

Strategic utterances: repertoires, perceptions and indexical speech patterns among coloured people in Paarl

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis looks at spoken Afrikaans among coloured people in Paarl by focussing on their context-based speech habits. They speak a heterogenous Afrikaans dialect called Kaaps Afrikaans, which often differs between individuals and social circles. This means that the nature of their Afrikaans speech is often determined by their immediate physical and/or social contexts. It became clear during the conversations with the participants that they regarded Standard Afrikaans as superior to their own everyday speech in formal contexts. However, many also expressed the opinion that English outranked Standard Afrikaans, which may explain why several participants preferred to conduct our recorded conversations in English and not Afrikaans. A short historical outline of the development of Afrikaans from a Khoisan trading pidgin into a dominant Dutch Creole and, later, into the diverse present-day Afrikaans is also provided. Mention is also made of the development Dutch Creole literature – written in Arabic script – among Muslim slaves and how it was used to spread the teachings of Islam.

Opsomming

Hierdie proefskrif kyk na gesproke Afrikaans onder kleurling mense in die Paarl deur te fokus op hul konteksgebaseerde spraakgewoontes. Hulle praat 'n heterogene Afrikaanse dialek wat Kaapse Afrikaans genoem word. Kaapse Afrikaans verskil dikwels tussen individue en sosiale kringe. Dit beteken dat die aard van hul gesproke Afrikaanse dikwels bepaal word deur hul onmiddellike fisiese en/of sosiale kontekste. Tydens die gesprekke met die deelnemers aan hierdie projek het dit duidelik geword dat hulle standaard Afrikaans as beter beskou as hul eie alledaagse spraak tydens formele kontekste. Baie het egter ook die mening uitgespreek dat hulle Engels hoër ag as, selfs, standaard Afrikaans, wat kan verduidelik hoekom verskeie deelnemers verkies het om ons gesprekke – wat op band afgeneem is – in Engels uit te voer in plaas van Afrikaans. ñ Kort historiese uiteensetting word ook verskaf van die ontwikkeling van Afrikaans vanaf 'n Khoisan-handelspidgin tot 'n dominante Nederlandse Creole en later ook in die diverse hedendaagse Afrikaans. Daar word ook melding gemaak van die ontwikkeling van die Nederlandse Creole letterkunde - geskrewe in Arabiese skrif - onder Moslem slawe en hoe dit gebruik is om die leringe van Islam te versprei.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis takes into account how coloured Afrikaans-speakers in Paarl understand their own speech habits in a South African context where Standard Afrikaans is the language norm. They speak Kaaps, which is a version of Afrikaans spoken predominantly by – but by no means limited to – working-class “coloureds” in Cape Town and beyond its city limits. Kaaps Afrikaans is one of the three dominant regional varieties of Afrikaans along with *Oranjerivier Afrikaans* (“Orange River Afrikaans”) and *Oosgrens Afrikaans* (“Eastern Border Afrikaans”). Although its presence is notable throughout the Western Cape, Kaaps is most common among the majority of working-class Afrikaans-speakers in the broader Cape-area. Kaaps has become a negative social marker as it is “probably the most stigmatised Afrikaans variety” (Willemse, 2016:75). In spite of this negative image, it has become increasingly popular among middle-class white and black university generation as a “cool coloured lingo”. With many who comically use Kaaps phrases like *awe masekind* (“hi brother”) in accents that made it sound like (ah-weh maw seccund) without risk facing any negative stereotypes. This is the wonderful quality of language: it transcends race, social class, city limits and provincial borders.

It still is amazing how language, which used to be considered “gangster slang” has become so mainstream. Yet despite its newfound popularity, Kaaps and its everyday speakers are still plagued by negative perceptions of their speech, which often leads to them being judged unfairly and, possibly, excluded. Students are taught from a young age that theirs is not the legitimate form of (spoken) Afrikaans as school teachers correct their pronunciation during oral presentations in Standard Afrikaans. In contrast to its popularity among white and black university students, many of the wealthier coloured participants in this study distanced themselves from Kaaps Afrikaans, because of its supposed low status. Those who speak it on a daily basis view it as “normal” Afrikaans because everyone in their communities speaks it. Speaking this Afrikaans variant enables them to establish commonalities with others, build friendships, express affection and shout out in anger. In short, as one of the participants stated: it is the best way to express yourself. Despite this, many Kaaps Afrikaans-speakers have learnt to identify the contexts where a more standardised speech would have a more favourable outcome. Thus, like many other speakers of low-status home languages, they have learnt the skill of altering their speech enough for them to avoid any preconceived notions about their character. Those who do not have the necessary repertoire of speech forms needed to speak differently in contexts are often faced with discrimination. There are also contexts where a more formalised speech is perceived negatively, as one of the participants

recounted how she was stigmatised because she did not speak in the Kaaps Afrikaans dialect. She was unable to reproduce certain orders of indexicality and this paved the way for the discrimination she experienced. Blommaert (2005) describes indexical meaning as “social meaning, interpretive leads between what is said and the social occasion in which it is being produced” (Blommaert, 2005:11). He states that through indexicality, every utterance tells us something about the speaker, leading us to make character judgements based purely on how they speak.

Coloured by name

This racial classification has been a point of ideological and political contestation since “its emergence in the late 19th century” (Adhikari, 2013:1). It is one of the remnants of a segregated past, which is still in use in contemporary South Africa – to the disdain of many classified as such. It unearths bad apartheid memories, which many from the older generation would prefer to forget. It has been argued that only two race categories were used in 1910 ““coloured people” and “natives” subsumed into the same racial category” (Posel, 2011:89). These official categories were decidedly “vague” and, according to Posel (2011), the legislation of the time used racial categories without definition. The term coloured was not in official use by the Union, however, this does not mean that it was not used colloquially to refer to the descendants of slaves. The vagueness in racial classification should also not be interpreted as an indication that racial discrimination was not rife.

The absence of homogeneity in the racial classifications gave enabled racial categories to be determined by various individual prejudices. One example is the idea promoted by an official “that coloureds could be distinguished by their high cheek bones; another insisted that he could “tell a coloured with absolute certainty by the way he spits” (Posel, 2011:96). After 1948 the preservation of “racial purity” became the main goal of the of the new Nationalist government and racial categorisations became homogeneous as all races were provided with an identity document, stating their racial backgrounds. According to Posel (2011), these racial taxonomies was “recorded in a new national population register, alongside a host of other pieces of information about all the citizens listed” (Posel, 2011:98). With this came various restrictions. My father recounted the story of a church bell that would ring in the centre of Paarl at 6 o’clock, indicating that all black and coloured people had to vacate the area.

Today, the term “coloured”, is still used as a racial classification, ascribed to a heterogeneous “group” of people - who have very little in common - from all over South Africa, with the aim of separating them racially, culturally and socially from white, black and Indian South Africans. The popular misconception among many South Africans is that “colouredness is an inbred quality that is the automatic product of

miscegenation or an artificial identity imposed by the white supremacist establishment on weak and vulnerable people as part of a divide-and-rule strategy” (Adhikari, 2006:468). Although I have been classified as coloured at the time of my birth, I do not identify as such. However, I recognise that there are many South Africans – including the overarching majority of my research participants – who self-identifies as coloured. To many, it has become a neutral group identity they have in common with their friends. Therefore, this racial classification will be included in this thesis.

Methods

This research was conducted in Paarl, a town located approximately forty minutes outside Cape Town. It is the biggest town in the Drakenstein Municipality, with approximately 112 045 inhabitants out of which 70% are coloured, according to the 2011 census data. Approximately 87% of the town indicated Afrikaans as their first language, while only 6% declared English to be theirs. The majority of the coloured people still live in Paarl East after they were forcefully removed from central Paarl, according to the Groups Areas Act of 1950. I grew up in Paarl East and have lived there for the majority of my life. Throughout the years I have maintained a moderately-sized friendship network that came in handy when I needed participants for this research: friends of friends and their acquaintances were easily attainable contributors. However, being introduced to people proved to be the only easy part as recording them proved to be a challenge. The conversations were only recorded whenever the participants felt comfortable with it. The recording of conversations and interviews are an invaluable part of the data collection process, especially in instances where transcriptions of these interactions are needed. However, many of the people I approached were uncomfortable with the prospect of being recorded. The presence of the voice recorder was a source of unease for them, with some requesting for it to be put away, while others preferred not to take part at all. This left me with the only other option of jotting down keywords and phrases onto my trusty notepad and piecing them together into a coherent summary as soon as I possibly could – in a determined effort to stay as true to the participants’ sentiments as possible. Most of those participants who consented to be recorded immediately adjusted their speech as the context changed for them from a conversation to an interview as soon as I pressed “record”. They would often change to a more formal Afrikaans speech or, even, English as they perceive the context to have shifted to one that is more official. This, in itself, was interesting to observe. These conversations were transcribed and translated into English where needed. The original Afrikaans transcriptions are included with the English translations in order to avoid any loss of meaning which may occur during the translation process. The dialogues included in this paper are transcriptions of the recorded interviews which reflect (according to my notes) the sentiments of many participants whom I was unable to record. In an effort to

remain true to the sentiments of the participants I did not change or formalise their speech in either the transcriptions or the dialogues contained in this paper. However, I have provided English translations for the Afrikaans dialogues (which I have included) as well as instances where Afrikaans words are used during English speech. However, some nuanced meanings have been lost in the translation process.

The sessions with the participants were never referred to as interviews but as ethnographic conversations. Mentioning the word “interview”, from past experience, made many people nervous – depending on their perceptions of interviews – and often led to them declining being interviewed. Thus, I referred to these interactions as ethnographic conversations which I described to the participants as very informal interviews, which they would lead. However, I did have a few key questions which allowed for a measure of consistency throughout the conversations. The goal was to identify common themes among the participants’ responses, for example, the majority of the participants ascribed to the idea that their everyday language is inferior to the Afrikaans used in formal contexts, like the work environment. I also substitute the participants’ names with pseudonyms in an effort to assure their anonymity. The knowledge that I would not be using their real name was a source of comfort for those who did not want to be identified. The majority of the participants (20 people) who allowed me to record them consisted of individuals who described themselves as middle-class and educated – as I mentioned earlier, these were friends and acquaintances. The rest (14 people) were people who I met as I walked through some of the areas in Paarl East. I avoided the spaces known for gang activity and limited my fieldwork to crowded, busy streets. Here, I approached men and women of different ages – quite often unsuccessfully – to speak about their Afrikaans speech habits. Depending on the immediate physical contexts, many of those I approached on the street regarded me (understandably) either with confusion or suspicion, while others just smiled and politely declined. However, I managed to engage successfully with 14 people in this manner regarding their Afrikaans speech habits.

However, those who assented were quite willing to engage openly in the conversation. Many of the older people in our community seemed rather intrigued by the subject as well as at the fact that one of “our children” would be interested in such a study. Along with the participants in my mixed-income area, I interviewed people from middle-class suburbs like Charleston Hill, Denneburg and Mountainview as well as people from the poorer areas like Lantana, Nederburg, Chicago and Amstelhof. I made a conscious decision to include both people from poorer (working-class) backgrounds as well as those from middle-class backgrounds in the data collection process. This was purposefully done with the aim of assessing whether there were any differences in Afrikaans language use between individuals from these backgrounds. The comparable variations in language use among individuals in these two “groups”

were not consistent enough to justify any claims of concrete differences in spoken Afrikaans between working-class and middle-class coloured people in Paarl. Although I use terms like “middle-class” and “working-class”, I would like to point out that these are not linguistically homogenous groups. Kaaps Afrikaans and more standardised Afrikaans-speech forms are not exclusive to either of these “groups”. Although many of the middle-class participants stated they spoke Standard Afrikaans, I would suggest that they spoke Kaaps with more elements of the Standard variety.

Chapter overview

Chapter 1 provides a short account of the early development of Afrikaans. It highlights the key roles played by the Dutch, the Khoisan and the African-and-Asian slaves. The Dutch exposed the Khoisan to their language during frequent trade transactions. The Khoisan learnt enough of the language to enable them to barter with the visiting Dutch – they resulting Dutch pidgin represents the genesis of Afrikaans. The introduction of new slaves from regions including East Africa and the Asian Archipelago introduced many new languages to the Colony and the indigenous Khoisan. This further influenced and changed the existing pidgin, which later developed into a Dutch creole – *Kaaps Hollands* (or “Cape Dutch” in English) - which became a shared language among the Khoisan, slaves, and the slave owners. Today, Kaaps Afrikaans shares many similarities with *Kaaps Hollands*. The Muslim community in the Cape had an immense influence in the development of a phonetic Cape Dutch alphabet, written in Arabic script – the first written form of what would later become Afrikaans. Davids states that it was used for religious lessons in *kopiesboeke* (“handbooks”) and for translations of the Quran between 1815 and 1915 according to Davids (2011). Cape Dutch became so widespread among the sizable slave population that it began to impact the spoken language of the colonisers to the extent that many lost competencies in written Dutch. With the advent of the English colonization, Cape Dutch changed again as words and phrases of the new hegemonic language were incorporated into this spoken language: an attribute it shares with the contemporary Kaaps Afrikaans. Regardless of its sheer dominance as a spoken language, *Kaaps Hollands* remained a lowly “*Hottentot Hollands*” (a derogatory name) in the eyes of language purists, because of its connection with the lower echelon of the Cape society: the Khoisan and the slaves. Today, Kaaps Afrikaans is also regarded as an inferior form of Afrikaans for similar reasons: its connection with the working-class in the Cape and its status as a “mixed” language. Like its *Kaaps Hollands* antecedent, it has never been the language power of and prestige and it has continuously been associated with poverty and all the misconceptions about the poor: laziness, low intelligence, submissiveness, etc. This has had a profound effect on those speech habits of those who speak Kaaps Afrikaans as a daily language. Many of the people with whom I engaged in conversation during this

research process, seemed to have internalised these negative perceptions. It affected people in different ways, but the majority had one thing in common: they quickly learnt the value of being able to speak Afrikaans differently in diverse contexts.

Chapter three

This chapter considers the relation between Afrikaans speech and social space in Paarl. Focusing more on the personal accounts of the research participants, the goal is to gain an understanding of their perceptions of their own speech habits. According to the majority of the participants, they choose to speak differently in different “places”. However, they can only do this if their repertoire allows – everyone is not in possession of repertoires that allows them to perform these variations in speech. This enables them to fit in and be more relatable towards their interlocutors. They speak a version of Afrikaans, called Kaaps by some theorists and language activist, which differs enough from the other spoken dialects to make it stand out. The manner in which the speakers incorporate English words into their daily speech or fluently change from Afrikaans to English mid-sentence is a common characteristic quality of Kaaps, but it also forms part of the reasons for its low status. With critics calling it a *gemegde taal* (mixed language). This mixed language is juxtaposed to “beautiful” Afrikaans – a more standardised version often reserved for formal occasions. Using Kaaps Afrikaans in these formal contexts is frowned upon as unprofessional and possibly offensive. Thus, several participants have stated that educated people often avoid speaking it for fear of being stigmatised by their peers in the formal environment. I also give a short description of Paarl as the broader context of this research as the site where the first attempts were made at standardising Cape Dutch. Data collection was conducted within the region of Paarl East: a section of the town which the apartheid dispensation allocated for “coloureds”. It is a mixed-income area with poverty-stricken townships located only meters away from middle-class suburbs. There are some differences in Afrikaans language use between some – not all – participants who lived in wealthier areas and those who lived in poorer areas. Many of the wealthier participants admitted that they actively avoided speaking Kaaps, because of its bad image. Conversely, many who lived in the working-class areas regarded their more standardised speech as pretentious. However, they admitted that speaking Standard Afrikaans and Kaaps brought with them respective values in different contexts.

Chapter four

This chapter discusses the etymology of the name “Kaaps Afrikaans” and makes the argument that it has more in common with *Kaaps Hollands* than just a name. The majority (but not all) of those who speak Kaaps Afrikaans are descendants of the Khoisan and the predominantly Malay and Muslim slaves who

developed Cape Dutch. These descendants have been classified as coloured – a collective term for people from various backgrounds have collectively classified as “coloureds”. Similarly, to Cape Dutch-speakers, those who speak Kaaps Afrikaans form part of the lower echelon of the Cape society. However, it has to be noted that not all of the participants from the poorer backgrounds speak Kaaps Afrikaans. There were some who spoke a more formalised Afrikaans, similar to that of participants from the middle-class. Conversely, there were participants from the middle class who preferred to speak a more Kaaps dialect. Although they also form the largest part of the population in the Cape (just like their forefathers), Kaaps Afrikaans-speakers do not have the sociopolitical and economic influence to elevate the status of their spoken language – they were in a similarly disadvantaged position as Cape Dutch speakers in the colony. Thus, they adopt the diglossic practice which involves speaking different forms of Afrikaans when the context requires them to do so. The majority of the participants in this study stated that they feel “pressured” to speak a more “standardised” Afrikaans on formal occasions. Lastly, this chapter looks at the idea that perceptions of language affect the perceptions of its speakers and vice versa.

Chapter five

The conclusion contains a short discussion about the main themes in this thesis as well as a short anecdote depicting the results of my inability to recreate a specific order of indexicality on a train headed to Kimberley in the Northern Cape. Where a woman chastised my brother and I for contributing to the ruin of the Afrikaans language merely by the way we spoke the language – which can be described as distinctly Kaaps Afrikaans. I also discuss the increasingly popular trend among young Afrikaans-speaking adults in Paarl East who teach their children to speak English as their mother-tongue. These parents often have little experience with speaking English on a daily basis and as a result, they teach their children – what I can only describe as – the English version of Kaaps Afrikaans: English with the incorporation of many Afrikaans words and phrases. I propose this as a possible topic for further research.

Chapter 2

A look at the development of “Afrikaans” at the Cape

“Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker’s intentions; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one’s own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process” (Bakhtin 1981:294)

This chapter takes a historic look at the development of Afrikaans from its beginnings as a Khoisan pidgin, to slave creole language and then into Modern Afrikaans. A short description is provided of its genesis as a trade lingo between visiting Dutch merchant sailors and the indigenous Khoisan. They were the original inhabitants of the Cape, who developed a Dutch pidgin with Dutch as the base language. This trade language facilitated the trade in goods between the indigenous people and the Europeans. The fluid and flexible nature of (spoken) language enable speakers to adapt and change it to suit their needs. It is as a result of this flexibility that pidgins come into existence, making it possible for people from different language backgrounds to communicate. Pidgins and the creoles come into existence in polyglot societies where the colonised and enslaved are forced to come to terms with a new – almost certainly European – hegemonic language. In order to appease their colonisers, the conquered made efforts to learn enough of their spoken languages to allow sufficient communication. In the process, new languages (pidgins and creole) come into existence, often becoming the lingua franca of the subjugated population, as was the case with Creole Dutch in the Cape. The Dutch elite stigmatised these “new” languages (pidgins and creoles) as jargons fit only for the slaves. It has been argued that the spoken language of the Dutch colonists did not pass through a pidgin phase, but that they later spoke Early Afrikaans – as the creole Dutch of their slaves began to have an effect on their spoken language – followed by Modern Afrikaans. However, some historical evidence shows that they spoke Creole Dutch by the time the English colonised the Cape. The tongues of their slaves – who worked in their homes and minded their children – influenced their spoken language to the extent that visitors from Holland noted that they spoke differently. By the 19th century, the number of Dutch descendants who spoke Cape Dutch had increased considerably since the emergence of this creole among the slaves.

The development of Dutch pidgin(s) at the Cape

The Khoisan were a pastoralist population consisting of approximately fifty thousand people, who lived and thrived under the shadow of *Hoerikwaggo* (Table Mountain). According to Fourie and Luiten van Zanden (2013), the Khoisan were comprised of two “groups” of people: the pastoral Khoe, whose most

valued resources were their cattle and the San who were hunter-gatherer people. They were in frequent contact with Dutch merchants and sailors who laid anchor at Table Bay in order to refresh their water and food supplies. This regular language contact with the Dutch led to the development of “trade jargons”. According to van Rensburg (2016), the first recorded contact between the Dutch and the Khoisan was when a Dutch merchant traveller – Van Linschoten – arrived in the Cape in 1583. The visiting mariners made transcripts of the Khoisan attempting to speak Dutch and these showed – according to van Rensburg – “the Kaaps and Afrikaans nature of these attempts” (van Rensburg, 2016:55). The following are examples of words which formed part of this pidgin: “*vol laen* (*volladen*) [fully laden], without the intervocalic [d] (cf. *bôre*, in this data, for *borde* [plates]), and *vra-* as root form (*ick vrade*) [I ask], which can be compared here with *ghe-* [to give] of early Kaaps” (van Rensburg, 2016:55). These pidgins, developed by the Khoisan, essentially facilitated the trade in goods between the Khoisan, who provided fresh food and water to the Europeans. Approximately sixty years later, when the Dutch colonisers arrived in 1652, the Khoisan were already equipped with a repertoire of Dutch pidgins. These enabled them to communicate with the colonisers who had no interest in mastering the intricate “click” sounds of the indigenous language. The slaves who arrived in the Cape during the subsequent years learnt this trade language during their frequent encounters with the Khoisan, adding their own changes in the process.

When van Riebeeck arrived in the Cape in 1652 with 82 men and 8 women, his orders from the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Companjie* or VOC) were not to colonise the area but to build a fort. This fort was “little more than a victualling station for Dutch ships passing between Europe and the East” (Fourie, 2013:468). As the settlement grew along with the growing demand for farming land, the Khoisan were forced out of the area. The halfway station grew in size and soon became a self-governing Dutch outpost with its own judiciary system. Most historical works claim that there were less than twenty personal slaves in the Colony at the time who travelled with their owners from Batavia to the Cape. Most of them were sold upon arrival where after they worked in the homes of Dutch officials or maintained their gardens. Soon retired VOC employees – called *Vryburghers* (literally meaning Free citizens) – moved to the Cape after receiving acres in farming land from the Company. There existed a shortage in the available workforce in the Colony as the 120 or so settlers and the small number of slaves in the Cape were unable to handle the work needed to maintain and expand the Colony. Many Europeans from different nationalities wanted to try their fortune in the new Colony, but they were not welcomed by the Dutch. Always finding ways to cut costs, the VOC discouraged expensive (white) European labour from immigrating to the Cape. In the process, they also wanted to ensure that the Colony remained

“purely” Dutch by deterring these non-Dutch speakers from settling in the Cape, thereby ensuring the hegemony of their language. This left van Riebeeck with the challenge of acquiring alternative labour, for which he eventually turned to the Khoisan.

The Khoisan refused to work for the Dutch on land where they roamed freely before the Dutch established it as a colony. These Dutch newcomers were essentially imposing their rule over the land that the Khoisan had populated for generations and this made their relationship volatile with frequent scuffles breaking out resulting in the Khoisan suffering great losses at the hands of the Dutch who had more advanced weapons. Subsequently, van Riebeeck turned to slave labour, a very lucrative – albeit controversial – industry during the seventeenth century. The commercial use of slave labour was at its peak in 1658 when the *Amersfoort* docked in Table Bay with 174 Angolan slaves, seized from a Portuguese slave ship bound for Europe. There were 180 slaves in the Colony by the time van Riebeeck retired in 1662. These slaves worked on farms and in the private homes where they cooked, cleaned, fetched firewood and collected water from the pumps. These Angolan slaves had developed various Portuguese creoles since their colonisation by the Portuguese in 1575. They brought these languages with them to the Cape, but they were never “in general use as lingua franca because too few colonists and indigenes knew these languages” (Roberge, 2004:90). A Dutch pidgin soon came into existence among the slaves in their contact with their owners as well as the local Khoisan who also spoke a Dutch pidgin, referred to by the Dutch as “*Hottentots-Hollands*”.

As the Colony expanded and the demand for cheap labour grew, the VOC began importing slaves in increasing numbers from “the Indonesian archipelago, Bengal, the South Indian coast and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Madagascar, and the East African Coast” (Davids, 2011:37). These slaves brought new artisanship as well as an influx of new languages to the Colony. According to Davids (1990:37), the new slaves brought approximately seven main languages and at least fourteen different dialects with them. As stated by Davids (2011:51), evidence found in the Cape archives show that four of these languages – Malayu, Sunda, Bugis and Macassar – were present in written and spoken use at the Cape of Good Hope. In the resulting social milieu, some of these languages changed or disappeared as speakers encountered other more frequently used languages. The most dominant among these languages was Malayu-Portuguese – described as “broken” Portuguese mixed with Malay by some – spoken by the majority of the new arrivals from the South Asian Archipelago. Although Malayu-Portuguese was not the only language to influence in the pidginisation of Dutch, it became so increasingly widespread among the growing number of slaves “in the Cape Colony during the period 1658-85 as to leave a very strong impression on the Dutch language” (Roberge, 2004:87). Quite a few words from Malayu-Portuguese

origin became popular in the Cape, which would be included in the Afrikaans vocabulary years later: *piesang* (banana), *rottang* (cane), *soebat* (beg), *bredie* (stew) and *sjambok* (whip).

Thus, Dutch pidgins came into existence during a timespan as these new slaves scrambled to find ways to communicate with each other as well as with their masters in their new contexts. I use the plural form, “pidgins”, as the uniform development of a single Dutch pidgin in the Cape seems unlikely when considering the size of the Colony, a large number of slaves, the multitudes of languages they spoke, and groups were often isolated from other slaves on remote farmsteads. For their own survival, the slaves soon managed a basic understanding of their owners’ Dutch, changing it in the process with their own speech habits: word pronunciation and meanings, etc. The development of these “new” languages among the slaves was facilitated by “co-habitation in the Company’s slave quarters, [...] interactions in small groups in private homes [and] in the fields where they worked, or meetings in the growing town” (Davids, 2011:37). The harsh nature of slavery meant that these speech mediums came into existence during times of distress in a context where the slaves had to find ways to communicate with people who did not speak their languages. Mufwene (2000:73) argues that “the development of any communicative competence is not a planned activity; it is a byproduct of efforts to communicate” (Mufwene, 2000:73). Often living in isolation from others, these slaves had limited contact with the outside world in a labour system that “often entailed the separation of new arrivals from their linguistic and cultural groups” (Roberge, 2004:79). This was a cunning way of forcing slaves to forego their own languages and Davids (2010) argues that this violent nature of slavery weakened language barriers as slaves find ways to communicate with each other in order to form support networks needed to survive. Roberge (1995) argues that the Cape Dutch pidgin(s) and creole(s) were secondary languages as the slaves “could avail themselves of Creole Portuguese or Pasar Malay” (Roberge, 1995:76). Thus, the slaves were multilingual and could code-switch between languages depending on whom they spoke to and, perhaps, where they were.

The wealthy Burghers in Cape Town and the more successful farmers in the Boland had very little comprehension of these Dutch pidgin(s), if any, and did not intend to learn to speak them. The less wealthy settlers – farmers etc. – who lived in the Boland and along the frontier are believed to have “at least a passive – often active – knowledge of the Cape Dutch pidgin” (Roberge, 1995:81). According to Fourie (2013), the society in the Cape could be divided into groups which include “the affluent Company officials and traders in Cape Town, who often also had farms in the country; the gentry who owned large farms and lived opulently; the hard-working farmers who owned few slaves; and the poor, pastoral farmers of the interior” (Fourie, 2013:419). These farmers used a form of Cape Dutch in communication with their slaves and their descendants who worked on their farms. The emphasis on speaking “proper”

Dutch became less prominent the further they lived outside Cape Town, which was the Dutch cultural hotspot. This made it possible – at a later stage – for the farmers who lived outside the city to adopt the language of the “hotspots” and appropriate it as their “own” during the formation of a new collective (Afrikaner) identity. At the time, there existed a Dutch language hierarchy among the population in the Colony, with the most creolised tongues spoken among the slaves of Malay background on one end of the spectrum and the hegemonic “high” Dutch of the settlers on the other. Quite often, the level of pidginised speech was dependent on who people spoke to, “the nature of their communicative networks, and the sociolinguistic circumstances (code-switching)” (Roberge, 1995:82). Code-switching, according to Siziba (2014) occurs when speakers switch between two or more language varieties: in this case, between “high” Dutch and Dutch pidgin. The latter had a low status among the Dutch elite who viewed it as a mark of social inferiority – this is similar to the low status of ascribed to the Afrikaans spoken by the participants in this research (discussed in Chapters 3-4) who also find it necessary to perform code-switches, depending on their interlocutors and immediate contexts. Dutch Creole soon replaced these pidgins.

Creole Dutch

Bickerton (2016:6) describes a creole language as “any language which was once a pidgin and which subsequently became a native language”. According to Holm (2000), a creole is the lingua franca of an entire community, “often one whose ancestors were displaced geographically so that their ties with their original language and sociocultural identity were partly broken” (Holm, 2000:6). Geographic displacement is often one of the characteristics of slavery and slaves in these circumstances often have to adapt to new environments and languages in order to survive. In the process, simplified forms of the colonists’ language mixed with the languages of the slaves come into existence. This process is very complicated and entails the inclusion and exclusion of words and phrases from both the hegemonic language and the “lesser” slave language(s) until some form of consistency is reached in the form of a language pidgin or creole. The creolisation of the Dutch language occurred in the “western Cape around 1700, following the withdrawal of the [Khoisan] into the interior to escape European domination and in the aftermath of the 1713 smallpox epidemic” (Roberge, 2004:88). This smallpox epidemic decimated the Khoisan population causing their surviving numbers to flee the Cape, taking with them their own version of Cape Dutch, which they used in communication with migrant farmers in the interior of the Colony. It is possible that there was an exchange of cultural traits from the arrival of the first slaves, who were forced to live together in cramped slave quarters. Davids (2010) states that these slaves would have had conversations in fields where they worked on isolated farms or in small groups in the rapidly

expanding town. These exchanges would have “been necessary for survival and resulted in the emergence of new cultural traits that in turn were transmitted to their children” (Davids, 2010:37). The development of a shared language was vital for the slaves who needed to form support networks among their ranks. Their masters were often violent, subjecting the slaves to various forms of torture, like “being broken on the wheel impales through the anus and disembowelled are but examples of this brutality” (Davids, 2010:37). It is easy to understand how vital it was for the slaves to have a shared language. However, not all of the slave owners were Dutch, many who were released from slavery, became slave owners themselves.

Although a Dutch creole began stabilising as a spoken medium in the Cape at the beginning of the eighteenth-century, the slaves continued to communicate among themselves in at least three of their own languages: Malayu, Baganese and Portuguese. However, this changed by the start of the nineteenth-century when creolised Dutch gained prominence as lingua franca among the slaves in the Cape. The emergence of this creole as lingua franca was due to the considerable size of the Muslim slave community in the Cape, in comparison to Christian slaves. This community, who spoke Malayu and other Asian tongues adapted to speaking Dutch creole in order to assimilate non-Asian slaves who converted to Islam. According to Stel (2007), one of the attributing factors to the disappearance of Malayu and Portuguese-Creole was the British ban on slave imports in 1808. This severely reduced the functionality “of Creole Portuguese and Malay as oral links with non-assimilated newcomers from Asia” (Stell, 2007:93). This handicapped their communication with people from their own countries of origin, which in turn, necessitated the newcomers to learn Cape Dutch. Another contributing factor was the rural origin of the new Muslims, who “had been more subject to Dutch influence and had possibly been linguistically assimilated into the European community” (Stell, 2007:94).

Although the creole played an important role – as a shared language – among the Muslim and Christian slaves, it was viewed as a joke among the Dutch elite. According to Davids (2010), archival evidence shows how Meurant, Boniface and Baine (prominent journalists) used Cape Dutch/Afrikaans solely for comic effect and ascribed it to uncultured “non-white” speakers. Meijer and Muysken (1984) posits that most of the nineteenth-century views on creoles reflected the racism that characterised slavery, which seemed to be the norm in the Cape Colony, as can be seen in the following letter from Bertrand-Bocande (1849:73):

“It is clear that people used to expressing themselves with a rather simple language cannot easily elevate their intelligence to the genius of a European language. When they were in contact with

the Portuguese and forced to communicate with them, speaking the same language, it was necessary that the varied expressions acquired during so many centuries of civilization dropped their perfection, to adapt to ideas being born and to barbarous forms of language of half-savage peoples. (Meijer & Muysken, 1984:22).

The use of the words “half-savage peoples” seems to be in reference to the Khoisan who had frequent barter contact with the Portuguese in the years before the arrival of the Dutch. This language-based discrimination or stigma was also aimed at the slaves and their descendants who also spoke this “rather simple language” – they all formed part of the lower class in the city. The more affluent population in the Colony avoided speaking this “barbarous” language in polite company and, therefore, spoke *Algemeen Beschaafd Nederlands* (the hegemonic Dutch of the time), not wanting to risk their own respectability. Thus, it seems that there existed a “class linguistic rather than a racial linguistic divide in the Cape of Good Hope” (Davids, 1990:39). Cape Town was the Dutch cultural hub of the Colony during the nineteenth-century and continued to be so after the English colonisation. Here, schools, newspapers and frequent contact upheld Dutch language standards with people from ancestral Holland who came to visit the Colony. These factors may have had a “constraining influence on the language of the cultured Christians and upper classes, preventing [them] from deviating from [the Dutch of Holland]” (Davids, 1990:38). However, it would be impossible for their spoken language to remain unchanged when taking into account that the Dutch were in constant contact with the slaves who worked in their homes and took care of their children. It is possible that these children and – to some extent – their parents gained a degree of proficiency in Dutch creole through their daily interactions with their slaves. However, because of the low status of the slave creole, they would have to code-switch back to hegemonic Dutch when conversing with their peers, in order to preserve their respectable status - slave Dutch had a disreputable image, among the Dutch elite, as a slave patois. According to Davids (1990), there was a distinction between the Dutch spoken by the different spheres of society in the Cape. He provides an excerpt of a report by, J. G. Swaving, who was an interpreter at the Cape Supreme Court. Swaving (quoted in Davids, 1990) stated that he was acquainted with:

"that kind of bastard Dutch which was spoken in this country by the farmers and slaves, as well as among the Hottentots and various other heathen races, and which is not entirely absent from the speech of even the most cultured among Christians and the upper classes of people" (Davids, 1990:39).

The Dutch farmers living on the outskirts of Cape Town – in areas like Stellenbosch and Paarl – also spoke a Creole Dutch, which they used as their daily language. It would appear that the same degree of

stigma attached to it in the city did not extend to the countryside. Based on historical evidence, there was little difference between the spoken language used among the abovementioned lower (“non-white”) classes in Cape Town and the language of the Dutch farmers in the outlying farm areas of Stellenbosch, Paarl and beyond. According to Davids (1990), Swaving was one of the first to recognise that there was very little difference in the spoken language of the Dutch farmers on the outskirts of Cape Town and the slaves they owned. The majority of those in the lower classes spoke the same Dutch creole, as the “Khoi, the Free Blacks and the slaves together constituted the bulk of the lower class people in Cape Town in 1818” (Davids, 1990:39). These farmers also formed part of the lowest group in the Cape society, which became apparent when taking into account Pannevis’ plea for the translation of the Bible into Cape Dutch. Living outside of the cultural centre of the colony (Cape Town), allowed the spoken language of the farmers to evolve more freely and soon it began to resemble the creole spoken by their slaves. Numerous accounts of travellers to the nineteenth-century rural areas had reported that people living there spoke a Dutch “differently”. It was later determined that they also spoke a creole language, passed on to them through daily contact with these labourers and the nurses who raised their children. These travellers claimed that it was “necessary for them to have some knowledge of this ‘corrupt’ Cape dialect for effective communication with the rural inhabitants” (Davids, 1990:38). It is in these outskirts where early Afrikaans and ideas of Afrikaner cultural identity began to solidify, soon after the Colony became an English settlement.

Anglicised through education and the formation of Afrikaner identity

When the British introduced the English language to the Cape Colony, many within the Dutch high society and the farmers’ community attempted to resist interacting with the new language. As mentioned earlier, the Dutch made great efforts in the early years of the settlement to ensure that theirs was the only European language in use. They went so far as discouraging other Europeans (Huguenots) from immigrating to the new Colony. There was unhappiness among the Dutch when the new hegemonic language – English – replaced Dutch in all government functions – including the newly introduced compulsory government schools. By the end of the nineteenth-century, English became the preferred *lingua franca* for the youth of the Dutch elite.

These new changes were inevitable after 1795 when the British captured Cape Town and established a naval base at the Colony. They soon built the first European missionary schools, aimed at “westernising” young slave descendants – this included introducing them to Christianity. The slaves were suspicious of this newfound religious inclusiveness displayed by the English, as they were never welcomed in Dutch

churches in the past. According to Davids (2010), these missionary schools – hosted in previously empty churches – began attracting significant numbers when they began teaching slaves the Christian philosophy in English and then explaining it to them in “Dutch”. By 1847, this tactic produced favourable results as out “of 100 children present for examination at the infant school, 60 were ‘Mohammedan’” (Davids, 2010:65). Soon after these mission schools were established, the first British citizens settled in the Cape Colony in 1820. Along with British officials, mostly educated families qualified for immigration to the Colony in an effort to establish an English presence. These families were initially chosen because the parents placed great emphasis on education, which helped with anglicisation. It was important to have these elite families in Cape Town as it was the cultural hub of the Colony throughout the nineteenth-century. Therefore, Lord Somerset – the English Governor of the Cape – encouraged them to settle there, while the “poorer sections of British society settled in the Eastern Cape, far from the polite society of Cape Town” (Mesthrie, 2004:15, brackets my own). These – predominantly working-class – British citizens settled in the Eastern Cape and, according to Mesthrie (2004), the roots of South African English can be traced back to this settlement.

In 1822, English instructors joined the clergymen – who ran the missionary schools – at strategic locations throughout the Colony for the “purpose of facilitating the acquirement of the English Language to all classes of society” (Barnouw, 1934:2). Thus, the Anglicisation of the colony was initiated, enabling the Governor to proclaim that all judicial acts, proceedings and documents be drawn up and promulgated in English from 1825. Subsequently, the Dutch speakers in the Colony had to interact with the new hegemonic language in one way or another. By 1827, approximately 24 English-medium schools were operational in Colony. Dutch children – who had never encountered English before – attended Government schools where they were taught English history and English grammar from English teachers. According to Barnouw (1934), these Dutch children believed “education” meant learning English. Prior to British rule, the Calvinist Church Magistracy controlled schooling in the Cape Colony. According to Le Roux (1998), schooling was adequate enough to fit the needs of the time and what “children learnt preserved them from spiritual as well as well as physical dangers: the two pillars of the pioneer’s lifestyle – the Bible and the rifle – were foremost” (Le Roux, 1998:96). The primary aim of this education was to prepare children for church membership. Thus, these schools were geared toward teaching Dutch literacy, which would enable the children to read the Bible. There were previous attempts at establishing slave schools with the aim of teaching the first slaves in the Colony the Dutch language during the early days of colonisation. However, these proved to be unsuccessful as these slaves continuously absconded regardless any efforts made by the Dutch to keep them in these schools.

The existing private (and expensive) Dutch schools could not compete with these government schools in the city, especially as it was more beneficial – socially and professionally – for the children to be proficient in English. Despite this, the Boers in the rural areas continued their children’s schooling in small, private Dutch schools in resistance to the official language policy. Dutch was also the language of the Dutch Reformed Church and only these schools could teach these children the literacy needed to read and understand the scriptures. For them, the main aim of a school education was to “train the child for membership of the church” (Barnouw, 1934:3). Realising that they needed these children to have a grasp of the English language, the British presented a concession to the Boers. Barnouw (1934) states that Sir George Napier ruled in 1839 that Dutch would be included in the curriculum of the 19th century English schools, which led the children to flock to the cheaper government schools. While they were there, these children were also taught English – this was a cunning tactical move on the part of the British. This language began to influence Dutch/Cape Dutch to the extent that it was noticeable to visitors from Holland.

According to Donaldson (2004), the first concrete example of this English language influence is found in the work of a Dutchman, called A.N.E. Changuion (1844). He was a researcher who came to Cape Town to help remedy all of the “irregularities” in spoken Dutch of the white population in the Cape. He found that 12% of his body of noteworthy “divergencies in Cape Dutch, collected only 24 years after the arrival of the 1820 settlers, is the direct result of interference from English” (Donaldson, 2004:29). The widely spoken Dutch Creole began to change as the new English hegemonic language began to influence it. Irrespective of efforts to preserve the status of Dutch among the Dutch elite, the impact of English on their speech habits was notable. By the late nineteenth-century, Dutch youths, who attended English schools, preferred to speak English while only reserving Dutch for communication with the older generation. Thus, English became a status language in the Colony and the younger Dutch generation held it in higher regard. This Anglicisation of the Colony also caused dissatisfaction among Dutch Afrikaners who viewed this as a threat on “their” culture and language, particularly after learning that sending their children to dual medium English/Dutch government schools enabled the British to teach their children English. The widely-spoken Dutch creole became influenced by English as the population in the Colony were increasingly exposed to this language. A large number of these farmers home-schooled their children in a display of resistance against British rule and the new hegemonic language. Combined with the emancipation of slaves in 1834 – which erased their rights to own slaves – as well as other economic reasons, the Dutch/Afrikaners felt compelled to trek further inland where they would ultimately begin the processes of developing Standard Afrikaans in the Calvinist Kweekskool.

By 1873, the first higher education institution in the colony, University of the Cape of Good Hope, was established. Modelled after the University of London, it was an examining body that "guaranteed quality by setting examinations and conferring degrees on students who passed the required examination no matter where they acquired the appropriate knowledge" (royalsociety.org.za). In 1883, the *Gedenkschool der Hugonoten* (Huguenot Memorial school) – an Afrikaans primary school - was established on the De Kleyne Bos farm (today Augusta Kleinbosch) in Paarl. Its role was to ensure that the children of the "boeregemeenskap" (farmers community) in areas like Dal Josafat and Klein Drakenstein - in Paarl - received their education in their *moedertaal* (mother-tongue).

Early Afrikaans Literature

Cape Dutch was initially a shared spoken language among slaves (descendants) and farmers on the outskirts of Cape Town, who adopted it and changed it into a language of "their own". These Dutch farmers and their descendants would, later, fashion it into a symbol of Afrikaner identity. However, before this transpired, written Cape Dutch was the language of instruction during Muslim religious lessons (*madrassa*). By the beginning of the nineteenth-century, Cape Dutch had developed into a language in its own right and it began to appear in written form among the Muslim slaves and their descendants. Stel (2007) argues that by the turn of the eighteenth-century, "the core of established Cape Muslims had to make cultural concessions to accommodate the new ethnic components of the community by gradually relinquishing its Asian linguistic connection in favour of Cape Dutch/Afrikaans" (Stell, 2007:93). In 1862, Abu Bakr Effendi – visiting from Turkey – established his own *madrassa* (Muslim school) where he taught the principles of Islam to young students. He wrote these lessons in *kopiesboeke* (student handbooks) containing religious lessons written in a modified version of the Arabic alphabet. According to Dangor (2008), the Muslims slaves in the Cape already had an understanding of the Arabic script "which was essential for the reciting of the Qu'ran in the original language, but they did not understand Arabic" (Dangor, 2008:124). He innovatively devised a method of modifying the Arabic alphabet in order for it to be used for written Cape Dutch/Early Afrikaans – a language most of the slaves understood. Thus, the Dutch spoken by the Cape Muslims had its own phonetic alphabet and language structure, which when read aloud shared very little similarity with contemporary Standard Afrikaans.

According to Dangor (2008), this Cape Dutch literature "flourished briefly when it first emerged in 1868-1869 and later from 1906-1929" (Dangor, 2008:124). Van Selms (1953) have hesitantly dated the oldest example of Afrikaans in Arabic text to 1856. Stell (2007) states that Abu Bakr Effendi's *Bayanûddin* was a key milestone in the Cape Malay literary tradition – it was written in 1869 and printed in 1879. The use

of this Arabic-Afrikaans writing “as a medium of communication was so extensive that even the London Mission Society, an Anglican Church establishment, had to use Cape-Dutch for their proselytism and educational efforts directed at ‘Malays’ in Cape Town” (Davids, 2012:89). These efforts were somewhat successful as a considerable number of Muslims converted to Christianity. The literary tradition of writing Cape Dutch in Arabic script continued for years among Muslims until the English government introduced compulsory education for all children. According to Stell (2007), the English language was introduced to these students in Roman script. Ever since, texts in Cape Dutch and, subsequently, Standard Afrikaans were written using this writing system.

According to Davids (2011) many of these scripts, dating from 1845 and onwards, are still in existence today. There are some good examples among these scripts (written between 1845 and 1957) with “the most comprehensive inventory being Kähler’s list in his study of Arabic Afrikaans literature” (Davids, 2011:91). However, Arabic script was not the only written medium used by Islamic leaders in the Colony. According to Davids (2010), one of the religious publications by Imam Abdurakib ibn Abdul Kahaar is an example of how writing in Roman script emerged as a tradition from 1898 and onwards. This religious leader followed a similar written language practice to that of the Christian community. A Dutch grammarian became aware of this practice and wrote the following comment:

“On the one hand the influence of Biblical language on a religious people was great and marked. The Patois [their spoken language] they had accepted as a medium of exchange of ordinary thought to a large extent made room for better language whenever loftier themes were handled or prayers offered. Then the Scriptures were their guide, from which they borrowed every expression of reverence, and each word which in their limited everyday vocabulary found no place” (Davids, 2011:99).

It is believed that this change from Arabic script to the Roman script was done for the benefit of new, white, converts. Intermarriages were common between Muslim men and white women during the period 1808-1915, according to Davids (2010). During these unions, the women were expected to convert to Islam and there is a probability that they were unfamiliar with Arabic script. Another possible explanation for the change in written medium is, that these publications were directed at Muslim women. They received a more extensive secular education in comparison to the men, who “were removed from the mission schools at an early age” (Davids, 2011:100). Throughout the early part of the twentieth century, there was an increase in the use of Roman script as Arabic script was used less frequently.

The first recorded example of the term “Afrikaner” being used was when a man called Hendrik Bibault declared, *Ik ben een Africaander* (“I am an Afrikaner”) as he rode away on his horse in Stellenbosch in 1707. The term “Afrikaner” in the early eighteenth-century was used in reference to “people of mixed European and African blood” (Du Plessis, 2003:134). This soon changed, as the term became a group identity for Afrikaans-speaking people of European (white) descent. Mesthrie (2009) argues that this Afrikaner identity became more distinct the further the farmers moved away from the Cape.

In 1875 Rev. S.J. Du Toit and his colleagues established the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (GRA), a white organisation geared at promoting a separate group identity for Afrikaners, distancing them from the Dutch and – especially – the English. Their motto was “*vir ons Taal, ons Nasie en ons Land*” (“For our Language, our Nation and our Country”) (Roth, 2017:66). Immediately notable is here, is the emergence of a form of nationalism. In the following years, leading to the advent of apartheid, this Standard Afrikaans was portrayed as the language of the Afrikaner and in the process, its affiliation with coloured Afrikaans-speakers written out of the history books. Words and phrases that did not meet their requirements were omitted or their pronunciation altered, but some words from Malayu origin were kept: *piesang* (banana), *soebat* (plead) etcetera.

The creation of the GRA was sparked by efforts made by Arnold Pannevis, who wrote a letter to the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1874, pleading for an Afrikaans translation of the Bible. According to him, this would benefit the millions of coloured souls who spoke this “corrupted” Dutch. He also added that the Dutch Bible has become incomprehensible for thousands of Dutch-speakers because “a dialect has developed, idiomatically quite different from the Holland Dutch” (Naudé, 2009:38). This meant that a large number of the farming community outside Cape Town – in the Boland – could not understand written Dutch. The British and Foreign Bible Society rejected Pannevis’ request and were opposed to the idea of propagating “jargons” in this manner – even the Dutch Reformed ministers were against the idea of replacing their Dutch religious texts with the “new” language. Thus, there was friction in the Afrikaner community between those who wanted to preserve the status of Dutch – especially its use in their church services and Bibles – and those who were in support supported the GRA in the promotion of Early Afrikaans.

Afrikaans still held an inferior status in relation to Dutch at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, as a result of an increasing volume of Afrikaans literature, it gained prominence over Cape Dutch – which was used in Arabic written form for Muslim religious purposes. By the time of his death in 1911, Du Toit and the GRA translated seven of the books in the Bible, he replaced the *Afrikaanse*

Patriot newspaper with *Die Paarl Post* in 1905, and it is still a successful Standard Afrikaans weekly newspaper in Paarl. Du Toit also wrote the first novel in Afrikaans, called *Di Koningin fan Skeba* (The Queen of Sheba) which “featured as a serial in *Ons Klyntji* from March 1896 to May 1898” (Naudé, 2009:99). *Ons Klyntji* (“Our Little One”) is described as the oldest Afrikaans magazine

The language monument, built in 1893 in Burgerdorp was dedicated to the equal status of the hegemonic Dutch of the time and English and it was (and still is) the only monument of its kind. This monument was also dedicated to promoting “a variant of the Cape Dutch vernacular that was propagated as the official language by the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners” (Huigen, 2011:129). Thus, with a language monument dedicated to its connection to the high Dutch of Holland, “Afrikaans” became “superior” (sic) to its Cape Dutch antecedent. Thus, the process of separating Afrikaans from its image as a “*Hottentots*” language was becoming successful. The aim of its incorporation on the monument was to promote this language as the symbol of whiteness, the language of *regte Afrikaners* (real Afrikaners). Thus, the differences between these two forms of Afrikaans became more defined along cultural and racial lines. The following is an extract from a traveller’s guide, called the *Englishman's guide to the speedy and easy acquirement of Cape Dutch* by H. Elffers (1903), which instructs the would-be traveller on the basics of the Dutch languages in the colony:

There are now two distinct varieties of Cape Dutch used in South Africa. The one may be set down as a real patois, low and undeveloped, dependent on circumstances and locality, easily influenced, and becoming more and more Anglicised;--the other, a language lacking the grammatical niceties of the Dutch of Holland, and the shades of meaning which necessarily adorn a tongue of which the learned make-use, besides discarding much of the idiom of the North-but none the less expressive, and with a scope scarcely, if at all, diminished; a language fit for the pulpit and platform, though lacking' somewhat in expressions for modern ideas, and wholly in technical terms. (Elffers, 1903:5).

Thus by 1903, a clear distinction was made between the two “varieties” of Cape Dutch; one is more suitable for sermons, while the other is “just” a spoken jargon which would be difficult to comprehend outside of a specific context. In his writings, Elffers highlights how indispensable the knowledge of this “real Cape patois” is to travellers finding themselves connecting with “up-country life”. A few parallels can be drawn between the description of *Kaaps Hollands* (Cape Dutch) in the abstract above and contemporary Kaaps Afrikaans. The qualities of the “real patois” (Cape Dutch), bares a striking resemblance to “Kaaps” – it is a fluid language with characteristics that change dependent on the context

and other circumstances. Speakers are able to use more slang terminology when the need arises, enabling them to conform to any variation in “Kaaps” speech – it is not a uniform language like the written standardised variant with individuals having variations of “Kaaps” speech forms in their repertoire. As a result, Kaaps Afrikaans speech differs between individuals and cliques, who often have their own lingo that is often used to speak in code.

Conclusion

The arrival of the slaves from the East Indian Archipelago as well as various parts of the African continent brought an influx of language to the Cape. It is in this polyglot society, that a Dutch Creole came into existence, which became the most widely spoken language in the Colony. The Muslims among the slaves adapted this spoken language into a written form – in Arabic script. Their trade lingo further developed into a Dutch creole, which became the lingua franca among the slaves, their descendants as well as the poorer farming communities outside Cape Town. Although this language was widely spoken in the Colony, it remained a lowly spoken lingo in the opinions of the Dutch language purists. The arrival of the British in the Cape brought change in the Colony. Dutch was no longer the hegemonic language as English became the new standard. The English initiated their Anglicisation of the colony through compulsory schooling, which introduced children to the hegemonic language.

Although the English introduced the Roman alphabet to the slaves and their descendants on a mass scale through mandatory education at government schools, literacy in Arabic Afrikaans remained steadfast until the twentieth century. Skills in written Arabic-Afrikaans disappeared with the death of the last Imam (Muslim priest) in the mid-1960s, who had the ability to write in the language. Irrespective of its popularity among the majority of the population, the Dutch elite viewed it as a linguistic abomination and refused to speak it. However, the continued contact they with their slaves influenced their own speech habits to the extent that visitors from Holland noticed some discrepancies. Simultaneously, the before-mentioned Dutch farming communities experienced difficulty comprehending religious Dutch texts like the Bible. In an effort at rectifying this issue, the GRA standardised Cape Dutch and the resulting language was (Early) Afrikaans. Afrikaans was portrayed as the symbol of the Afrikaner “culture” during the mid-twentieth century in an effort to disassociate it from its creole origins.

Chapter 3

The intricacies of Afrikaans speech and social space

“When I talk about language (words, sentences, etc.) I must speak the language of every day. Is this language somehow too coarse and material for what we want to say?”

(Wittgenstein quoted in Cavell, 1985:90).

Among the many uses of spoken language – the conveyance of meaning being the most obvious – is that it enables individuals to project different images of themselves in various contexts. This is often achieved by modifying their speech by changing accents as well as word choice and usage, with the aim of “fitting in” and being contextually appropriate. In order to achieve this, speakers need to be in the possession of a repertoire consisting of these different speech forms. Spoken language is popularly perceived to be a social marker which is commonly connected to a constructed identity. As a result, speakers will alternate between two (or more) versions of the same language in order to project the correct image of themselves, because how you speak plays an integral role in shaping perceptions of your character. People are very perceptive in this regard and will readily make subjective value-based judgements simply based on how you speak. Talking in a contextually inappropriate manner can convey the wrong impression, ultimately leading to the stigmatisation of the speaker. As a result, many speakers access their available speech repertoires and perform strategic dialect changes to avoid embarrassment. When most Cape Afrikaans-speakers find themselves in formal contexts – like the classroom or the lecture hall – they find it necessary to speak more standardised Afrikaans in order to project intelligence and amicability. Language purists have always regarded the Cape dialect as an inferior form of Afrikaans, spoken by people who lack the intelligence and/or motivation to speak the language “properly”. Many of the people I spoke to during the course of this project expressed frustration at the stigmatisation they face for speaking – what they view as – “regular” Afrikaans.

Paarl

The location for this research, Paarl, has a historic connection with the Afrikaans language. It forms part of the outlying farm areas outside Cape Town, where generations of slaves lived and worked on farms owned by the Dutch. It is also the site where the first steps towards standardising the dominant creole language in the Cape were made. This Dutch Creole of the slaves became so widespread among the colonists that many had trouble reading the Dutch of Holland. A group of individuals under the leadership of S.J. du Toit began the first attempts towards translating the Bible from an earlier form of Dutch into Early Afrikaans in 1872 was initiated in this town. The local newspaper, the *Paarl Post* – formerly *Die*

Afrikaanse Patriot – was the first Early Afrikaans newspaper in South Africa when it was published on 15 January 1876. However, it was ridiculed in more established Dutch and English publications for being written in the slave language. Although this language was rapidly developing into Modern Afrikaans by the early part of the twentieth century, it was still ridiculed as a creole “kitchen language”. This led to the grammarian W.S. Logerman stating, “Cape Dutch is not a language, it is a patois

Paarl has a language monument with a museum on site dedicated to the historical development of Afrikaans. This monument was built during a tumultuous time in South Africa in 1975, a year before the SOWETO riots (where many black students died) against – among other issues – racism and the introduction of Afrikaans as a compulsory language of instruction in schools. At the time, Afrikaans was viewed as the language of the oppressor and today it still struggles to shed of the taint of apartheid. Although Afrikaans is the mother-tongue of the majority of coloured people in Paarl, many do not feel a sense of pride in the Afrikaans language – as displayed by staunch Afrikaners. Quite a large number of the people here have not been to this monument and, to them, it has merely become part of the landscape. Most participants expressed a disjuncture with Standard Afrikaans because the language has historically been promoted as a white Afrikaner language:

“I have to confess though, that I grew up my whole life thinking that Afrikaans was originally the language of the Afrikaner and that my community developed a version from that. However, after just a few weeks of research and historical study, I found – to my surprise – that it’s actually the complete opposite!” (vanniekaap.com, 2016)

The Afrikaans spoken by the majority of the inhabitants of Paarl has characteristics that make it distinguishable from the hegemonic norm. The overarching majority of the town’s inhabitants (86%) are classified as coloured according to the last Census in 2011. Although many scholars and language activists have dubbed this regional dialect as Kaaps, it has become apparent throughout the process of this research that many of its speakers are unfamiliar with this name. This is why Stone (1995) – who conducted a study among coloured Afrikaans-speakers in the Cape Peninsula – states that the term Kaaps has no currency within these speech communities. Similarly, it has no currency in contemporary Paarl where coloured people use other adjectives (“normal”, “rough”, etc.) to describe their spoken Afrikaans. The biggest difference between Kaaps Afrikaans and the standardised variant are the inventive ways the language is used. Words are given new meanings, vowels are pronounced differently, one or more sounds of certain words may be left out (elision), and sentence structure is cleverly changed. All of this is done in accordance with what the speaker observes as the spoken language norm: who you speak to and where you are at any given moment influences how you speak. A repertoire can be described as “a set of ways

of speaking [which] in turn, comprise *speech styles*, on the one hand, and *contexts of discourse*, on the other, together with *relations of appropriateness* obtaining between styles and contexts” (Blommaert, 2005:13, brackets my own). Indexical interpretations are often ascribed to accents: those viewed as “normal” by some can be interpreted as intimidating by others when combined with repertoires peppered with expletives. Speakers encounter different language “norms” as they encounter various contexts: the workplace, at home, or speaking to different people in the same location. One example of this occurred during a conversation with a participant about her perceptions of spoken Afrikaans among coloured people.

During my conversation with Celeste, her elderly neighbour quickly dropped by for a chat about the birds she saw in her garden – although I suspected, judging from her suspicious glances, that she was more curious to see who Celeste’s male visitor was. All through their short *tête-à-tête* Celeste automatically began addressing the older lady in the third person as she shifted to a more “suitable” respectful Afrikaans speech. This signified that she was addressing the elderly woman with the required respect – it would be socially inappropriate to speak to an older person in a manner that would assume an age affiliation. Often the shifts between spoken language modes are subtle as speakers keep their accents while changing their vocabularies in order to “fit in” with the people around them. In this instance, Celeste changed her repertoire and modified her accent so that her vowels became more rounded. She also substituted all personal pronouns with “*Antie Mary*” to the following effect: “Aunty Mary, did Aunty Mary know that my dog almost bit aunty Mary’s cat?” This is often done as a show of respect and marks the speaker as being *ordentlik* (“decent”). I asked Celeste why she thinks she addressed her neighbour in a different way:

Me: *ek weet ek doen dit ook, maar hoekom dink jy praat jy annerste [anders] met haar?* (“I know I do it too, but why do you think you spoke to her differently?”)

Celeste: *My ouers het my geleer om respek te het vi [vir] grootmense [older people] en saam met dit gaan ñ anne [ander] manier van praat. Dit is nie asof ek nie respek het vi [vir] mense van my ouderdom nie, dis net somehow annerste [anders].* My parents taught me to respect older people and along with that goes a different way of speaking. It’s not that I don’t respect people my age, but it’s just different somehow.

Indeed, it would seem odd if she spoke to me like that and this is what makes spoken language so interesting. Quite often one individual would have different ways of speaking Afrikaans using various accents and syntaxes with the aim of “fitting in” to different contexts. These contexts vary between social

spaces, and audiences – the latter sometimes regardless of the social space. Very often a speaker can be in several contexts at the same time. The pattern of agreement among the participants is that *suiwer* (“pure”) Afrikaans is only used when and where they feel the need to convey sophistication, professionalism and approachability. Some have stated that it felt like a foreign language and that they did not feel confident enough to speak it and risk making a fool out of themselves. Conversely, *gewone* (“regular”) Afrikaans is used daily in communication with family and friends, reaffirming and strengthening kinship bonds. This “regular” Afrikaans in itself is also multifaceted in its nature as individuals have their own unique speech practices. This is because “language, like culture, offers a paradox: it is shared but must be made one’s own” (Ross, 2010:138). Speakers alter their “regular” Afrikaans vocabularies and accents as they interact with different “groups” within their social spheres, for example: respectfully addressing the elderly, or using a more abrasive Afrikaans lingo with some of their peers. Having such a fluid and adaptable language repertoire as a resource allows speakers to navigate different contexts or social spaces by appearing “cool” among friends or respectful among those who value correctness.

What is Kaaps Afrikaans?

Kaapse Afrikaans (later called *Kaaps*, “Cape Afrikaans”) is one of the three dominant spoken Afrikaans varieties in South Africa, along with *Oosgrens Afrikaans* (“Eastern Border Afrikaans”) and *Oranjerivier Afrikaans* (“Orange River Afrikaans”). Also known as Cape Afrikaans Vernacular, *Kaaps Afrikaans* – as well as Standard Afrikaans – has a comparatively close lineage to *Kaaps Hollands* (“Cape Dutch”) – the Afrikaans antecedent. This regional spoken dialect is linked by name with *Kaaps Hollands* “as an earlier layer of the Afrikaans language” (Hendricks, 2016:8). The name, *Kaaps*, was used by locals as well as foreign visitors to the Cape as a shortened form for “*Kaaps-Hollands*” and it was the most commonly spoken language among the lower classes in the Cape Colony. Cape Dutch developed among the Khoisan, the slaves and their descendants who worked on the farms and in the homes of their Dutch masters. Eastern Border Afrikaans was the spoken language of the Dutch settlers in the Eastern Cape and was “eventually selected for standardization” (Dyers, 2016:64). Orange River Afrikaans was developed among speakers of Khoisan languages “who came into contact with Dutch in the North-West part of South Africa” (Dyers, 2016:64). *Kaaps Afrikaans* is predominantly, yet in no way exclusively, spoken by working-class “coloureds” in and around Cape Town. The roots of this spoken variant – and Afrikaans in general – can be traced back to the pidgins and subsequent Dutch creole spoken among the slaves and Khoisan, that gained linguistic dominance among all the lower classes of the Colony. Cape Dutch was a sociolect rather than an ethnolect: which would have been spoken only by the slave and Khoisan

descendants. According to Gerwel (2012), the re-introduction of the term Kaaps as a name for the Cape Afrikaans variant is accredited to Adam Small. He referred to the language in which he wrote as Kaaps in the foreword of the revised edition of his collection *Kitaar my kruis*. Small described it as a “complete language with its roots in the earliest of Khoi adaptations of Mariner Dutch” (van Rensburg, 2016:54). The name Kaaps was already popularly used “during the Dutch and early English rule at the Cape, specifically in the period before the Great Trek and the establishment of the Boer republics” (Hendricks, 2016:8). This name correctly implies that this spoken variant immersed in and around Cape Town. However, this name is not known widely among Kaaps-speakers and it is most commonly used within academic circles. Many of the participants in this study – speak versions of Kaaps – stated their spoken language to be “normal”, “*plat*” (“flat”) and even coloured Afrikaans.

Kaaps Afrikaans differs from the national hegemonic Afrikaans and the other two aforementioned spoken variants in many ways which include: the flattening of vowels where *spook* (“ghost”) becomes *spoek* [spuk]; partial word pronunciation (elision) as *wanneer* becomes *wanne* (“when”). Existing Afrikaans words get new – contextually specific – meanings, for example, *minute* (“minutes”), could be a reference to time or it could simply mean “no”. Another feature of Kaaps is the “the embedding of the Afrikaans past tense form (ge-) in the English word, e.g. *ge-worry*, as well as the redundant addition of post morpheme to adjectives, e.g. *bieterere*” (Dyers, 2016:65). The inclusion of Cape Malay terminology in daily speech is one of the most notable characteristics of Kaaps Afrikaans, with words like *kanala* (“please”), *shukran* (“thank you”) and *afwan* (“it is a pleasure”). This vernacular Afrikaans has many words that are not very common in other forms of spoken Afrikaans in other parts of the country, like *anneste* (“different”), *klora* (“coloured person”), *jilly* (“jelly”), and *kappietop* (“hooded jacket”). It also has guttural swear words like *poes* (female genitals), *naai* (“a jerk” or “sex”) and *jus* (“crazy” or “sexually aroused”). It is these characteristics of Kaaps Afrikaans – especially the swear words – that often form the basis of the critique against it. Just like Afrikaans in general, Kaaps Afrikaans is a multifaceted (spoken) language. Its heterogeneity became evident when I listened to the different voices and their Afrikaans use during the transcription process. According to Hendricks (2016), the usage of Kaaps Afrikaans is characterised by dialectal differences. He states that the phonological markers may be dominant with one speaker, while the Kaaps of another speaker “is more specifically marked lexically or grammatically” (Hendricks, 2016:31). There also different forms of Kaaps as people from different financial backgrounds often tend to speak it differently, depending on the social circles the frequent. An example of this is the difference in spoken Afrikaans among the majority of the working-class and that of the middle class. However, I do caution against the idea that there are uniform Afrikaans speech

differences between these constructed “groups”. As there were participants in this research, who lived middle-class lifestyles but spoke somewhat similarly to some of the participants in the poverty-stricken areas of Paarl East.

How you speak (Kaaps) Afrikaans is dependant on the spoken forms you are often exposed to. For example, a speaker from a middle-class background may not identify with the spoken Afrikaans norm, common among her peers. She may identify more closely with friends from a working-class background and adopt their form of Afrikaans speech. Not only do we convey our own identities through spoken language, but we also portray “group” identities. As Hendricks (2016:31) states: ‘The kind of Kaaps you speak is (...) a roadmap of the cultures and subcultures you are exposed to’. There is also a difference in the spoken Afrikaans among Muslims, which includes many Islamic terms and phrases – like *salaam* (a common greeting), incorporated in and *shukran* (“thank you”) to name a few. Many of these Islamic words and phrases have been incorporated into the daily speech of Christians who have Muslim friends and family.

Kaaps Afrikaans is also used in written form by reporters in respected Standard Afrikaans newspapers. Hendricks (2016) makes an example of Peter Snyders, who wrote a column called “Kopstukke” in *Die Burger*. Currently, Nathan Trantraal writes a column in the *Rapport* weekly newspaper, with many complaints from loyal readers regarding his use of written Kaaps Afrikaans in the paper. The most prominent Kaaps newspaper is *Die Son*, which is a daily newspaper sold in the Western Cape, Northern Cape, and Eastern Cape. This newspaper is characterised by its use of colloquial language, one of which is Kaaps. The paper is sold in two regions in the Western Cape: the Cape Peninsula and the Boland. According to de Vries (2016), there are slight variations in the versions of Kaaps used in these newspapers. She states that the reports and stories in the copies sold in the Boland would have fewer markers of Kaaps in comparison to those sold on the Cape Flats. I argue that this shows that there is a notable Kaaps presence in the everyday Afrikaans speech among the coloured people I interviewed in Paarl in the Boland. Although there are some contextual differences present in the speech of individual participants – as some had more formal, Standard Afrikaans speech characteristics than others – I would not make a concrete distinction between Kaaps Afrikaans versus Boland Afrikaans as Hendricks (2016:9) argues. Especially, when taking into account the popularity of newspapers like *Die Son* in the Boland. According to de Vries (2016) the stories in *Die Son* may contain more elements of Kaaps depending on one specific day compared to others when “subjects and their stories may dictate greater prominence to an informal (Standard) Afrikaans with elements of Kaaps or other colloquial varieties” (de Vries, 2016:130). However, she does states that the language used in this paper is not always a “true” reflection

of Kaaps due to pressure on reporters to keep to deadlines, the need to translate Kaaps to the language used in the rural areas and vice versa, and a shortage in editors. Thus, it should rather be considered to be ‘an informal Afrikaans with elements of Kaaps’ (de Vries, 2016:130). However, it is also argued that English words are used in more frequency instead of “instead of their Kaaps lexical equivalent” and that “Standard Afrikaans is used in prime news and especially in sport reports” (Blignaut and Lesch, 2014:21). Thus, Standard Afrikaans still has prominence over the colloquial Afrikaans when in key stories.

“Beautiful” Afrikaans and professionalism

While walking along the busy Steenbok Street lined with low-cost municipal flats and intermittent shebeens (informal, often illegal drinking spots), I saw young teenagers crowded in front “mobiles” (tuck-shops) – a common scene in any neighbourhood in Paarl East. I passed my childhood home in the – now rundown – Parlita Park complex where young children played in the street, much to the frustration of a taxi driver who, as a result, was forced to slow down. Years ago, Ello and I became friends here and remained in contact long after my family moved away. His family could not afford to move away and subsequently stayed on as the whole area went into decline and social degradation. As a worker in the administration offices at a local college, Ello believes in the importance of being professional at work. It is required of all employees in his line of work to speak a more “standardised” Afrikaans in an effort to project professionalism and competence. Like most, he is aware of the stigma attached to the colloquial Afrikaans spoken by most of the coloured people in Paarl and as a result, he changes his accent and word choice accordingly.

After reminiscing about our nostalgic childhood days, I politely declined the beer Ello proffered and began talking about my research topic. He seemed fascinated and after pressing “play” on my recorder I was instantly taken aback when Ello switched from Afrikaans to English – albeit English with a heavy Afrikaans intonation. I have never heard him speak English and it seemed odd that he would do so in that setting – while speaking to *me*. Clearly, we had different interpretations of that specific context: I regarded it as one of our regular conversations, but the addition of the voice recorder seemed to change the dynamics and, for him, made our interaction more “official”. He later explained that English sounded more “professional” than the Afrikaans we speak. This was not an uncommon sentiment among many of the participants who stated they would rather speak English in formal contexts instead of (Standard) Afrikaans. This is often caused by self-consciousness, because they “do not feel themselves competent to speak Standard Afrikaans” (Willemse, 2016:76). This is something that I also grappled with as a

(Kaaps) Afrikaans-speaker, myself. For many participants like Ello, there is a greater disconnect from Standard Afrikaans than there is from English and as a result, they preferred to speak English during our sessions. This disconnect was summarised by another participant, who stated that most Afrikaans-speaking “coloureds” are often only familiar with (standard) English, which is taught and spoken in school only. The difference between the spoken Afrikaans at home and Standard Afrikaans is often enough to make some speakers feel self-conscious and insecure about their competency in Standard Afrikaans speech. This is why speakers, like Ello, opt to speak English when they feel comfortable enough that the context will allow it. As I told Ello about my research, he stated that he had read about Kaaps in one of the weekly Afrikaans newspapers, called *Rapport*. According to him, there was a coloured journalist who wrote about Kaaps Afrikaans *in* this colloquial language and he remarked on how strange it was to read Afrikaans. When I asked Ello for his opinion about why “coloureds” changed how they spoke Afrikaans in different contexts he stated:

Ello [speaking English]: “It’s a way of adapting [to] your environment. It is not a way of standing out or impressing people. It is a way of conducting yourself. For example, at work, if I spoke *Kaaps*, they wouldn’t understand me. It would be something different to them. It would be something strange to them. So it is more about adapting to a specific work environment than it would be to impress anyone”.

Me: “Do you speak English at work too?”

Ello: “Only when I’m dealing with English people.”

Me: “Why isn’t coloured Afrikaans decent enough for *your* work?”

Ello: “I speak with a lot of Afrikaans white people over the phone and when they hear a coloured accent, they think you can’t do your job and will *soema* [closest translation would be *out of the blue*] ask for the manager. That is avoided by speaking “boere” [controversial term for Afrikaner] Afrikaans or English.

As can be noted, Ello was already familiar with the name, Kaaps. Seven out of the twenty participants (recorded interviews) of all the participants were already familiar with the term as it has been covered extensively in articles in respected, Standard Afrikaans newspapers like *Rapport*. As mentioned in the previous section, this weekly newspaper has a columnist, called Nathan Trantraal, who writes exclusively in Kaaps Afrikaans – to the irritation of many of its readers who complain that they do not understand his use of Afrikaans. There are various Facebook pages and groups like *Vannie Kaap* and *Coloured Mentality*, dedicated to “coloured identity” where people debate and discuss issues like language and

identity. Whenever I accidentally mentioned the name “Kaaps Afrikaans during conversations with the participants, they immediately knew what I was talking about – even though they may not have been familiar with that, specific name.

For him, adapting to his specific work environment meant replacing his usual vernacular with a more Standard Afrikaans or English vocabulary. Thus, portraying an image of a capable worker because he is believed to sound more intelligent. If he spoke his everyday Afrikaans, he would run the risk of being stereotyped as inept and as having low intelligence, regardless of how educated he *might* be. This view is often also held by other coloured individuals from a more privileged background who use different forms of spoken Afrikaans in their social circles. Thus, when Ello is confronted by someone who speaks Afrikaans in a manner which implies an educated background, he modifies his speech to match theirs. When I asked Ello why he thought Kaaps Afrikaans is not preferred for formal occasions he stated in English:

Because all the textbooks all the poems all the literacy – even as Capetonians or as Western Cape people – everything we are taught is in “standardised” Afrikaans. If you go to any varsity – and I am talking about the old historic Afrikaans universities that are Potchefstroom, Stellenbosch, the old Rand University (now the University of Johannesburg), Pretoria, wherever you, go Standard Afrikaans is what they spoke, it is the language of academics. [However] when you come back to the Western Cape you fall back into that Cape Afrikaans because that’s how you grew up and that’s how people speak in the streets, but when you get back into the professional world you need to speak a Standard Afrikaans that *anyone* understands or *everyone* understands.

The majority of the participants in this study claimed to speak a more formalised, standardised Afrikaans in official or formal contexts, which include work environments where it is expected of them to do so. This is reflected in the way my father – a successful painter and renovations contractor – addresses his white clients, regardless of age, as *meneer* (“sir”) or *mevrou* (“ma’am” not “Mrs” in this context) while adopting a more “standardised” Afrikaans accent. His telephonic interactions with these clients, who always address him by his first name, are simultaneously interesting and frustrating to observe in a contemporary South African context. All personal pronouns (you, he, she, etc.) are replaced by the aforementioned titles during these interactions. His reasoning behind this is that it is more respectful to address clients in this manner and, thus, good for business. Whether this is true or not is open for debate, but the difference in his respectful speech towards coloured/black clients and white clients is quite apparent. However, he maintained that his *huistaal* [home language] would not be suitable for business purposes.

My neighbour expressed a similar awareness of the inferior status of her “normal” Afrikaans speech in the business environment. A single mother of four, Elwilné shares a fairly large house (divided into two apartments) with her sister and her spouse. She works as a sales assistant at a well-known clothing retail store in the local mall. She is aware of the prejudices attached to coloured Afrikaans speech:

“Ek is nou jammer om dit so te stel, maar mense wat “beter af” is praat ñ suiwer Afrikaans, want... ek dit dit gaan alles oor status, want mense kyk neer op die Afrikaans wat ons praat. Wanne [wanneer] jy suiwer Afrikaans praat soos hulle, dan kan jy maklik inpas by society [die samelewing]. Dit lyk asof mense vir my dadelik recognition [erkenning] gee wanneer ek hulle approach [benader] in suiwer Afrikaans, maar as ek hulle met dié “wilde ”Afrikaans approach [benader], sal hulle my net kyk en vra “wa [waar] kom sy dan nou vandaan?”. Dadelik sal hulle die indruk kry dat jy ñ “sekere tipe” is, maar dit is nie altyd die geval nie. Verstaan? Dit was altyd net oor mense se persepsie van jou, in plaas van wie jy rerig is.

(“I’m sorry to phrase it like this, but people who are financially “better off” speak purer Afrikaans, because...I think it is all about status because people look down on the Afrikaans that we speak. When you speak pure Afrikaans as they do, then you can easily fit into society. It would seem that people immediately give me recognition when I approach them in pure Afrikaans. However, if I approach someone speaking this wild Afrikaans, they would stare at me and think “where the hell did *she* come from?” They immediately have this impression of you and they will think you are a certain type, but this is not always the case. Understand? It’s always been about people’s perceptions about you instead of who you really are”).

In her response, she highlights the popular preconceived notions that people hold about coloured people and their daily speech. In an effort to avoid unfavourable judgement, she feels required to speak like “them”: whom she described as “Afrikaners and pretentious ‘coloureds’”. She connected economic status (“people who are better off”) with forms of Afrikaans-speech, and there is a degree of truth to her sentiment as social circles and physical contexts have an effect on the manner in which we speak. For the most part, people who live middle-class lives seldom move in the same circles as those who live in poverty and as a result, there are often (but not always) small differences in accents and vocabularies. That, however, does not mean they cannot alter their spoken language in order to “fit in” with different cliques or to conform to a different language “norm”. This is why Elwilné was able to change how she spoke in order to ensure acceptance into “their” society. In his study on the Afrikaans speech habits of coloured people in the Cape Peninsula, Stone (1995) argued that middle-class “coloureds” speak a *more* “standardised” Afrikaans in comparison to spoken Afrikaans used among the working-class. However,

Afrikaans is a heterogeneous language and its speakers have diverse speech habits, which means there are middle-class people speak Kaaps and working-class people who speak a more standardised Afrikaans. Kaaps Afrikaans, itself, is diverse with friendship cliques sharing their own secret codes, teenage boys adapt words and phrases from the gangsters' *sabela* – lingo of the Numbers Gang – which includes the (now) popular term “*awe*”, while many of the older generations use a more reserved form of speech. I encountered many variations of Kaaps speech while interacting with the participants in this study and – as someone who grew up in Paarl East – this came as no surprise. Repertoires have always varied between individuals as people are equipped with different speech forms, taught through frequent interactions with people they encounter.

Thus, the linguistic resources people are equipped with, differ between individuals as they become equipped with different speech modes while interacting with, cliques, households and sometimes residential areas. This means that one individual uses various speech modes depending on the context. How you speak Afrikaans is determined by personal choice combined with your willingness to conform to your interlocutors' speech. Altering how you speak Afrikaans will enable you to successfully negotiate social spaces and “fit in”.

“It is almost frowned upon by people that are qualified...”

Quite often, people (like Elwilné) who move in different social circles use styles that enable them to fit into those circles: they may mimic each other's vocabularies, accents and project an acceptable image. Ochs and Schieffelin, (2006:182) argue that people take “an active role in constructing [a] language that is most useful to their needs and appropriate to their social status”. The idea that her Afrikaans vernacular is not suitable for the work environment seems logical when taking into account the superior status of Standard Afrikaans. In his study on the expression of coloured identity in Cape Town, Adhikari recorded similar sentiments expressed by a middle-class coloured man who stated that “although *kombuis* [kitchen] Afrikaans was his home language, he felt ashamed of using it when speaking to whites or ‘respectable people’ as it would mark him as ‘low class’” (Adhikari, 2006:484, brackets my own). Thus, choosing how we verbally express ourselves is vital when striving for acceptance in a more “sophisticated” context. Elwiné is aware of this low status of her daily Afrikaans speech and states:

“I will say again that it has a lot to do with society. I would approach people (customers) at work in *suiwer* (“pure”) Afrikaans – if I can phrase it like that – but would speak normally with my colleagues. However, if I spoke to the customers in the way I spoke to my colleagues, they would look at me as if I am mad. If I were to speak in pure Afrikaans, the client would say that I provided a very good

service. The only place where I speak this “pure” Afrikaans is at work, but I would speak like I speak now everywhere else”.

In the years that I have known her, I always admired how eloquently Elwilné spoke Afrikaans and it is puzzling that she views her “normal” speech as offensive to (specifically white) customers. Elwilné normally speaks a version of Kaaps Afrikaans which is fairly common among people who regard themselves as middle-class. It is characterised by “flat” vowel pronunciation and the contextually based assignment of new meanings for existing words, but her accent is decidedly classy. In this instance, Kaaps Afrikaans is the “normal” speech as it is the most commonly spoken form of Afrikaans in Paarl East. Using formalised speech among friends or colleagues would seem out of place. Joseph (2004:39) states that we read “the identity of people with whom we come into contact based on very subtle features of behaviour, among which those of language are particularly central”. As we do this, we determine what the contextual speech rules are: which form of address would be appropriate for our interlocutor. Thus, repertoires “allow people to deploy certain linguistic resources more or less appropriately in certain contexts” (Blommaert, 2005:13). Amy shared an example that illustrates the importance of knowing when to use specific forms of speech. She lives with her parents – both teachers – in an area called Mountain View. She stated how showing different kinds of respect requires different forms of speech and the importance of identifying them.

Me: what do you think could be the reasons why people speak differently in different situations?

Amy: I speak *hoë* (“high”) Afrikaans with my boss at work, because it shows a level of respect, and also I think she expects you to speak properly to her. I can’t speak to her in the same way I might speak to my friends. Whereas I am more at ease with my friends by being myself. I think it boils down to respect - not that I don’t respect my friends. The only reason I speak to her and my previous managers like that is because they’re in higher positions. I would also speak differently to older people compared to younger people or to my friends.

Making value-based judgements on a person’s character purely based on how they speak is nothing new. In his study on coloured identity within the period 1910-1994, Adhikari (2006) states that coloured Afrikaans speech was popularly denounced as sub-standard in comparison with hegemonic Afrikaans. He argues that the Afrikaans spoken mostly by the “coloured community and variously referred to as Cape, Capey, *Gamtaal* (the language of Ham) or *Kombuis* (kitchen) Afrikaans has, for example, customarily been stigmatised as a mark of social inferiority” (Adhikari, 2006:483). In the past, this Afrikaans form was used in offensive cartoons featured in prominent Afrikaans newspapers as a source of humour and comedic relief. This confirmed “the Afrikaner in his prejudiced belief that the coloured

is culturally and linguistically a buffoon” (Devarenne, 2010:394). Someone who may be part of the society Elwilne alluded to is Tasha.

I met with Tasha at her parents’ home in a middle-class suburb, close to where I live, called Charleston Hill. We settled on the *stoep* (“veranda”) overlooking her mother’s prized garden. Tasha shared with me that her mother hails from a respectable family in Malmesbury and that her grandfather was Dutch – she was very proud of this. As a result, her mother is fluent in Dutch as well as “Standard” Afrikaans. According to Tasha, her parents raised her brother and her with English as their first language and *hoë* (“high”/ “Standard”) Afrikaans as their second language. Her reference to “standard” Afrikaans as being “high” serves as an indication that she holds it in high regard in comparison with what she referred to as Kaaps. As a student at another university, Tasha described herself as an educated woman and expressed a distinct distaste towards coloured Afrikaans, stating her “association with Kaaps has been very negative, because people tend to...either in some communities it is frowned upon if you speak like that”. She stated in a definitive manner that (coloured) people who are “qualified” or have acquired a higher education, frown upon ‘Kaaps’ and those who speak it. There is a negative stigma attached to Kaaps as it is believed to be a language spoken by uneducated, working-class (coloured) people who lack the ability or motivation to speak properly. Historically, Kaaps and its antecedents – the Khoisan trade pidgin(s) and, later, *Kaaps Hollands* – were perceived to be lowly languages by the Dutch elite, who possessed the social power to determine the status of a language. Willemse (2016) states that “what the norm is, and whose language form is considered polished and acceptable, is determined by social power and economic interest.” (Willemse, 2016:75). It was never in the interests of the racially biased apartheid dispensation to promote the language interests of “non-whites”. Their focus was to promote the racial and cultural superiority of the Afrikaner and (Standard) Afrikaans. Although white racial superiority is not promoted in this democratic government, the superior status of Standard Afrikaans – the symbol of Afrikanerdom – over “regional dialects” like Kaaps Afrikaans perseveres. The majority of the participants in this study who identify as middle-class, like Tasha, have internalised this belief about the superiority of Standard Afrikaans.

However, Kaaps Afrikaans has its value in certain contexts and the qualified people Tasha mentioned, would not hesitate to utilise this form of Afrikaans when the need arises – specifically when trying to establish a form of commonality with those who speak it every day. She has personally seen how her uncle – a union lawyer – used this “coloured” Afrikaans (phrase used by Tasha) in negotiations with factory workers, even though he does not speak it at home. Her distaste for it compounded by bad experiences at school in Stellenbosch, where they lived before moving to Paarl.

[Tasha speaking English]: For me, I think the kind of identity people take, grounds which language they associate with. I found it extremely discriminating at Rhenish High School when I was almost questioned by other coloured girls who were there from Grade 1 till Grade 10 who questioned why I don't speak *that* dialect. Because I came from a school in the Cape Flats and I mean Belhar Primary isn't really on the Cape Flats and it was the first coloured school that had English as a mother-tongue or first home language. My parents wanted me to go to that school particularly because of its history and because they had ballet, they had violin, they had gymnastics, they had tennis. Everything which I have done which was not available normally at a public school. And that is the problem: if you seek opportunities then people frown upon you for taking that approach.

As a result of her inability to reproduce certain orders of indexicality, Tasha faced this stigmatisation. She did not conform to their expectations and paid a price for it. The “othering” and stigmatisation Tasha experienced because of the way she speaks mirrors how she views the Afrikaans spoken by other coloured people. Such preconceived notions about how a person should speak Afrikaans because of their skin colour and where they are from is not uncommon. A similar sentiment arose when I had a conversation with a friend from Bellville. Speaking a more “standardised” Afrikaans while living in Belhar seemed contradictory to the schoolgirls who grew up in Stellenbosch and they teased Tasha for being pretentious. I was similarly confronted for mimicking “the Cape accent” by a friend from Cape Town who reasoned that all the coloured people from Paarl speak Afrikaans like the “white people who live there in that town”. This triggered a series of emotions ranging from confusion to anger and puts into question why the close similarities in our accents made him question my “linguistic sincerity”. Why is it important that there remains a difference between our accents as to indicate different language communities (Cape Town and Paarl)?

Same Difference?

Spoken language is a performance and it could not exist without the speakers. These speakers may utilise the same language differently within the same “speech community”. This in itself puts the concept of a language community under question as it implies a set of linguistic practices shared by all individuals in a specific “group” where everyone has the same speech habits. Jourdan and Taute (2005:15) argue that “it is an inherent characteristic of language, as a shared competence that continually emerges and renews itself through communicative interaction, that it is constantly changing, and that no speech community, nor even the speech repertoire of an individual, is completely uniform”. Blommaert (2005:215) describes a speech community as consisting of people “who produce, share, and exchange orders of indexicality”. He argues that one individual can be part of many speech communities at the same time. Equally, Morgan

(2004:3) states that a speech community “is the product of prolonged interaction among those who operate within shared belief and value systems regarding their own culture, society, and history as well as their communication with others”. Therefore, it would make sense for the speech habits of individuals to vary between contexts.

One of the participants offered a theory in explanation for his speech habits. Enver is a long-time friend who works as a technician at a pathology laboratory in the Strand, said “I have to admit that I would speak differently with the person I feel comfortable with. I would be more relaxed. I don’t know if it might be that I judge that person at that moment, but I know exactly with whom I can speak what type of Afrikaans”. This was a striking comment in a context where Enver did not seem relaxed or comfortable and this in itself was odd. Enver and I had known each other for over eight years and had spent quite a lot of time socialising with other friends in various restaurants. As a group of friends, we had lively debates and arguments about various topics – among other topics – whether Adidas is really a better brand than Nike. This was the nature of our friendship and the expectation was that a similarly animated discussion would take place when I chose one of our usual hangouts as the venue. However, the dynamics changed after I pressed record on my device, making sure that he noticed, to indicate that the interview/conversation started. I purposefully did this to see whether this elicited any change in the way he spoke and I wasn’t disappointed. His responses became measured and reserved, almost as if we did not have a friendship. This was intriguing and I questioned him about this sudden change.

Me: the way you’re speaking right now is very different from how you usually speak. It seems very formal. Why do you speak differently now? I’ve picked up that you have a more formal tone to your replies.

Enver: Oh definitely. I’m doing this because the work that you’re doing now is important to your future. You have to do this in order for you to earn a master’s degree. So, I feel that people won’t understand if I speak how I normally speak and I have the tendency to get excited and then I would start speaking really fast. I also speak like this because I want people to understand what I am saying and because I respect what you do.

Me: So, speaking formally is better suited for the occasion?

Enver: Yes, that’s right. Because your master’s degree focusses on Afrikaans, I feel that I need to speak “correctly” and “*decently*” [with emphasis]. I do this out of respect for the language and what you’re trying to do.

Thus, he believed that his “normal” (colloquial) speech was unsuitable for the occasion because of its informality. One of the characteristics of colloquial Afrikaans is that it has a “high degree of linguistic borrowing from other languages, particularly English; in this sense as well, [...] unlike Standard Afrikaans, whose borders have been more closely policed” (Devarenne, 2010:390). Also, unlike spoken Standard Afrikaans, this everyday speech may contain abrasive terminology.

In an area close to where one of my extended family members live is a *smokkel jaart* (shebeen) ran by a man called “Lucky”, who used to work as a machine operator at a big cigarette manufacturing company. The factory eventually closed down and left many unemployed and forced a few resourceful individuals – like Lucky – became entrepreneurs. A friend knew Lucky personally and introduced me to him after explaining to me that Lucky was quite talkative. He allowed me to stand behind the counter and observe how he interacts with his customers with the condition that I did not get in the way and that he frisks (body search) me before I leave. He permitted me to do so on a Sunday – Fridays and Saturdays were too busy. Lucky was calm and soft-spoken when we first met, but turned into someone else when the shebeen opened for business. He used different Afrikaans speech forms with different people: he could *sabela* (isiZulu word meaning “respond”) to gangsters who used gang lingo, speak lovingly to his wife and turn back to me and speak “normally”. Successfully using these different speech modes interchangeably is vital in ensuring that everything runs smoothly and any mistake – speaking lovingly with the gangsters or speaking gangster lingo with me – would lead to confusion and embarrassment. Most strikingly, he was profusely used vicious epithets at people who drank the beer too fast and vomited on the floor. When I asked him if he always spoke to his customers like that he stated:

Lucky: “*Kykhie ek moet. As eki skeli sal die mense my virri gat vat. Jy moet wys wie is baas vannie plaas!*” (Look, I have to. If I don’t scold them, these people won’t take me seriously. You have to show them who is in control around here!)

Me: *Wat as iemand vi jou kwaad raak?* (What if someone gets angry at you?)

Lucky: “*Nee dan moet hulle fokkof van my jaart af.*” (Then they should get the fuck off of my property).

To *skel* is potentially dangerous because it can easily lead to a fight, but because he is in a position of power in his own shebeen, it is seen as necessary. Thus, in the process of *skelling* he reasserts his position as the own and boss of the shebeen. Ross (2010:152) states that “hints carried in tone, gesture, intonation, vocabulary, forms of speech are read as indicative of a person’s social rank and put downs consequent on the reading may be cruel”. This is why his reaction seemed unnecessarily aggressive to me even

though the people sitting in the shebeen did not seem to mind – he was the owner and he could speak however he pleased. Had he behaved like that in a different context people would have been shocked. Lucky admitted that he has great difficulty speaking Standard Afrikaans and blames it on his lack of interest in reading since his youth. He states he has trouble with the more complicated, long words which seem so foreign to him. He is one of many who struggle with Standard Afrikaans and – also – English, because both “are the languages of power in bureaucracies, and both are imbued with racialised, class and status hierarchies that present formidable barriers to many in working-class communities” (Ross, 2010:152). Four other participants admitted to having trouble reading and understanding complicated Standard Afrikaans. As a result it does not form part of their speech repertoires – this possibly puts them at a disadvantage when seeking employment. According to Blommaert (2005) through indexicality, “every utterance tells something about the person who utters it - man, woman, young, old, educated, from a particular region, or belonging to a particular group, etc. - and about the kind of person we encounter - we make character judgements all the time, and labels such as ‘arrogant’, ‘serious’, ‘funny’, ‘self-conscious’, or ‘business-like’ are based almost exclusively on how people communicate with us” (Blommaert, 200:11). As a result of their inability to project images of themselves as respectable or decent, because their spoken language is often perceived to be a marker for the opposite. As stated previously, coloured people and their ways of Afrikaans speech have often been placed at the bottom of such hierarchies. Many still feel slighted by this and express an outright dislike of Standard Afrikaans and those coloured people who choose to speak it:

Chad: “Afrikaans is a *kak* (“crap”) language. I never liked speaking like the *boere* (in reference to white Afrikaners) like some *aansitterage* (“ostentatious”) “coloureds”. I speak *regte* (“real”) coloured Afrikaans”.

Fairclough (1989) argues that there are always pockets of resistance against the hegemonic language and that it is not always widely accepted. He makes an example of spoken Standard English and how it is not widely accepted among people of other dialects and those who speak other languages. He states that people are aware that “it is someone else’s language and not theirs, despite claims to the contrary” (Fairclough, 1989:58). Chad felt so opposed to Standard Afrikaans that I unwittingly began to speak in a heavier Kaaps accent. I noticed this while I was transcribing the conversation, matching his speech. We were standing outside his municipal flat in Lantana, watching a group of young men gambling under a tree. I could hear that many of the people in the area spoke like Chad. However, I did notice that one or two young mothers spoke English to their children – a common trend among young parents in Paarl East. Chad explained that he referred to his daily Afrikaans as “real” because he grew up speaking it: it

is his everyday language. To him, Standard Afrikaans “felt” like an alien language “in his mouth”. He stated that he felt “stupid” when he tried to speak “like that”. This self-consciousness or discomfort made sense. As my younger brother would always tell me, “*nee my broe, djy hou vi’ jou wat djy nie issie!*” (“stop trying to be something you’re not”) whenever I speak in a more formalised accent at home.

Conclusion

Speech is ultimately a performance and we, the speakers, play the dual role of actors and audience as we engage in conversation with our interlocutors. As social actors, we will always be judged by our interlocutors. *Who* our interlocutors are will always dictate *how* we speak. The coloured Afrikaans-speakers who participated in this study are very aware of this as they navigate various social spaces that often have different language norms. Although these differences in spoken Afrikaans abound, there is a general consensus that Standard Afrikaans is the language ideal. This chapter focussed on individual coloured speakers’ ideas about spoken Afrikaans in different contexts. Those who expressed a dislike for coloured Afrikaans admitted that it has some value in specific contexts.

Chapter 4

Socio-political power and language normativity

“Ek deal al vi jare met mense wie dink omdat ek inne dialect skryf of praat ‘it somehow vi hulle die right gie om my opinions te kan dismiss. Die insinuation being dat omdat ekkie algemene beskaafde Afrikaans praat, ek somehow less intelligent is. Want iemand wat so dink is culturally solipsistic”

(For years I have dealt with people who believe they have the right to dismiss my opinions because I speak and write in a dialect. The insinuation being that I am less intelligent because I don’t speak the popular civilised Afrikaans. Anyone who believes this is culturally solipsistic) Trantraal writing in *Rapport*, 21 December 2014 (translation my own).

There is nothing more universal than the human habit of focussing on difference: it is, after all, how we make sense of the world. We invent social constructs like “races”, and “cultures” with the aim of highlighting difference and forming social, racial as well as cultural hierarchies. In order to achieve this, these constructs are treated as unchanging objects belonging to specific “groups” – and where groups are formed, there will be those who are excluded. Whoever possesses the political and economic power in any context, determines who is included as well as which qualities are required to become a member. Language is an example of such a quality. It is often ordered into hierarchies with language at the top, dialect in an intermediary position and, then patois on the lowest level. Afrikaans has been compartmentalised in such a hierarchical manner: with Standard Afrikaans as the ideal and the Kaaps Afrikaans (“Kaaps”), Orange River Afrikaans and, Eastern Border Afrikaans regional dialects beneath it. Standard Afrikaans or – rather – Afrikaans, in general, has years been depicted as the language of the Afrikaner. In the process, specifically, the “Kaaps” variant was depicted as a lesser *kombuistaal* (kitchen language). This is not because it is only spoken in the kitchen, but because it still carries the slave stigma of *Kaaps Hollands* (Cape Dutch), which it markedly resembles.

Kaaps Afrikaans: a contemporary version of Kaaps Hollands?

During the nineteenth-century in Cape Town, “Afrikaans [...] was seen as a [language of slave descendants].” (David, 1990:38, brackets my own). By the beginning of the 20th century Cape Dutch – now renamed as (Early) Afrikaans as Afrikaners began to standardise it – remained a lowly slave language in the opinions of language purists in the Union. This connection with its creole history hampered the image of (Early) Afrikaans as a “legitimate” language, suitable to be the language of the Afrikaner. However, this changed with the advent of a nationalist dispensation whose racialised politics promoted the superiority of white citizens with (Standard) Afrikaans as the symbol for Afrikaner

nationalism. This caused a great rift between this language and the majority of its speakers (“coloureds”), who officially became second-class citizens who spoke inferior versions of the language. Le Cordeur (2011) also provides another reason for the difference in Afrikaans speech used by “coloureds” and Afrikaners. He states that *bruinmense* (“brown people”) never really identified with white people as a result the role they played in colonisation, slavery and apartheid. He continues:

“Omdat daar vir baie lank nie formele kontak tussen bruin- en witmense was nie, was daar baie min beïnvloeding, gevolglik het die variëteite van Afrikaans naas standardafrikaans voortgegaan om te bestaan” (Le Cordeur, 2011:773)

In the quote above Le Cordeur states that the Afrikaans language variants continued to exist alongside Standard Afrikaans, because there was little [language] influence from white people as there were no formal contact between them and brown people. The only Standard Afrikaans influence was provided during Afrikaans lessons at school. Similar to the British, who used compulsory schooling to advance their anglicisation efforts during the nineteenth-century, the apartheid government introduced Standard Afrikaans as the hegemonic language to all in the Union of South Africa. Today, Standard Afrikaans is still taught as the “correct” form of the language in Afrikaans medium schools, to children who speak a different version of the language as soon as they leave the classroom. Adhikari (2006) states that until recently, when the notion of the creole nature of Afrikaans gained popularity, “there was a widespread acceptance within the coloured community of white, especially Afrikaner, denigration of *kombuis* Afrikaans as a *vulgar patois*.” (Adhikari, 2006:483). Out of all the participants, Gabby, could not mask her disdain for “Kaaps”. She is one of two participants – the other is Amy – who was raised by parents who are Afrikaans-teachers. Gabby truly believed that “Kaaps” was marker for social inferiority, thus she was proud of the “high” Afrikaans her mother speaks.

Me: I have to ask you. You said your mother is an Afrikaans teacher (teacher who taught the language Afrikaans), is it the same Afrikaans she uses daily or does she speak the Standardised Afrikaans “normally”?

Gabby: You know that was actually one of the challenges that my mom faced daily as a teacher. One of the factors, why she resigned from teaching, was that my mom spoke “high” Afrikaans.

Me: The standardised?

Gabby: Yes. Even the teachers who she worked with struggled with the standardised Afrikaans. When she would speak to teachers, they themselves didn’t understand that [version of Afrikaans] because

she would be hired at schools that were English often or she taught at schools in very poor communities on the Cape Flats like Bonteheuwel, Uitsig Primary, (uhm... what are the other schools) ...uhm Belville, but it's very poor schools like quintile 1 schools. And where Kaaps is their standard and where she has to now teach a standardised [Afrikaans]. I remember helping her with her marking and so. There is a big gap in the writing that as a teacher you have to almost like reach out to the learner and take him away from the community's form of language to a language that is "appropriate" [here she mimed quotation marks] based on the curriculum.

The majority of the people I spoke to during pre-arranged conversations or during happenstance chats in Paarl East have internalised the idea that their mode of Afrikaans-speech was inferior. This is why our neighbour complained that the coloured newscaster did not speak Afrikaans *mooi genoeg* ("beautifully enough") when they pronounced words too "flatly". This is interesting as she speaks Afrikaans in a similar "flat" manner. When I asked how she would have preferred the newscaster to speak she stated that he should speak like the "boere" – this is a controversial label directed at all white people, not just farmers.

Who determines the language norm?

The status of "a" language is determined by the socio-political status of its speakers. Those in power control popular perceptions about language standards and norms through, for example, the education system and by controlling the narrative in the media. Their language – traditionally, Standard English/French/Portuguese – becomes the dominant language over all the spoken languages of the lower classes. These lower classes are subsequently forced to come to terms with the hegemonic language in and would often add it to their language repertoire, reserving it for communication with the dominant classes. This situation is common in colonial contexts where inequality is rife. When the Dutch ruled the Cape Colony, their language was promoted as the only legitimate language in the colony. Similarly, the English language became dominant over Dutch and the indigenous languages when the British colonised the Cape. The language(s) of those they ruled were never considered polished enough to be viewed as on par with their language. The dominant classes avoided speaking these languages and stigmatised those who did. This is because these languages had negative values attached to them in the specific context of the Cape. The languages of the slaves – in all probability – did not have such a low status in their countries of origin, but as a result of their slave status in the Colony, they were regarded as lowly slave lingo in comparison to the European language of their masters. *Kaaps Hollands* ("Cape Dutch") was the dominant language among the lower classes throughout these periods of European governance in the Cape Colony.

However, it remained a low-status language as a result of its association with the proletariat which consisted mostly of Khoisan and slave descendants.

“At a lecture, delivered at the South African Public Library on 29 April 1882, the colonial linguist, Dr. Theophilus Hahn, not only used this label [patois], but indicated that, although this Cape Dutch patois was “phonetically Teutonic, it is psychologically essentially a Hottentot idiom” (Davids, 1990:37).

This extract of a lecture that was delivered in the latter half of the nineteenth century highlights the (mostly negative) race dynamics of language politics in at the time. *Kaaps Hollands*, was plainly described as a as a “Hottentot” idiom despite being a Germanic language. Thus, its association with the Khoisan, blemished its Germanic heritage. Davids (1990) states that this dominant negative rhetoric of Cape Dutch and Early Afrikaans “contributed considerably to Afrikaans ultimately acquiring the derogatory nicknames of “kombuistaal” (kitchen language) and “Hotnotstaal” (hotnot is a derogatory name for Khoisan)” (Davids, 1990:38). Graber (2007) makes an example of Fanakalo or Fanagalo, which is a pidgin language used heavily among mineworkers. It was for a long time derogatively referred to as “Kitchen Kaffer”. Graber argues that “what counts as “kitchen language” at the level of register includes not a single discrete or well-defined register, but rather a variety of practices” (Graber, 2007:156). This heterogeneity is a characteristic Kaaps Afrikaans as it differs between individuals, friendship groups, and towns. Thus, “what counts as “kitchen language” at the level of register includes not a single discrete or well-defined register, but rather a variety of practices” (Graber, 2007:155). Speech is often context based as we speak differently in different contexts. How you speak to your friends is often different from how you speak to your parents, which could also differ from how you speak to your siblings. This is a characteristic of speech in general, among people from different backgrounds, who speak different languages. Quite often, a difference in speech is often accompanied by a difference in demeanour as speech is ultimately a performance.

We portray different versions of ourselves as we adapt our speech, while we move through contexts and come into contact with different people, enabling us to “fit in” with our interlocutors. However, all speakers are not equally equipped with the same language repertoire. For example, my university education has exclusively been in English. As a result, I was to be placed in a room with Afrikaans-speaking academics, I would be at a disadvantage because I am not equipped with the vocabulary to converse with them as – I am under the impression that – my formal Afrikaans would not suffice, because it is not academic enough. Blommaert (2005) defines indexical meaning as “social meaning, interpretive

leads between what is said and the social occasion in which it is being produced” (Blommaert, 2005:11). He argues that indexical meaning creates language norms: how language should be used in specific contexts. This enables us to make character judgements – their intelligence, upbringing – based purely on how people speak. Thus, Blommaert (2005) makes an example of the pronunciation of the letter “r” in what he refers to as New York English, where some people pronounced the letter and others did not, according to their (social) backgrounds. New Yorkers were aware of this and these features became indexes of large patterns of social stratification in society” (Blommaert, 2005:12). This stratification was, at times, apparent among the participants in this study. Many of the people who identified as middleclass, distanced themselves from those who spoke “*flat*” (Kaaps) Afrikaans and many of the participants who spoke this “*flat*” Afrikaans them as “pretentious”. This is because (the more) formalised speech of many of the middle-class participants, had negative values connected to it in specific contexts. For example, in contexts where colloquial Afrikaans is the “norm”, using formalised speech could lead to stigmatisation. Kaaps Afrikaans is often described as a sociolect because of its perceived connection with only the working-class in Cape Town. Hendricks (2016) argues that it is spoken by people from different backgrounds, and therefore claiming it to be a state that it as “a marker of Coloured identity has, therefore, no solid base” (Hendricks, 2016:10). I agree that it is a shared language among people from diverse backgrounds, however, it would prove difficult to break the stereotype.

Despite attempts by the GRA to “legitimise” Early Afrikaans as a “white” language after the establishment of the Union 1910, it remained a lowly creole in the eyes of language purists. However, this changed with the advent of another political dispensation whose racialised politics promoted the superiority of white Afrikaners with (Standard) Afrikaans as the symbol of their nationalism in 1948. This caused a great rift between this language and the majority of its speakers (“coloureds”), who officially became second-class citizens who spoke inferior versions of the language. Today, Standard Afrikaans remains the hegemonic form of the language in South Africa and the distance between it and the majority of its working-class speakers in and around Cape Town seems just as significant as it had been in the past. Their spoken “Kaaps” Afrikaans has become a marker for a host of generalized preconceived notions, which include laziness. As a result, many of these speakers opt to speak the “proper” Afrikaans – they were taught in school – when the occasion requires them to. Doing this enables them to project the preferred image, increasing the odds of creating the desired impression and “fitting in”.

Popularly described as *kombuistaal* (“kitchen language”) or *gamtaal* (“language of Ham”), “Kaaps” has for years been regarded as a lower form of the Afrikaans language in a similar way that Cape Dutch was

perceived as the lower form of the Dutch language. The popular perception of Kaaps Afrikaans is that it is a caricature of Standard Afrikaans, it has for years been associated with “the so-called ‘typical humour of the coloured person’” (Willemse, 2016:75). This is reflected in the cartoons and jokes featured in prominent Afrikaans newspapers where “Kaaps” and the images of coloured comical figures are used to convey jokes and remarks on current issues. According to popular belief, the “Kaaps” speaker is considered immature, passive, and semi-skilled with an inability to understand or appreciate complexity” (Willemse, 2016:75). Many middle-class coloured research participants in Paarl actively distance themselves from this regional dialect and argue that they never speak it – even though, there are some elements of it in their speech. Standard Afrikaans is a prestigious dialect and speaking it, brings with it certain values: you appear more intelligent, approachable, and – more importantly – you exude *ordentlikheid* (“decency”). This sentiment came across in my conversation with Amy, who was proud of being raised to speak Afrikaans “correctly”:

Amy: it definitely boils down to how you were raised. Now, if you look at my personal situation: I was raised to speak “real” Afrikaans.

Me: is it because your father is the Afrikaans teacher at a high school?

Amy: hmm (in an agreeing fashion). He raised us to speak properly.

Me: what do you mean?

Amy: He taught us to not make up our own words and not to speak so “flat” (plat) as we (me included) do. I feel that plays a big role. However, I also believe that how you feel with a person at that moment also plays a role (voice trails off).

Many “Kaaps”-speakers are aware of this and they often alternate between their daily Afrikaans speech and a more “standardised” spoken form when they encounter people who speak a more standardised Afrikaans, like Amy. They do this to avoid stigma and marginalisation.

Similarities between Kaaps and Cape Dutch

Kaaps Afrikaans has more in common with *Kaaps Hollands* than just a shared name. Similar to its antecedent, Kaaps Afrikaans is the spoken language of the marginalised lower classes of the Cape. The image of a language is determined by the perceptions of its speakers and vice versa. Historically “coloureds” have been a marginalised community under white rule. This becomes apparent when taking into account how “coloured people have effectively been written out of the narrative and marginalised to

a few throw-away comments scattered around the text” (Adhikari, 2013:1). Similarly, Cape Dutch-speakers lived a life of hardship as the slaves of the Dutch and the British until the abolishment of slavery in 1834. As *Kaaps Hollands* was the lingua franca of the slaves and Khoisan, Kaaps Afrikaans – today – is the language of the lower classes of the Cape population: marginalised people, living on the fringes of the city. Those who speak Kaaps Afrikaans are criticised for language mixing as the *ge* is commonly attached to English words – for example *gecharge*, *gejump* and *gekill* – as the language continues to change. The grounds for this stigma is often based on its speakers comparatively abundant incorporation of English words in their daily speech, often shifting completely to English in mid-sentence, for example:

“*Ek is soe ongelukkig met hoe sake uitgedraai het*, but you know, things will get better” (I am so unhappy with how things turned out, ...).

Kaaps Afrikaans is also characterized by the incorporation of many Cape Muslim Afrikaans words and phrases like “*ghaniemand* (nobody: Standard Afrikaans = *niemand*); *ghawietenskap* (used in the same sense of ‘knowledge’; Standard Afrikaans = *kennis*)” (Davids, 1991:43). A few years ago, I became acquainted with a fellow student who hailed from the Netherlands. Having always had an interest in the Dutch language, because I could understand many of the words. I shared this with her and she agreed that there are many similarities between these languages, especially the way it is spoken among coloured people. I asked what she meant and she stated our pronunciation seemed more Dutch-like than Standard Afrikaans. As “Kaaps” speakers incorporate English words and names like “flat”, “Natalie” and “cat” into their daily speech, they pronounce the letter “a” with a Dutch accent and it becomes an “e” sound (flet, Netalie and cet). Similarly to Dutch, the “d” consonant is also devoiced and it becomes a “t” sound, as *hond* (“dog”) becomes *hont*, the English word “blond” is pronounced as *blont*, etcetera. I argue that these – and many others – are Cape Dutch creole characteristics which have survived in the speech habits of generations of, predominantly, (working-class) “coloureds” in the Cape. What I have provided here is my interpretation of how I and many other people – in and around Cape Town – speak and it is not intended as a linguistic analysis, for which I am not trained. These language characteristics make “Kaaps” Afrikaans and its speakers unique among the other Afrikaans variants and their speakers. However, it is this uniqueness that forms the basis for the discrimination aimed towards coloured Kaaps Afrikaans-speakers who, as a result, actively try to avoid stigmatisation by performing dialectical shifts when they identify the need to do so. One of the participants, called Clement, highlighted the importance of adapting to different contexts in order to avoid discrimination. He often switched between Afrikaans and English:

The thing is when we all grow up in poor areas...we speak the same coloured Afrikaans...you know, in the scheme [this is in reference to government housing]. *O's praat dieselle taal en o's gebruik mos dieselle "slang" en die selle manier van dinge sê. Baie van ons beweeg yt ons omgewings en dan werk hulle in ander environments. Hulle gan university toe en dan pas hulle aan by dai mense en hoe hulle praat. Soe kan hulle success behaal. Wanne hulle by die huis kom praat hulle gewoonlik weer reg.*

("we speak the same language and we use the same slang and we express ourselves in the same way. Many of us move away and find work somewhere else. They go to university and then they adapt to those people and how they speak. That is how they can achieve success. When they get back home, they usually speak normally.").

This spoken language has always been portrayed as a caricature of the standardised language norm, a notion which materialised in the way Kaaps has often been used in the cartoon or humour sections in respectable Afrikaans newspapers. Often described as *kombuistaal* ("kitchen language") or *gamtaal* ("language of Ham"), Kaaps has for years been regarded as a lower form of the Afrikaans language that should not be held in the same regard as the hegemonic variant. This is reflected in the cartoons and jokes featured in prominent Afrikaans newspapers where Kaaps and the images of a coloured Gatiepie is used to convey witticisms and observations on contemporary issues. In the dominant narrative the "Kaaps speaker is considered naïve, shufflingly submissive, and half-skilled with an inability to understand or appreciate complexity" (Willemse, 2016:75). Unfortunately, many have internalised this negative perception of their spoken language. This became apparent in my conversation with Reagan, who's response highlighted correlates with the argument Willemse (2016) makes. What follows is a direct excerpt of our conversation – including the language errors:

Me: so, what you're saying is that there is some sort of duality or a two-sidedness: the "comic" Kaaps Afrikaans and then the formality of the standardised Afrikaans.

Him: that's exactly what I mean, yes.

Me: so, why can't *Kaaps* be formal? What makes it more comic than formal?

Him: [well,]because all of the textbooks I have come across, starting from school years has been written in Standard Afrikaans. I remember the first book I came across in Afrikaans, maybe you also had it, *Boet en Saatjie*?

Me: wow! Now you're taking me back!

Him: yes, that was the first book I read. Every other Afrikaans book we had in school after that was written in Standard Afrikaans.

Reagan is emphasising the role that written language plays in the perception of a hegemonic language. For many of the working-class and some middle-class participants in this study, the only interaction they had with Standard Afrikaans, was in written form. These often came in the form of prescribed reading in school or, more currently, in (mostly digital) newspapers. Many of them claimed that these were better and more “educational” than *Die Son*, which is written in Kaaps Afrikaans. As a written medium, Kaaps Afrikaans does not follow the same language rules as Standard Afrikaans. Kaaps is often as heterogeneous in its written form, as it is in speech. The difference between written Kaaps and Standard Afrikaans is the codified nature of the standard. According to Fairclough (1989), the codified nature of the standard “went hand-in-hand with *prescription*, the designation of forms of the standard as the as the only “correct” ones” (Fairclough, 1989:57). One form of prescription which Reagan and I have encountered is the language lessons at school, where you are taught to speak and read Standard Afrikaans and Standard English. Seeing Standard Afrikaans written in a book, used for lessons by a school, only solidified its “superior” image. In the process, we learnt that our form colloquial Afrikaans-speech is not the “correct” way to speak the language. This is why Standard Afrikaans is the ideal language for Timmy, who is aware of the superiority of “formal” Afrikaans. To him, standardised Afrikaans is the language ideal because it is the written medium for literary and academic work.

Me: yes that’s the same in my case as well as a lot of people I know.

Timmy: I think, to make it more comfortable for our *bruinmense*, we talk this *nie-suiwer* (“non-pure”) [arguably not the same as impure Afrikaans]

Me. So since you’re saying white people speak formal Afrikaans, when do you use this formal Afrikaans?

Timmy: Well, sometimes you have to adapt to the situation. For example, when you go for an interview and the all the people interviewing you are white – ok perhaps there would be a *bruinmens* (brown person) among them – then you don’t want to sound *lelik* (bad, ugly). Ok I wouldn’t say *lelik*, but you would want to sound more formal or you want to come across as formal. So, you would speak more (sic) decently and more professionally, because you would want to impress them.

Instead of viewing “Cape Afrikaans” and Standard Afrikaans as parts of the same whole, Timmy and many others share the opinion that they are intrinsically different. This is understandable when taking

into account how Standard Afrikaans was historically portrayed as an Afrikaner language in comparison to the Cape Afrikaans of “coloureds” from the Cape – who speak the language with a “comical” accent. This narrative is quite popular among coloured people from other parts of the country who often criticize Kaaps Afrikaans-speakers of ruining (sic) the language with their unique word pronunciation. One participant recounted how a relative from the Northern Cape corrected his speech when he said *vereffend*, instead of the Standard Afrikaans *vroëer* (“earlier”). Novan said it reminded him of his days at school when the Afrikaans teacher would show them how to speak Afrikaans properly. I asked one of the participants, called Novan, whether he was aware of any differences between coloured Afrikaans and Standard Afrikaans – he had already made reference to what he called “coloured” Afrikaans. He preferred that we conducted the interview in English because it was more “academic”.

Me: tell me, do you know of any differences between, this coloured Afrikaans and Standard Afrikaans?

Him: I’m aware of some.

Me: how would you describe them?

Him: Standard Afrikaans has many different forms: different ways to speak. On the other hand, Cape Afrikaans is mostly slang, slang that comes from *their* heritage. A slave heritage. A lot of sayings – mostly comic sayings come from that heritage, but Standard Afrikaans is more focused and is used in academic settings.

Novan describes himself as someone who worked hard through school and university to be able to live “comfortably”. It is clear from his reply that he now distances himself from “them”, the people who speak the comical Kaaps – even though he grew up speaking it as a daily language. He described it as a conscious choice, especially after he began moving in different friendship circles at the university. This is a common thread among a number of participants who earned degrees and became disassociated with Kaaps as a result of its negative image in some contexts. However, this is not a universal sentiment as one participant, an older man called George. He stated that he was always intrigued when – what he referred to as – coloured slang in a negative light when spoken by coloureds, but as soon as the same slang was used by white people, it would be perceived as “cool”.

It is interesting to note that quite a number of these socially mobile participants would distance themselves from their home language in order to conduct the interviews in English. Almost one-quarter of the participants preferred to speak in English, especially after I pressed “record” on the voice recorder.

In comparison, only two of the participants, who lived in the poorer areas, opted to speak English. One of them was an Afrikaans-speaker, but she was also an avid reader of English fiction and non-fiction. She stated that she did not read any Afrikaans books and that she did not feel confident about speaking *mooi* (“beautiful”) Afrikaans. Standardised Afrikaans did not form part of her language repertoire and she, therefore, had to resort to speaking English. The majority of the participants spoke a more formal Afrikaans during our conversations – those who spoke colloquially knew me personally. As interviewers or ethnographers, we have an effect on the people we converse with and our race, gender and the way we speak has a profound effect on how people interact with us and the information we gain from them.

Although many of the participants related the same disconnect with Standard Afrikaans, others revered Standard Afrikaans as the language ideal. Some went so far as to express their disdain for – what they referred to as *gham* Afrikaans. The use of *gham* is a biblical reference to the curse that was placed on Canaan, Ham’s son. Canaan was dark-skinned and the curse was placed on his children. This was traditionally used as justification for slavery during the seventeenth century and onward. The label *gham* in a similar manner as some Americans would use the word *ghetto*. They insisted that it created the impression and of speakers being “low lives”. Adhikari (2006) stated that a middle-class coloured informant in the mid-1990’s told him “that although *kombuis* Afrikaans was his home language, he felt ashamed of using it when speaking to whites or ‘respectable people’ as it would mark him as ‘low-class’. However, there were also those who praised their colloquial Afrikaans, because of its genuine nature. To them, it is the best medium for self-expression, whereas Standard Afrikaans – to them- was fairly limiting in this regard. As one participant stated: “*mens vloek dan so lekke in jou eie taal*” (the best translation is: “your own language has the best curse words”). Indeed, the majority of the participants who spoke Kaaps Afrikaans – working-class or middle-class – emphasised that they only became self-conscious of their speech when they were in contexts where there was a possibility for them to be stigmatised.

As Adam Small wrote:

Kaaps is ’n taal in die sin dat dit die volle lot en noodlot van die mense wat dit praat, dra: die volle lot, hulle volle lewe ‘met alles wat daarin is’; ’n taal in die sin dat die mense wat dit praat, hul eerste skreeu in die lewe skreeu in hierdie taal, al die transaksies van hul lewens beklink in hierdie taal, en hul doodsroggel roggel in hierdie taal. Kaaps is nie ’n grappigheid of snaaksigheid nie, maar ’n taal.

(“Kaaps is a language in the sense that it carries the whole fate and destiny of the people who speak it: the whole fate, their whole life ‘with everything therein’; a language in the sense that the people who speak it, give their first cry in this life in this language, all the transactions of their lives are

concluded in this language, their death rattle is rattled in this language. Kaaps is not a joke or a comedy, but a language”) (Willemse, 2010:75).

This sense of pride that Small communicates through this piece is reflected in the responses of many participants who seemed proud of their spoken language. One of these participants was Timmy. He works as a general labourer for the Drakenstein municipality – Paarl is the biggest town in this municipality and Timmy had worked there for 4 years. Our conversation in Afrikaans was initially about general topics until I asked his opinion about differences in Afrikaans-speech. We spoke in the Kaaps Afrikaans dialect because we knew each other and we felt comfortable:

Me: *Dink dji da is enige verskil tussen hoe ons as bruinmense Afrikaans praat en hoe ander Afrikaans praat? Wat is die verskil en hoe identify mens dit?* (“Is there a difference between the Afrikaans spoken among “coloured” people and the Afrikaans spoken by white people? And if you feel there is a difference, how would you identify this difference?”)

Timmy: *Dai is eintlik ñ goeie vraag.* [tentative silence]. *Uhm...ok wit mense praat suiwer Afrikaans. Ons bruinmense praat – ek sal sê – wel, dit issie suiwer Afrikaans nie. Ek dink ons coloured mense het ñ taal invent wat vi’ ons maklik klink. Ek dink die boere, die wit mense, hulle hou by formality. [laughs] Ek dink hulle hou by suiwer Afrikaans en dai’s Afrikaans. Ek dink dis makliker vi’ ons om plat Afrikaans te praat. As ek daaraan dink, is suiwer Afrikaans eintlik ñ difficult taal, because ek kan remember ek het beter gevaar in my Engels klasse op skool in vergelyking met Afrikaans.*

That’s actually a very good question. [tentative silence] Uhm...ok white people speak “pure” Afrikaans. We *bruinmense* (brown people) speak – I would say – well it isn’t *suiwer* (pure) Afrikaans. I think us coloured people invented a language for us that sounds easy to us [perhaps he means it is a language which is easy for us to speak and understand]. I think the boers, the white people, they stick with formality. [laughs] I think they stick with *suiwer* Afrikaans and that’s Afrikaans. I think for us, it’s easier to speak [the *plat* Afrikaans]. If I think about it, [“pure”] Afrikaans is actually a difficult language, because I can remember I did better in my English classes at school in comparison with Afrikaans.

The idea that white people speak “pure” Afrikaans has been a constant theme among the responses of the participants. This could possibly be connected with the racialised perception of Standard Afrikaans as a “white” language. According to van der Waal (2012), this “myth of Afrikaans as a white language, in association with the political mobilisation of white Afrikaans-speakers, was strengthened by the institutionalisation of Afrikaans in various organisations that were given the role to protect and

standardise the language” (van der Waal, 2012:450). For years this narrative was promoted in popular media via programmes on the television, the radio and through the print media. These objectified forms of the hegemonic language has had an adverse effect on people like Timmy who believe in the existence of concrete speech differences between white people and coloureds. According to this line of thought, these two “groups” speak different, homogenous versions of Afrikaans. In reality this is not the case, as speakers have their own individual speech practices which may not conform to such generalisations. Tasha – who I mentioned earlier – is an example of someone who spoke “differently” at school and, unfortunately, was stigmatised as a result.

Afrikaans heterogeneity: the challenges of two forms of Afrikaans

Afrikaans education during the formative school years often emphasised the difference between the Standard Afrikaans and the “Kaaps” the students spoke among their friends. They learn that their daily speech is inferior to the standardised “norm” and will lead to penalties when they spell words incorrectly or pronounce words with a “Kaaps” accent in class. During a conversation about language with a long-time friend in Lantana Street, we discussed our school years and the challenges we faced (as Afrikaans-speakers) during Afrikaans lessons. This street is one of the main arteries in Paarl East. It runs between Rabiesdale – my mixed-income area – and Klein Nederburg. The latter is an area populated by the working-class and a number of unemployed people, who live in municipal flats, semi-detached houses and (mostly) a growing number of shantytowns. Meagan lives in a municipal flat on Lantana Street, quite close to the Primary School where we met in 1995. We recounted how we both – as mother-tongue Afrikaans-speakers – struggled with the strict language rules of Standard Afrikaans in school. Meagan stated how confusing and challenging Afrikaans lessons used to be.

Me: *Hoekom sê dji Afrikaans is erg?* (“Why would you say Afrikaans is hectic?”)

Meagan: *Jy weet, wanneer jy Afrikaans op skoolvlak geleer was, het jy geleer van voegwoorde en alles dai. Wel, dit was somtyds te moeilik om dai woorde te vat en dit te convert van jou taal na suiwer Afrikaans. Verstaan dji wat ek probeer sê?* (“You know when you’re taught Afrikaans at a school level, you learn about conjunctions and all that [making a sweeping gesture with her arms]. Well, it was sometimes difficult to take those words and convert them from your language to “pure” Afrikaans. Do you understand what I am saying?”)

Me: *Ek dink ek ve’staan wat dji bedoel?* (“I think I understand exactly what you mean?”)

Meagan: *Die suiwer Afrikaans man! Die vokale. Ek het dit nooit verstaan nie.* (“The pure Afrikaans, man! The vocalic speech sounds. I never understood them”).

Meagan: *Ek onthou hoe elke woord reg uitgespreek moes word en sy het jou reg gehelp as jy nie reg gedoen het nie.* (“I remember how every word had to be pronounced “correctly” and if you didn’t do that she [the teacher] would correct you”).

Standard Afrikaans lessons were a challenge for many of the children who lived in the area and the teacher encouraged them to read (standard) Afrikaans books as this would improve their Afrikaans language skills. However, many had no interest in reading in general and some children (myself included) could not get into the habit of reading books, written in Standard Afrikaans. There was a “gap” between the Afrikaans children were taught in school and the Afrikaans they learnt from their parents. Elwilné summed it up during our conversation, when she made a comparison between written Afrikaans (taught at school) and spoken Afrikaans (taught at home). I asked her a question – albeit a very leading question – in the hope of her describing any differences in speech between coloured people and Afrikaners.

Me: *sal dji sê da is ñ verskil in die Afrikaans wat bruin mense praat en die Afrikaans wat wit mense praat?* (“would you say there is a difference in the Afrikaans that coloured people speak and the Afrikaans spoken by “white” people?”)

Elwilné: *ji kry praat Afrikaans en skryf Afrikaans. Ek het dit besef toe ek weer bein studeer het. Ek het baie keer opgemerk dat die manier wat jy woorde en sinne skryf, verskil van hoe jy dit sou skryf. Dit is hoekom my Afrikaans klaspunt altyd laer was as my Engelse graad.* (you get speaking Afrikaans and written) Afrikaans. I realised this after I started studying again. Often I have found that the way you phrase words and sentences when you write, differ from how you would have spoken them. This is why my Afrikaans class mark was always lower in school in comparison with my English grade).

Me: *ja ek het dieselfde ge-experience.* (Yes I had the same experience).

Elwilné: *ja dit gebeur vandag nog met my kinders.* (yes it still happens today with my children).

Me: *hoekom dink dji, gebeur dit so?* why do you think this is so?

Elwilné: *wel, dis wat ek dink: ons praat Afrikaans en ons moet in dit skryf. O’s praat nie Engels nie. So, die geskrewe vorm is al Engels wat ons ken. O’s het twee soorte Afrikaans: die een wat ons skryf en die een wat ons praat en dit is hoekom ons mistakes maak. Ek bedoel, ons praat hoe o’s praat, maar dai Afrikaans is verkeerd asos dit neerskryf. Die Engels wat ons in die skool leer, bly met ons, want daar is nie ñ ander manier hoe o’s dai taal gebruik nie. O’s praat Engels net wane dit nodig is,*

maar o's praat daaglik Afrikaans. So dit beteken dji sal beter vaar in Engels, want dji is al klaar gewoont aan die regte manier om dit te gebruik. Somtyds confuse o's die Afrikaans wat ons praat mey die een wat os skryf. (“well, here is what I think: we speak Afrikaans and we have to write in it. We don’t speak English. So, the written form is the only one we are familiar with. We have two types of Afrikaans: the one we write and the one we speak, and this is why we make those mistakes. I mean, we speak how we speak, but that Afrikaans is not correct when you write it down. The English we learn in school stays with us, because we don’t have any other way of using the English language. We speak English only when it is necessary, but we speak Afrikaans daily. So this means that you will do better in English because you’re already used to the correct way of using it. Sometimes we confuse the Afrikaans that we speak with the one that we write”).

However, the presence of English is growing among the people in Paarl East. It is not only the middle-class who raise their children as English-speakers, but also those who live in middle-class areas. In his research on language shifts among coloured people in Paarl, Beukes (2015) found an increasing number of Afrikaans-speaking people rearing their children with English as their mother-tongue – this, despite the fact that the parents remain Afrikaans-speakers. He describes it as a language shift within two generations. Beukes (2015) who also conducted his research in Paarl among coloured people discovered that one of the most common reasons why Afrikaans-speaking parents raise their children as English speakers is the “ability to talk to a larger and greater variety of people” (Beukes, 2015:4). These children are also taught to speak Afrikaans, but only as a secondary language. He does, however, highlight the concerns expressed by teachers and parents who believed that this bilingualism may retard their ability to learn. Nevertheless, he states that competency in both English and Afrikaans could be advantageous to these children as “the mental gymnastics needed to constantly manage two or more linguistic systems increases cognitive flexibility and makes learning easier” (Beukes, 2015:5). These parents – who often speak very little English in general – teach their children a version of the language that is heavily influenced by their daily Afrikaans. As a result, they would call their children by saying “come now here” which is a direct translation of the Afrikaans *kom nou hier*, in a similar way that “give that for me” is a direct translation of the *gee dit vir my*.

Kaaps Afrikaans heterogeneity

Individuals have their own, unique language repertoires consisting of speech forms which they accumulated throughout their lives. How they utilise these speech forms vary between speakers as Kaaps Afrikaans is a heterogeneous sociolect and it can differ between individuals, groups and towns. This is because there is “never a homogenic form for all speakers, even for situations in which language is used

(Kotzé, 2016:43). This is why many speakers learn to adapt their speech to match those around them, with the aim of easing communication. One of the participants – called Anzel – highlighted how he spoke differently depending on who he was speaking to. Anzel lives in a part of Klein Nederburg that is colloquially referred to as “New York”. I have not noticed, until now, how many of the zones in Paarl East have been given informal American city names, for example New Orleans, Chicago, Las Vegas and New York. All, except New Orleans, are poverty-stricken areas. Anzel told me how impressed he was with his new home in New York, constructed out of brand-new corrugated iron. It was the replacement for his original shanty, which burnt to the ground a few weeks ago.

Me: praat jy dieselfde tussen vriende in vergelyking met hoe djy by die werk praat? Bepaal jou omgewing en met wie djy praat jou taal? Do you speak the same when you are among friends compared to the form(s) you use at work? Does the type of Afrikaans you use depend on where you are and who you talk to?

Anzel: ja, da is definitely verskille. Dit hang af wat die posisie van dai person het inni gemeenskap, waste social rank dai person het: as dai person ñ priester is sal ek op n specific manier met hom of haar praat in comparison met my vrinne. Yes, there are definite differences. It depends on what position a person has in a community, what social rank that person has: if the person is a priest, I would address him/her in a specific manner in comparison with the way I would a friend. Or even an older person would be addressed with more respect in comparison to your friend or your cousin or [here I sense some hesitation] your boss.

Amy shares his sentiments regarding the variation in spoken language being dependant on the context, especially who your interlocutor is. She started of our conversation, by stating how proud she was of being taught to speak Afrikaans “correctly”. As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, both of her parents were educators and they made a point of teaching their children to speak the language as properly. However, it came as a surprise when she made a distinction between her “correct” Afrikaans and the version spoken by the Afrikaners she encountered. She is also of the opinion that the only “correct” Afrikaans, is the one that is most suitable for any given situation.

Amy: daar is nie een regte manier om Afrikaans te praat nie, solank die person wat na jou luister kan verstaan wat djy sê. However, mense wat nie die “plat” Afrikaans verstaan nie, sal nie weet wat djy sê nie. (There is no correct way of speaking Afrikaans as long as the person listening to you can understand what you’re saying. However, the people who do not understand the “flat” Afrikaans won’t know what you’re saying).

Me: *ek dink die terme wat djy gebruik is nogal interteressant: “regte” Afrikaans en “plat” Afrikaans.* (I find the terms you use quite interesting: correct Afrikaans and *plat* flat Afrikaans).

Amy: *dit klink net nie reg vir my nie, maar ek sal oorskakel na standardised Afrikaans sodat witmense my kan verstaan.* (“it doesn’t sound right to me, but I also switch to standardised Afrikaans so that white Afrikaners can understand me”).

Me: *ja, ek doe nook dit.* (“yes, I also do that”).

Me: *so, wane djy oor switch na “regte” Afrikaans, wat maak dit anders as die Afrikaans wat ons praat?* (“so, when you say you switch over to “correct” Afrikaans, what makes it so different from the Afrikaans that we speak? Are they not basically the same?”).

Amy: *die manier hoe “hulle” woorde uispreek, byvoorbeeld:hulle sal sê “ons”, terwyl ons sal se “ôs”. Dai sort ding, die manier hoe hulle woorde uitspreek. So, djy moet nou woorde op so ñ manier uitspreek sodat hulle kan verstaan.* (“the way “they” pronounce words, for example, they would say *ons* (“us”) while we would say *ôs*. That type of thing, how they pronounce words. So now you have to pronounce the words in such a manner so that they can understand”).

Me: *kan dit miskien ook wies hoe o’s sekere woorde gebruik?* (“Could it, perhaps, also be how we use certain words?”)

Amy: *ons gebruik nie die woorde reg nie* (“we don’t use words “correctly”).

This is why many people perform dialect switches in order to “fit in” with different physical and social contexts. “often the first cases of language disempowerment takes place in the classroom [...] teachers know that their students’ non-standardised language varieties are stigmatised economically, culturally and even politically [...] they also know that...the students who speak the variety, in the current case, Kaaps will be exposed to mockery and low performance expectations” (Willemse, 2016:76). Small corrective actions such as “*nee praat reg*” (“no, speak correctly”) has a disempowering effect over their home languages and the speakers themselves.

Speaking in a formal manner among friends, in a context where “Kaaps” is the norm often leads to people assuming that you are, either, a born-again Christian who is not “cool” enough to hang out with, or that you are just pretentious. Megan recounted how she was often teased for acting “*glampy*” (“posh”) often hearing “*sy hou vi ha wat sy nie issie*” – this translates to “she thinks she is better than us”. She speaks a version of “Kaaps” which is characterised by the full pronunciation of most words and a more formalised accent, common among people who aim to project *orentlikheid* (“decency”). However, she still uses

words that are distinctively “Kaaps”, like *vireffen* (“earlier”), *uiwe* (“onions”), *vidag* (“today”). Someone else may speak “Afrikaans” in a similar fashion but could include profanity – pronounced in a more formalised accent.

Standard Afrikaans has always been regarded as the “correct” version of the language and it always had a connection to white Afrikaans-speakers. This standard variety has always been regarded as “the ‘language of the oppressor’ used to reinforce the racist agenda of the white establishment” (Busch, 2010:284). Many South African share this view of Afrikaans and it has manifested in different ways. During the nineteen-eighties, many coloured parents opted to raise their children as English-speakers – distancing themselves from the oppressors’ language, with no knowledge of its creole origins. Today, English is still a preferred language taught to children from a young age, with many struggling to speak Afrikaans.

Me: hoekom dink djy maak mense hulle kinders as Engels-sprekend groot, wanneer hulle self Afrikaans is?

(“why do you think people raise their children with English as their first language when they themselves are Afrikaans-speakers?”)

*Candice: soes ek voorheen gesê het, is dit net my opinie, ok? Dji is op die hoogste vlak wanneer dji Engels praat. Society aanvaar jou vinniger, want dji en jou kinnners praat Engels. Dit is asof dji op ñ glamorous level is. Dis baie keer nie eens die geval nie – dji kan finansieel sukkel! Net omdat jy jou kinders “♪ come here ♪” roep [soft sing-song voice] in plaas van **KOM HIE DJY!** [this startled me]. Apparently, represent dai verskillende mense, maar dis nie altyd die geval nie! Engels word gesien as die meer aanvaarbare taal, want dit is die taal wat wit, swart en coloured mense praat en dis nie reg nie. Ons moet eintlik die drie tale kan praat: Engels, Afrikaans en isiXhosa. Hoekom moet ons een prioritise oor al die ander? Ons taal gaan uitsterf as ons so aangaan. Dis wat ek dié week besef het.*

(“like I said before, I am just expressing *my* opinions, ok? You are on a higher level when you speak English. Society is quicker to accept you because you and your children speak English. It is almost as if you are on a glamorous level. More often than not, that is not even the case – you could be struggling financially! Just because you say to your children “come here” [said in a sing-song voice], instead of “**KOM HIE DJY!**” (Come here you!). Apparently, that represents very different people, but it may not be the case! English is viewed as the more “accepted” language, because it is the language that the white, black and coloured people speak and that’s just is not right. We should be able to speak

and understand the three languages: English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa. Why must we prioritise one language above all others? Our language *will* die out if we continue with this. That's what I came to realise this week").

In hindsight, I should have questioned Candice regarding who this society is. What is apparent, however, is the higher regard English has her opinion and the glamorous image you project when you speak it.

Conclusion

Thus, spoken language is more than just a tool for conveying meaning, it is a social marker used to identify, among other things: intellectual, moral and social status. Many of the more financially well-off participants declared that their Afrikaans was more *suiwer* (pure) than the *gham*, Afrikaans of "other coloureds". This othering has led to people building a repertoire of Afrikaans speech forms, including Standard Afrikaans speech, to represent each facet of their individual identities. Speakers may use slang or swear words as part of their "Kaaps" repertoire among (specific) friends or omit them when addressing an older person, and then formalise their speech when they enter the formal work environment. Although this is not universal to all "Kaaps" speakers – as individuals have their own speech habits – it was a common trend among the responses of the participants. This diglossic behaviour is common among disempowered people who speak dialects other than the hegemonic standard. This is the challenge faced by "Kaaps" Afrikaans-speakers in and around Cape Town.

Today, Standard Afrikaans remains the hegemonic norm of the language in South Africa and the distance between it and the majority of its working-class speakers in and around Cape Town seems just as significant as it had been in the past. Stone (2004) states that "some forms of Afrikaans used within non-white working-class speech communities, [are] not considered full languages by their speakers, are stigmatized as "die slang" (the slang) or "kombuis (kitchen) Afrikaans" (Stone,2004:385). Their spoken Kaaps Afrikaans has become a marker for a host of negative stereotypes, which include laziness and general stupidity. It is still "the variety associated with the non-white working class, is still to a large extent ignored, although it figures in some literary texts and in music" (Kriel 2008). As a result, many of these speakers opt to speak the "proper" Afrikaans – they were taught in school – when the occasion requires them to. Doing this enables them to project the preferred image, increasing the odds of creating the desired impression and "fitting in" by successfully avoiding stigmatisation. This chapter looked at the stigmatisation coloured Kaaps Afrikaans-speakers face and how they respond to these challenges.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This thesis discussed – among other topics – the perceptions coloured participants had of their language use in a context where different Afrikaans forms have hegemonic statuses in different social contexts. This proves to be a challenge for many who found it difficult to change their speech to match the changing contexts. Conversely, those who had competency in multiple forms of Afrikaans speech had very little difficulty in adapting to different settings. This discrepancy is due to the fact that individuals often have different language repertoires consisting of speech forms that are useful in their social circles. Although Standard Afrikaans is viewed to be the Afrikaans ideal, a large number of the participants stated that they only spoke it in spaces where they felt compelled to do so. This is because it held very little value when they engage in conversations with their friends and family.

The Superior Afrikaans variant

From the onset of its development as a trade lingo in Table Bay, Afrikaans has always been a shared language – even in its earliest iterations. It facilitated the trade in goods between the Khoisan and the Dutch Mariners who frequented Table Bay and, later, enabled these inhabitants of the area to communicate with the Dutch colonisers. In the guise of Cape Dutch, it became a shared language among slaves from different linguistic backgrounds, who needed to form support networks among their ranks in order to survive the brutality of slavery. Cape Dutch was not their only spoken language, it initially formed part of a repertoire of languages which included the languages of their homelands. The Dutch elite dismissed Cape Dutch as a slave jargon and they had no interest in speaking it as a result of this negative image. However, Cape Dutch became so prominent and its influence so extensive that it began to influence the language of the young Dutch elite in Cape Town as well as that of the poorer settlers in the rural areas outside Cape Town in rural towns like Stellenbosch and Paarl.

Soon the farmers' ability to read and understand the Dutch of Holland became so impaired that they could not comprehend the scriptures in their Dutch Bibles. Years later with the onset of the apartheid regime, the nationalist government built an Afrikaner identity around the Afrikaans language. Afrikaans was depicted as the language of the Afrikaner and efforts were made to distance it from its image as a coloured or creole language. These efforts were quite successful as Afrikaans was standardised and became the second official language of South Africa. As a result, laws were written in Afrikaans, it became the medium of instruction at Afrikaans universities and it was the only spoken Afrikaans form used on national radio and television. Quite importantly, it was – and still is – the only Afrikaans variant

that is taught in schools as the “correct” form of the language. Thus, Standard Afrikaans became quite prominent over the other spoken variants including Kaaps Afrikaans which became popularly perceived as the comical language of the Cape (coloured).

Today, Standard Afrikaans is still regarded as the superior form of the language and it is, still, the only version taught in schools and – until recently – in Afrikaans universities. Although university classes in Afrikaans have become increasingly rare, Standard Afrikaans remains synonymous with intelligence and *ordentlikheid* in the opinions of the majority of the participants in this research. This is why many of the middle-class, educated participants actively distanced themselves from Kaaps Afrikaans and those who speak it. They often dismiss those who speak Kaaps for “not knowing any better” because “they were raised that way”. Such sentiments gave the impression that those who held this opinion looked down on the people who spoke Kaaps Afrikaans as an everyday language. This is especially so when they emphasize that their own parents taught them to speak Afrikaans “correctly”. Instead of alternating between variations of Kaaps and Standard Afrikaans, many of the middleclass participants would speak English or Standard Afrikaans. However, *mooi* (“beautiful”) Afrikaans – as they refer to their speech – would be out of place in contexts where Kaaps is the norm or where people would expect you to speak it, for example, the participant who remembered being bullied at school for being “pretentious” because she spoke a standardised Afrikaans. Thus, those who are unfamiliar with context based Kaaps lingos or slang find themselves at a disadvantage in social settings where Kaaps is the norm. Many middle-class participants did not have Kaaps Afrikaans in their language repertoire because they had no interest in speaking Afrikaans “like that”. Kaaps Afrikaans simply did not form part of their everyday communication in the language communities they formed part of.

The negative image of Kaaps has become so engrained in the minds of many, including those who speak it as an everyday language – myself included – that they will immediately change their speech to a more standardised Afrikaans when they enter formal spaces or when they speak to someone who has some form of authority. This explains why many of the participants purposefully changed how they spoke as soon as I began recording them. One of the popular explanations that were offered for this change in speech was that they wanted my lecturers – who they assumed would eventually listen to the recordings – to understand what they are saying. Conversely, I unintentionally adopted the standardised Afrikaans speech of some of the participants and only realized I had done so during the transcription process. Five of the participants opted to speak English during the interviews – the most common reason that was offered was that English sounded “more professional” than Afrikaans.

Julle verniel die taal (“You are ruining the language”)

A few years ago, on a train heading to the Northern Cape, my brother and I met two young coloured women from Kimberley. They seemed interested in our background and nodded knowingly when we said we were from Paarl. They commented on the beauty of the Boland landscape and as well as the friendliness of the people they encountered there. However, they offered one critique: they disliked how coloured people from the Cape spoke Afrikaans. To them, it seemed like we were doing an injustice to a language which sounds so beautiful when spoken “properly”. One of the women stated that the way we speak spoils the language (*Julle verniel die taal*) and that we were too lazy to pronounce words correctly (*Julle is net te lui om die woorde reg uit te spreek*). She stated that coloured people in the Western Cape should strive to do better. Jourdan (2006) argues that the conditions of language production are central to its composition and usage. Context – interlocutor(s), physical space and time – plays an important role in the composition of spoken language. Described as the social practice of language, discourse is “itself power producing in that it is reality producing” (Jourdan, 2006:147). Unwittingly, she influenced how I spoke for the remainder of my stay in Kimberley – I adapted to their accent without realizing it.

Many participants had similar experiences and can recall instances where their spoken language was criticized in a similar manner, because – like me – they failed to reproduce certain orders of indexicality. Some Afrikaans-speakers have proudly constructed an identity around their “Kaaps” Afrikaans speech as a marker of coloured identity. A large number of the participants were from poverty-stricken areas in Paarl East where colloquial (Kaaps) Afrikaans speech forms are the norm among mostly young people and some of the older generation. The majority of the people in this “group” stated that they only spoke *mooi* (“beautiful”) Standard Afrikaans at work in communication with their superiors or when addressing customers – as many worked in retail – who often were white Afrikaners.

They stated that failing to alter their speech to a more standardised form could get them into trouble for being unprofessional. However, what does this mean for those who feel too self-conscious to speak Standard Afrikaans or those who simply are unable to speak it? They have difficulty finding employment in some areas of the job market as a result of their inability reproduce certain orders of indexicality. All of the participants stated that they attended Afrikaans medium schools and that they had training in speaking and writing Standard Afrikaans. However, Standard Afrikaans is not regularly spoken in the social circles they frequent and many who lived in lower income areas stated they felt self-conscious and “fake” or pretentious whenever they spoke it. Those who were able to speak a more standardised Afrikaans stated that it was an essential part of projecting *ordentlikheid* (“decency”) and intelligence as

Kaaps has popularly been perceived as a marker of low intellect. Thus, most of the participants who spoke Kaaps at home stated that they recognized the value of speaking Standard Afrikaans in formal spaces and that they were able to speak it when they *needed* to. This enables them to “fit in” with people who may not have associated with them otherwise. Thus, many speakers will always be motivated to alter their speech in specific contexts in order to be accepted by their interlocutors as the inability to do this can create social barriers.

Possible research topic

Conducting a study on something as personal as speech habits require a fair amount of self-reflexivity. This is especially so when you form part of the people you study. How does my speech affect those I interview? Does my speech change depending on the speech of my interlocutors or do theirs change, and why? Who I am as an interviewer affects those I interview: my sex, my race, my demeanour and my speech. This often affects the data that is collected and would in all probability have produced different results if any of these qualities were different. It would be especially interesting to see how the participants would have responded to my questions if I spoke Afrikaans differently. One of the biggest discoveries while doing this research was that many of the participants ranked English higher than Standard Afrikaans. They often raised their children as English-speakers as they perceived it to be a more universal language than Afrikaans. This is not a new phenomenon as many coloured parents during the 1970's/80's also raised their children as English-speakers in rebellion against the language policies of the apartheid government. It would be interesting, for future research purposes, to determine why this trend has reemerged in contemporary South Africa. Is Standard Afrikaans losing its status as a prestigious language among Kaaps Afrikaans-speaking coloured people in Paarl? A potential subject for study would be the trend among young Afrikaans-speaking parents who raise their children as first-language English-speakers.

Conclusion

As speech forms part of our identity it is one of the first attributes (after physical appearance) that our interlocutors consider when making judgements about us as speakers. These interlocutors will make value-based assumptions about speakers' moral characters, intelligence and upbringing simply based on *how* they speak. This is a common occurrence as most – if not all – speakers have judged someone (whether negatively or positively) based purely on their speech. The coloured participants in this study who spoke Kaaps Afrikaans as an everyday language are aware of the popular negative stereotypes that are ascribed to those who speak this dialect, ranging from their inability to speak Afrikaans “properly”,

their supposed laziness and low intelligence, to their assumed propensity to violence. As a result, speakers alter their speech in an effort at avoiding othering. However, by doing this we run the risk of reproducing and perpetuating these language and social hierarchies.

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