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ENTANGLEMENTS OF SEMIOTIC RESOURCES AND SPACE IN THE  
LANGUAGE PORTRAITS OF STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY STAFF AND  
STUDENTS

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*at*

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## **DECLARATION**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the lived experiences of minority language speakers at Stellenbosch University. The concept of linguistic repertoires is a central part of this study as it investigates the diverse linguistic repertoires participants bring with them to Stellenbosch University and how they use them to position themselves in the campus environment. This thesis included 15 participants who are either staff or students at Stellenbosch University. The study provides an in-depth discussion of language portraits, a methodological tool that is increasingly used in applied linguistics research (Busch 2012; Bristowe 2013; Prasad 2016; Singer 2018). Language portraits are art-based multimodal research instruments that produce data in the form of biographical narratives. Such data foregrounds the voice and perspective of the subject making it possible to trace the development of the linguistic repertoire across a life time. It also provides a clearer picture of the entanglements of language and other social issues such as gender, class, identity, etc. This study is narrative driven as it aims to foreground the voices of the participants by allowing them to tell their own stories and be part of interpreting the meaning as well. Chapters two and three are centered on the stories of two participants, respectively and from their narratives connections are drawn to the theory.

This thesis also investigates how the participants experience spaces on and around campus. It provides insight into how people read and interpret semiotic resources in the spaces they inhabit. Data was collected by using the participatory photo interview method (Kolb 2008) that invites participants to be part of collecting data about their surroundings, by taking photos of it. Participants were instructed to take pictures of anything in the spaces they move through in their daily lives that make them feel welcome and unwelcome and to provide brief explanations of their choice of pictures. The conclusions drawn from how participants experience spaces on campus and what they can accomplish with their linguistic repertoires paints a grim picture. The environment is portrayed as a place where rich linguistic repertoires are silenced, diversity is denied and people struggle to find spaces that truly feel welcome. This in turn affects where people choose to move and how much freedom they have to express themselves.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the movement in sociolinguistics which argues for language to be ‘disinvented’ and ‘reconstituted’ (Makoni and Pennycook 2005) and for a linguistic landscape to be viewed as multisensorial and multimodal (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010; Pennycook and Otsuji 2014). The study also attempts to show that in order for students to feel welcome at SU, more than just language needs to be attended to.

## ABSTRACT (ISIZULU)

Lo mbiko wocwaningo ubheka lokho abakhuluma izilimi ezikhulunywa ngabambalwa ababhekana nakho eNyuvesi YaseStellenbosch. Umqondongqangi wezindaba zolimi yiwona mnyombo walolu cwaningo njengoba luphenya ngezindaba ezahluahlukene zolimi ababambiqhaza abeza nazo eNyuvesi YaseStellenbosch kanye nendlela abazisebenzisa ngayo ukuzibeka ezindaweni abazibeka kuzo esikhungweni salenyuvesi. Lo mbiko wocwaningo ubandakanya ababambiqhaza abangu-15 abangabasebenzi noma abangabafundi eNyuvesi yaseStellenbosch. Umphumela walolucwaningo ukuba kube nengxoxo ejulile mayelana nemifanekiso eqondene nolimi, eyithuluzi elihlelwe ngendlela neselisetshenziswa kakhulu emkhakheni wocwaningo lokuphathelene nokubhekwa nokusombululwa emikhakheni wezilimi (Busch 2012; Bristowe 2013; Prasad 2016; Singer 2018). Imifanekiso emaqondana nolimi ingamathuluzi ocwaningo ayizimo ezahluahlukene akhiqiza imininingwane esazingxoxo ngemlando yabantu. Leminingwane igqamisa izwi nemibono yababambiqhaza mayelana nalezi sihloko okwenza kube lula ukulandelela ukuthuthukiswa kwezindaba zolimi ezimpilweni zabo. Iphinde inikeze nesithombe esicacile sokuthandelana kolimi kanye nezinye izindaba eziphathelene nenhlalo ezifana nezobulili, ezezinga, ezokuhlonzwa komuntu ngokobuyena, njll. Lolucwaningo ludle ngokulandisa njengoba luhlosa ukuthi ababambiqhaza bakwazi ukudlulisa imilando nemibono yabo baphinde babe yingxenye yokuhumusha incazelo. Isahluko sesibili nesithathu zigxile ezindabeni zababambiqhaza ababili, ngokulandelana kwabo, bese kubhekwa ukuxhumana kwemibono abayivezile kanye nemibono evezwa yilolucwaningo.

Lolu cwaningo luphinde luphenye ngokuthi ababambiqhaza bayithola injani indawo esikhungweni salenyuvesi kanye nezindawo eziseduzane naso. Ucwaningo luphinde lusivezele nokuthi abantu bayibheka futhi bayihumusha kanjani imithombo eyizimpawu ezindaweni abahlala kuzo. Imininingwane iqoqwe kusetshenziswa indlela yokubamba iqhaza ehambisana nokuthi ababambiqhaza baphendule imibuzo esuselwa ezithombeni abazithathile (Kolb 2008). Ababambiqhaza bacelwe ukuba babe yingxenye yokuqoqa imininingwane ngezindawo abahlala kuzo nabazijwayele ngokuthi bathathe izithombe zendawo. Ababambiqhaza bayalelwa ukuba bathathe izithombe zanoma iziphi izindawo abahamba kuzo nsuku zonke ezenza bazizwe bemukelekile noma bengemukelekile bese benikeza nezincazelo ezimfushane maqondana nokukhetha kwabo lezo zithombe . Imiphumela evezwa wucwaningo ngokuthi ababambe iqhaza bazithola zinjani izindawo abakuzo esikhungweni senyuvesi nabangakufeza ngezilimi zabo ezinohle kuveza isithombe esingesihle. Isimo sendawo sivela njengendawo lapho umcebo wezilimi ezifika nabalabafundi nabasebenzi unganakwa, ukwahluka kwabantu kuyinto engavumelekile futhi kunzima ebantwini ukuthola izindawo lapho bezizwa bemukeleke khona okwangempela. Lokhu kujika kube nomthelela maqondana nezindawo abantu abakhetha ukuhamba kuzona kanye nenani lenkululeko abanayo ekuvezeni imibono yabo.

Ngokwemibono yezinzululwazi, lolu cwaningo ludlala indima emzabalazweni wokusetshenziswa kolimi emphakathini okulwela ukuba ulimi ‘lushabalaliswa’ futhi ‘lwakhiwe kabusha’ (Makoni and Pennycook 2005) nokuba ukwakheka kolimi kubonakale njengento ezinzwaningi noma ezimoningi (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010; Pennycook and Otsuji 2014). Ucwanningo luphinde luzame ukuveza ukuthi ukuze abafundi bazizwe bemukelekile eSU, kungaphezu kolimi okumele kubhekwe.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The role of language in excluding people has been discussed and debated in South Africa for many years now. Although the South African constitution recognises 11 official languages and make allowances for mother tongue education, at university level only two of these are used as languages of teaching and learning, namely English and Afrikaans (Oostendorp and Anthonissen 2014). This leaves higher education faced with the challenge of ensuring the development of all our official languages to a level where they too can be used at higher education levels while trying to ensure that the current languages of instruction are not barriers to students' access and success. (Van der Walt 2004). Nowhere has the debate on language in higher education in South Africa been more heated than at Stellenbosch University. As one of the last universities to use Afrikaans to a significant degree as the language of teaching and learning (LoTL), many students who are not proficient in the language see it as a barrier to learning and integration. The debate around language at Stellenbosch University is further fuelled by Afrikaans' association with apartheid and oppression more generally. Afrikaans is still widely seen as the language of the oppressor despite the fact that, most speakers of Afrikaans are in fact not white. These debates on language were catapulted into the spotlight during the 2015/2016 student protests that swept across South Africa. These protests known as fees must fall took up issues such as the high cost of university education, curricula changes and language. At SU, Open Stellenbosch<sup>1</sup> played an important leadership role during these protests and voiced the opinion that Afrikaans was a tool of exclusion. (Luister 2015).

The protests led to a change in the university's language policy, which has undergone changes over a number of years, and claims to want to develop isiXhosa as an academic language. However, the addition of isiXhosa has been merely lip service (Neethling 2010). IsiXhosa does not really feature in actual practices in teaching and learning, with no undergraduate classes besides that in African languages being conducted in the language and with interpreting services mostly being available in Afrikaans and English. Currently, students must book preferably a week in advance to secure Xhosa interpreting services due to the scarcity of that resource.

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<sup>1</sup> Open Stellenbosch was created to challenge the hegemony of white Afrikaans culture and the exclusion of black students and staff. Open Stellenbosch is a movement of predominantly black students and staff at the University who refuse to accept the current pace of transformation" The Daily Maverick (2015). <https://bit.ly/33ccOk6>

The fees must fall protest and in particular the Luister Video<sup>2</sup> put the spotlight not only on languages of teaching and learning but also on language in social spaces. Academic research on language policy and planning at SU has been primarily focussed on the use of Standard Afrikaans and English in teaching and learning and the gradual addition of standard isiXhosa (Oostendorp and Anthonissen 2014; Van der Walt 2004). Considering the context in Higher Education, this study thus wants to investigate some of the aspects which the Luister Video has alerted us to by focussing on language outside of formal learning spaces. In addition, the study is interested in people's lived experiences of language. The population group who will be investigated are speakers of official South African languages, other than Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa. As isiXhosa is the language spoken by the majority of the black population in the Western Cape, it seems a logical solution to systematically introduce and utilise it a lot more at SU, in addition to English and Afrikaans.

Official university figures indicate that in 2017, 5.8 % of students speak an official African language other than isiXhosa as home language. IsiXhosa is spoken by 3.4% of students. This means that the greatest number of black students' home languages do not feature in any way in policies or practices at SU. This study will focus on the lived experiences of South African students and staff who are part of a linguistic minority group at SU. In this study, "linguistic minority groups" refers to mother tongue speakers of any other official South African language that is not represented in SU's language policy.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study will be novel, in that unlike the majority of studies on language-in education in South Africa, it will not be conducted from a policy perspective and within the classroom environment (Webb 2012; Banda 2010; Desai 2001). Focus will be primarily on how language is used in social spaces. It will look at participants' experiences with various languages at SU and the effects thereof in their day to day interactions. I focused on this specific aspect because during my Honours research I found that much of what happens outside of class contributes to how welcome students feel and how they fit in at SU. Many expressed how language was often used to enforce dominant cultures, remind others that they are outsiders and lay claim to various spaces and events. Names given to events and societies in a language that participants couldn't understand made those spaces inaccessible. In this case, language is also the medium for empowering a culture and taking ownership of a space. The Luister documentary also highlighted this as well as the difficulties encountered in the students' academic lives. Feelings of belonging and exclusion at Stellenbosch University thus rely on more than just being "accommodated" through language in the classroom. Space thus forms an important theoretical lens through which to look at language. As explained by Blommaert et al. (2005), spaces are never neutral. He goes on to say that space is part of what we understand as

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<sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup> *Luister* (Listen) is a documentary released in 2015 which focusses on how (mostly) black students and staff at SU experience the university and in particular language

context and context affects people in communication. Spaces are never neutral and are “always someone’s space, and they are filled with norms, expectations, conceptions of what counts as proper and normal (indexical) language use and what does not” (Blommaert and Dong 2010: 368). When entering a different space, different norms will apply, and this will affect the value and function of the individual’s linguistic repertoires.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

- a) What kind of understandings about language experience can be uncovered through the use of language portraits as a methodological tool?
- b) How do data from my particular sample contribute to the theoretical development of the concept ‘linguistic repertoire’?
- c) How does space interact with the linguistic (semiotic) repertoires of these participants at SU to create exclusion/inclusion on the SU campus beyond class settings?

### **1.4 RESEARCH AIMS**

- a) To explore the potentialities of language portraits as a methodological tool and what kinds of understandings about language experience can be uncovered through using this research method.
- b) The aims here are two fold.
  - i. To explore the rich linguistic repertoires that minority language speakers bring with them to Stellenbosch University and how this shapes their interactions within their current setting.
  - ii. To contribute to the existing body of knowledge on linguistic repertoires
- c) To gain insight into how people read and interpret semiotic resources in the spaces they inhabit, on and around the SU campus and what conclusions are drawn from their interactions with these spaces.

### **1.5 THEORETICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE**

This thesis explores the language experiences of minority language speakers, students and staff at Stellenbosch University (SU). It takes a poststructuralist perspective to sociolinguistics that recognizes the power of discursively constructed categories on language. Taking this perspective involves what Makoni and Pennycook (2005) call a

disinvention and reconstruction of our understanding of language in the contemporary world through processes that “involve becoming aware of the history of invention, and rethinking the ways we look at languages and their relation to identity, geographical location and other social practices” (Makoni and Pennycook 2005: 138). Poststructuralism looks at what constitutes these categories and works towards deconstructing them in order to better understand the subjectivities and ideologies that underlie choices and patterns of language behaviour.

From a poststructural perspective, a great focus is placed on the subject as “subjects are seen as shaped and constituted in their thinking, speaking, feeling, and desire and even in their corporality by the power of discursively produced categories” (Busch 2012: 507). Therefore, language and linguistic repertoire cannot be adequately understood without acknowledging and investigating how language is tied to the body, memory and emotion. Linguistic repertoires are an expansion of what Gumperz (1964) initially termed verbal repertoires. This frame allows for an expansion of the notion of linguistic repertoire that takes into account historical and biographical time dimensions and acknowledges how the subject is constituted “in and through language and discourse already established before” (Busch 2012: 510). These categories that form from past discourses are also involved in our construction and interpretation of space that in turn influences our linguistic practices and how we inhabit those spaces.

This thesis focuses on how people position themselves in various spaces on and around the SU campus. It also looks at what it is that participants see around them, in terms of language and artefacts, and what messages they take from that. Specifically, the interaction of space, linguistic repertoires (which carry history and emotion) and other semiotic elements in the meaning making process of participants will be explored. The study also takes a closer look at the language portrait as a methodological tool in researching linguistic repertoires and how the portraits provide tools of creative expression that enable participants to convey the heterogeneity of their repertoires and their lived experiences of language.

## **1.6 METHODOLOGY**

### **1.6.1 General design of the study**

This study is situated within a qualitative research paradigm. Qualitative research is exploratory research, seeking to understand social realities within their natural context. It is relatively subjective as it aims to gain insight into real life phenomena and behaviours in an effort to “describe lifeworlds ‘from the inside out’, from the point of view of the people who participate” (Flick, von Kardoff and Steinke 2004: 3). In qualitative research, data is collected through various methods such as, observation, individual interviews with participants as well as group discussions, preferably within a natural context. Though other forms of data do exist, the data collected is often in the form of texts such as transcribed interviews and researchers’ ethnographic field notes. These methods all rely on language

to communicate and interpret participants' views and experiences. However, when looking at human experiences, it must be taken into consideration that "our daily experience is made of a multiplicity of dimensions, which include the visual and the sensory" (Bagnoli 2009: 247). When asking questions about people's lived experiences it becomes all the more crucial to find ways to investigate these aspects that are often difficult to express in words. Bagnoli (2009: 247) suggests that "the inclusion of non-linguistic dimensions in research, which rely on other expressive possibilities, may allow us to access and represent different levels of experience". This is what art-based methods attempt to contribute to qualitative research.

### **1.6.2 Research instruments**

The research instruments used in this study were background questionnaires, language portraits and interviews. Language portraits were the art-based method used primarily as a means of eliciting autobiographical narratives about the participants' lived experiences of language. These narratives "offer insights into people's private world, inaccessible to experimental methodologies, and thus the insiders view" (Pavlenko 2007:164-65). The portraits were then discussed during one on one interviews. Participants were also asked, in their own time, to capture images of elements in their daily environment that make them feel either unwelcome or most welcome within the spaces they inhabit. Participants then explained why those elements made them feel that way and this formed part of the data. The sections below will provide more details about each of the research instruments used during this study.

#### *Questionnaires*

I used background questionnaires to establish basic participant information such as age, gender, and place of birth. The rest of the information was about their language history (how many languages they speak, where they use these languages and age of acquisition) and how long they have been part of Stellenbosch University. As part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to rate their competency in each of the languages that they had listed. The questionnaire is included in appendix A of this thesis.

#### *Language portraits*

Busch (2012) uses the multimodal, biographical approach of language portraits to study people's individual linguistic repertoires. The method looks at the subjective experiences of language throughout the lifespan of the participant. It provides both visual and verbal descriptions of the participant's embodied experience of language. With language portraits, participants can think and express themselves in both pictures and words. This process of thinking in pictures "contributes to foregrounding the emotional experience of language, power relations, and desire" (Busch 2012: 521). The use of language portraits goes as far back as 1991 when it was used by Neumann cited in Busch (2012) in research on language awareness in primary schools. Since then language portraits have

been used for many other areas of research in linguistics and in other disciplines. Participants are given a blank body silhouette and are asked to think about their linguistic repertoire, “the codes, languages, the means of expression and communication that play a role in their lives” (Busch 2012: 511). It is up to the participants to decide what they consider a language or code. Using different colours, the participants must map the different languages/codes that they use on the body silhouette in a way that represents their interaction and relationship with the language. In this process “the picture first serves as a means of eliciting explanations regarding language practices, resources, and attitudes and acts at the same time as a point of reference” (Busch 2015: 511).

In line with Busch (2012) this study made use of language portraits as an instrument of data collection. Participants were asked to colour in an empty body silhouette, each colour representing a language or variety that they speak, understand or aspire to speak. They placed these colours on various parts of the body silhouette to represent how they feel about each language as well as how they use it. This elicited narratives around the speaker’s language use, language history and language ideologies, among other things. The language portraits provided a starting point for conversation with an easy transition from just explaining what language each colour represents to topics that gradually lead to deeper questions of lived experiences. This activity was followed by an interview where the participants could expand on what their language portraits represent and tell their language stories as they individually experience them, with all the entanglements attached to language.

### *Interviews*

The completion of the language portraits was followed by one on one interviews where the portraits were discussed. The interviews were conducted in some of the participants’ homes with the idea being that the environment should be one where they feel comfortable. Where this was not possible, they took place in my office. The interviews were conducted mainly in English but participants were given the freedom to express themselves in the language of their choice and stop to explain as they go along, if necessary. This was only possible where I had at least a basic understanding of the language the participant chose to use. In collecting autobiographical narratives high importance has been placed on considering the language in which biographical interviews are conducted (Nevkapil 2003; Pavlenko 2007; Busch 2016). Nevkapil (2003: 63) defines language biographies as biographical accounts “in which the narrator makes the language, or rather languages, the topic of his or her narrative—in particular the issue of how the language was acquired and how it was used”. The language in which a story is told plays an important role in how the story will be told and understood. The same story told in different a language may vary in “the amount of detail, reported speech, emotional intensity, episodic structure, and framing of particular episodes” (Pavlenko 2007:171).



Therefore, where possible the language choice in the interview should be negotiated and not imposed, creating a space for codeswitching (Busch 2016). In such studies, codeswitching is “an important linguistic resource with a range of semantic and affective functions” (Pavlenko 2007: 173) that bi/multilingual speakers should not be deprived of. The interview would start with the participant explaining their language portrait, the colours and what they represented. They then would explain how the colours have been organized on the body silhouette and the conversation would naturally flow to one where they speak about any experiences linked to these explanations. These were unstructured interviews. Aside from a few guiding questions, the participant controlled the direction of the conversation. The time taken for each interview varied but averaged on an hour and thirty minutes. In this regard as well the participant was in control of the interview. I asked for an hour of their time but if they felt they wanted to continue thereafter they were allowed to do so. The interviews provided biographical narratives that offered a subjective perspective of the speaker to complement the more objective third person perspective of viewing people’s interactions using language. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed for data analysis.

#### *Walking with Camera/ photo interview method*

Pink writes about the method of walking with video as a means for the researcher to “produce empathetic and sensory embodied (emplaced) understandings of another’s experience” (Pink 2007: 250). In her study, Pink walked with participants and videotaped the walk, in order to share in the experience of the participants’ interactions within the space they inhabit and their daily practices. One of the aims of this thesis is to gain insight into how people read and interpret semiotic resources in the spaces they inhabit on and around the SU campus. In other words, similar to Pink (2007), the aim here is to gain an empathetic understanding of the participants’ embodied experiences of the spaces they inhabit daily.

A similar approach was followed in this study however, in order to foreground the experiences of the participants, the data was captured without the involvement of the researcher. This leans more to the participatory photo interview method discussed by Kolb (2008). This method invites participants to answer research questions “by taking photos and explaining their photos to the researcher” (Kolb 2008: 3). These photos and explanations provide a subjective perspective of the experiences of participants and their local contexts. The benefit of this method, as described by Kolb (2008: 5), is that it allows “the research discussion to start with real places and real experiences”. The participants in this study were asked to mindfully look at the spaces they move within every day and identify elements in their environment that makes them feel like an outsider or like they belong. They took photos of these (buildings, writings, etc...) and sent them to me by email, accompanied by an explanation of what the image represented for them and the feelings it evoked. This data gave a clearer picture of how they perceive their context and position themselves within it as well as the role of language in creating these spaces.



### 1.6.3 Participants

All the participants are South African citizens, studying or working at SU, whose first languages are one of the eleven official South African languages. The focus was steered towards finding out how they felt in an environment where their mother tongue is invisible, if there are feelings of alienation that come from this and how they use their linguistic resources to make a place for themselves at SU. There were 15 participants in total who completed language portraits and the accompanying interviews whose ages ranged from 18- 29 at the time of data collection. More information regarding their first languages and how many languages were listed on their portraits are detailed below in table 1. The participants self-identified as first language speakers of these official languages however, in three cases participants later explained that what they actually considered their home languages were non-standard varieties such as Kasi Sotho or Sepitori. These participants came from various provinces and the languages/codes listed per person ranged from 5 to 12. Some of the languages or codes listed as part of their linguistic repertoires included non-standard variations (Tsotsitaal, various forms of slang, Kasi Sotho and Sepitori) and some international languages. Of the 15 only 8 participants completed the photo interview activity.

The table below is a summary of the information stated above:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Home Province</b>	<b>Languages/ varieties listed</b>
Grace	Female	Student	Setswana	Northwest	9
Harriet	Female	Student	Sepedi	Gauteng	9
Heath	Male	Student	Xitsonga	Limpopo	5
Jabulile	Female	Staff	Sesotho	Limpopo	6
Khanyi	Female	Staff	siSwati	Mpumalanga	12
Lungisani	Male	Staff	isiZulu	Kwazulu Natal	6
Melody	Female	Staff	Sepedi / Sepitori	Gauteng	11
Nkosazana	Female	student	Tshivenda	Limpopo	5
Ntombi	Female	Student	isiZulu	Mpumalanga	6
Rainbow	Female	Student	Sesotho	Freestate	7
Ray	Male	Student	Setswana	Gauteng	10
Red	Male	Student	Tshivenda	Limpopo	10
Samson	Male	Student	Sesotho	Gauteng	8
Siyabonga	Male	Student	Xitsonga	Gauteng	5
Themba	Male	Student	Setswana	Gauteng	9

*Table 1: participant information*

#### **1.6.4 Data analysis**

The data collected for this study was analysed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is the process of “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke 2006: 78). It is a qualitative method of analysis that is used not only in linguistics but in a number of other disciplines such as psychology and anthropology. Going through the data it was important to continuously refer back to the research questions in order to identify the themes that were relevant to the study. What counts as themes is guided by the research questions. A theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun and Clarke 2006: 82). Data analysed through thematic analysis codes narratives and identifies salient themes in them, possibly highlighting issues that may have gone unnoticed otherwise. These themes are identified and grouped together, making it possible to identify what is commonly expressed by everyone.

#### **1.6.5 Ethical considerations**

I received both ethical clearance and institutional permission to conduct this research. Both letters are included in appendix C and D of this thesis, respectively. All participants signed a consent form confirming that they were informed and understood what was expected of them in this study. They were fully aware that their participation was voluntary and there would be no payment for their involvement. They were also informed that they could leave the study at any time if they so wished. They gave permission for their interviews to be recorded and used as data for this study. They were assured that their identity would be protected through the use of pseudonyms whenever they are quoted in the study. The consent form is included in appendix B of this thesis.

### **1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

This study will not be following a conventional format but rather one that is more narrative driven. The narrative driven nature of this thesis aims to foreground the voices of the participants, giving them the agency to tell their own stories. The research methods employed in this thesis, such as the language portraits, are specifically intended to foreground the experiential perspectives of the participants (Busch 2018). An empowering aspect of autobiographical narratives is that “they shift the power relationship between researchers and participants [...] making the object of the inquiry into the subject and granting the subject both agency and voice” (Pavlenko 2007: 280). The interaction between myself (the researcher) and the participants results in a co-construction of meaning with the participant perspective taking centre stage.

Throughout this thesis I refer to myself in the first person to reflect my own voice not only as the researcher but as an active participant in the process of reflecting on the experiences shared with me by the participants. Zhou and

Hall (2018: 348) advocate for the incorporation of the first person pronoun by researchers in qualitative research as it “adds to the subjective experience as part of the evidence for the author’s claims, and makes the author’s perspective and constructive role in creating meaning in a study more visible”. Empathetic connections came from certain understandings of shared life experiences between myself and the participants. I too, as a first language speaker of isiZulu, form part of the group of minority language speakers at SU. Like my participants, I come from a different province (Kwazulu Natal) with different linguistic dynamics, practices and attitudes to language. I can also relate with being both a student and member of staff at SU. The rapport built between us gave the participants the freedom to interact and express themselves freely. This is reflected in the frequent codeswitching that takes place during the interviews. I therefore cannot dismiss my participatory role in the research process and make it explicit by often referring to myself in the first person.

This thesis is art-based, drawing on various resources (drawing, colouring, photographs, speech and writing) to explore linguistic creativity and the role of the body and emotion in the development of linguistic repertoires. According to Jones (2018) linguistic creativity is messy and cannot be analysed in ways that do not confront/embrace this messiness. Jones encourages researchers to engage in “methods that go beyond trying to ‘make sense’ of it [the messiness of language] through traditional conceptual categories and attempt to approach it from the less traditional perspectives of embodiment and entanglement, affect and action” (Jones 2018: 1). As Busch (2016: 7) puts it, language should not only be “seen as a conventionalised, sedimented system of signifiers, but primarily as an intersubjective bodily-emotional gesture which relates the experiencing/speaking subject to the other and to the world”. This thesis delves into the entanglements and mess identified by both Busch and Jones and its structure is one that reflects the nature of entanglement.

Thus, through the way in which this thesis is written and structured, I attempt to do justice to the above mentioned entanglement and messiness. Instead of separate chapters dedicated to literature review, methodology, results and discussion, my chapters are rather organised around the narratives produced by the participants and how these narratives enlighten particular theoretical concepts (such as repertoire and space), or methodological considerations. The theories, main concepts and related literature will be woven into the stories of selected participants, thus pointing out how these stories confirm, contradict or illuminate existing literature or methodological orientations. There will be three content chapters rounded off by some concluding remarks. Below is a brief overview of these chapters.

### *Chapter 2: Samson: Lived Experiences, in Living Colour*

The chapter that follows explains and discusses the methodology of language portraits. The method looks at the subjective experiences of language throughout the lifespan of the participant. It provides both visual and verbal

descriptions of the participant's embodied experience of language. The chapter is centred on the language portrait of one particular participant, Samson. Among other things, we explore how effectively language portraits can be used to elicit biographical narratives. I begin with Samson as he best illustrates the potentialities of this method. My aim in this thesis is to foreground the voices of the participants, transferring the power to them to tell their stories. Samson's data is full of rich narratives that speak for themselves. We will look at the art-based, biographical method of language portraits that is used widely in various disciplines and often in the work of Brigitta Busch within linguistics. However, what I hope you will see is the effective co-construction of meaning that takes place as Samson and I both reflect on the work of art that he tries to interpret to me. Chapter two discusses the role of language portraits in bringing out rich narratives and creating spaces for such interactions between researcher and participant that flow naturally and place us on equal footing as co-constructors of knowledge.

### *Chapter 3: Harriet: Creativity, Criticality and Disinvention*

The 3rd chapter focuses on the story of one specific participant, Harriet, who displayed a diverse and colourful linguistic repertoire. Harriet's narrative engages with the theoretical framework of linguistic repertoires. Her portrait and narrative show how the concept of a linguistic repertoire "allows a move away from imagining languages as clear cut entities." (Busch 2012). She is fluid in her language use and seems to navigate with just as much ease between different language speakers and within different spaces and in so doing is uninhibited by discursively invented boundaries.

### *Chapter 4: In and Out of Space: Space Speaks*

This chapter looks at various elements that constitute space and their potential to be powerful semiotic resources. It looks at how participants read and understand the spaces they inhabit and how their behaviour (linguistic and otherwise) is affected by that reading. The issue of space is one that cannot be ignored as the landscape speaks volumes about representation. As mentioned earlier, spaces are never neutral and are "always someone's space, and they are filled with norms, expectations, conceptions of what counts as proper and normal (indexical) language use and what does not" (Blommaert and Dong 2010: 368). In previous research it often came up that language and other semiotic elements contributed towards making certain spaces selectively accessible.

### *Chapter 5: Concluding Remarks*

This chapter will discuss the main points made in this thesis. It will serve as a summary of the findings and provide an opportunity to bring all these thoughts together. Chapter five will reflect on the research process, considering

the limitations and contributions of the study. Once having considered any possible insights provided by this thesis, suggestions will be made regarding future areas of research.

## CHAPTER 2

### SAMSON: LIVED EXPERIENCES, IN LIVING COLOUR

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on Samson's portrait and narrative to discuss the potentialities of language portraits as a research method in qualitative research, broadly, and in applied linguistics more specifically. The chapter takes a closer look at how art-based methods are defined and how language portraits fit into this category. It also aims to give insight into how language portraits contribute to autobiographical narratives, enriching the data through the affordances of its multimodal nature. This chapter is anchored around a particular piece of data, the language portrait and interview of Samson. This piece of data is used to highlight the potentiality of the method, and to showcase the type of understandings produced when this particular methodology is used. It is therefore not a conventional "methodology" chapter which discusses the data collection and analytical methods and describes how it was utilised in the study.

To begin with, I am first going to discuss art-based methods and how they fit into the larger paradigm of qualitative research. Thereafter I look at language portraits as a particular kind of biographical and art-based method. I will then turn to the data from Samson's portrait and interview and discuss some of the salient themes from it with relevant examples from the interview transcript. I will also look at the narratives that were elicited through this activity and discuss the ways in which they enrich the data. Lastly, there will be a brief discussion on the insights provided by this chapter.

#### 2.2 ART-BASED METHODS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In the last few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, art-based methods have increasingly been used by qualitative researchers in the social sciences. Social scientists began to pay attention to how art, particularly images, can be used "to enhance their understanding of the human condition" (Mcniff 2008: 43). Finely (2008: 79) defines art-based research as "an epistemological foundation for human inquiry that utilises artful ways of understanding and representing the worlds in which research is constructed". Different forms of engagement with art have proven to be useful tools in research to help participants to better express their views and experiences of different phenomena and to reveal their subjective positioning within various situations.

Researchers have used art in a variety of ways, making use of different mediums of expression in their research. For example, Bagnoli (2009) uses three art-based methods (the self-portrait, the relational map and the timeline) in

two of her studies looking at young people and identity in England and Italy. Each of these involves drawing, her aim being to design “participatory methods which could allow taking part in the research process according to one’s own preferred modalities of expression” (Bagnoli 2009: 549).

Busch (2012, 2015) uses language portraits for her research which is also the method used in this study that will be discussed in more detail. Finely (2008: 79) adds that art-based research should be seen as an umbrella term as it cannot be “reduced to a prescriptive set of methods for generating and representing empirical materials”. These forms and their methods will vary according to a number of factors. These include location, diversity of participants and the multiple forms of representation available to both the researcher and participants -e.g., poetry, dance, visual arts etc. (Finely 2008).

Art-based methods also provide a medium through which researchers can better make connections with the embodied experiences of their participants and understand them in a more empathetic way. As Weber (2008) explains, people are not just ideas but beings of flesh and blood who learn through their senses. Changes in modality and exploring various creative means of expression enable people to tap into their senses. When people respond to images, they do so through their embodied experiences (Weber 2008). In this way “the visual disarms or bypasses the purely intellectual, leading to a more authentic and complete glimpse of what a particular experience is like or of what people think and feel” (Weber 2008 :46). This chapter illustrates how the purely intellectual can be bypassed to provide a more authentic glimpse of people’s experiences, through the use of language portraits.

### **2.3 THE MULTIMODALITY OF LANGUAGE PORTRAITS**

Language portraits fall into the category of art-based methods as they too utilise artful means to help participants express complex meanings through visual representation. The participant is also given the opportunity to explain what is visually represented and both the visual and verbal mode work together to make the intended meaning (of an often complex idea) easier to convey. Language portraits were initially used with children, as memory aids and as a way of putting them at ease in studies of language awareness (Busch 2012; Purkarthofer 2017). Language portraits and other forms of art-based methods have also been used with participants in cross cultural research where participants may find it challenging to express their meaning verbally (Bagnoli 2009; Prasad 2014). Busch (2012, 2015, etc.) uses the multimodal, biographical approach of language portraits to study people’s individual linguistic repertoires. This method looks at the subjective experiences of language throughout the lifespan of the participant.

Participants are given a blank body silhouette and are asked to think about their linguistic repertoire, “the codes, languages, the means of expression and communication that play a role in their lives” (Busch 2012: 511). It is up to the participants to decide what they consider a language or code. Using different colours, the participants must

map the different languages/codes that they use on the body silhouette. This must be done in a way that represents their interaction and relationship with the language, in connection with all aspects of what make up their daily lives. The language portraits provide a starting point for conversation with an easy transition from just explaining what language each colour represents to topics that gradually lead to deeper questions of lived experiences. The picture serves the dual purpose of “eliciting explanations regarding language practices, resources, and attitudes while simultaneously acting as a point of reference.” (Busch 2012: 511). This elicits narratives around the speaker’s language use, language history and language ideologies, among other things. Such narratives “offer insights into people’s private world, inaccessible to experimental methodologies, and thus the insider’s view” (Pavlenko, 2007:164-165).

This activity is followed by an interview where the participants can expand on what their language portraits represent and tell their language stories, as they individually experience them, with all its entanglements. The strength of this approach is its emphasis on the perspective of the speaking subject and thus it “contributes to an understanding of the linguistic repertoire as reflecting individual life trajectories” (Busch 2016: 2), discourses around language and how people have used language in different spaces and over time. The process of completing the portrait and the discussion about it brings about a lot of reflection on the part of both the participants and the researcher. This results in a co-construction of meaning through the dialogical interaction between the researcher and participant.

## **2.4 THE BIOGRAPHICAL COMPONENT OF LANGUAGE PORTRAITS**

As already mentioned, completing the language portrait and providing a form of interpretation of it makes room for narratives of a biographical nature to emerge. In what can be called the ‘biographical turn’, disciplines such as ethnography, sociology and history took interest in language biographies as early as the 1980s (Busch 2016). From the 1990s onwards there was increased interest in the use and establishment of biographical methods in applied linguistics (Pavlenko 2007, Busch 2016). Biographical methods include “language memoirs, linguistic autobiographies, and learners’ journals and diaries” (Pavlenko 2007: 163). Language portraits have been widely popularised by Brigitta Busch (2012, 2015, 2018) and have been used by many other researchers across the world to study language practices and related experiences with the focus on the first person perspective (Bristowe 2013; Prasad 2014; Singer 2018 ).

In collecting autobiographical narratives, high importance has been placed on considering the language in which biographical interviews are conducted (Nevkapil 2003; Pavlenko 2007; Busch 2016). The language in which a story is told plays an important role in how the story will be told and understood. The same story told in a different language may vary in “the amount of detail, reported speech, emotional intensity, episodic structure, and framing



of particular episodes” (Pavlenko 2007: 171). This is evident in the data that follows. In his narrative, Samson will often switch to the language in which the narrated incident was experienced. There are also instances where he feels that certain words carry a specific cultural/historic authenticity in context of the society he is recreating in the narrative. One such example is his choice of the word “Saloon” instead of “Barber shop”. Saloon was the word used in the township where he grew up when referring to a barbershop. He chooses to stick to this when relating his experience as a young Sotho boy, going to get a haircut. It is for such reasons that, where possible, the language choice in the interview should be negotiated and not imposed, creating a space for codeswitching (Busch 2016).

Nevkapil (2003: 63) defines language biographies as biographical accounts “in which the narrator makes the language, or rather languages, the topic of his or her narrative—in particular the issue of how the language was acquired and how it was used”. In such studies, codeswitching is “an important linguistic resource with a range of semantic and affective functions” (Pavlenko 2007: 173) that bi/multilingual speakers should not be deprived of. By making allowances for codeswitching and noting its role in enriching the data, we acknowledge that these narratives are not merely descriptions of facts but “provide the past in the light of the contemporary social situation in which the individual lives” (Nevkapil 2003: 65). In the next section, I will introduce the language portrait and interview of one particular participant, Samson, to illustrate how this research instrument works in practice and within our context of multilingual South Africa. I will further link these practical examples to what has been discussed so far in this chapter with regards to the use of language portraits as an art-based, biographical research methodology. I will share my experience as a researcher in this process and conclude by discussing the observed outcomes of employing this methodology, as illustrated by this particular case.

## **2.5 MEET SAMSON**

Samson is a 22 year old male student who has been a student at SU for five years. He is originally from the township of Katlehong in Gauteng. The townships in the Gauteng province are known to be rich in linguistic diversity and a place where multilingualism amongst the inhabitants is, more often than not, the norm. On his language portrait, Samson listed eight of the official South African languages as forming part of his linguistic repertoire. I specifically choose to highlight his language portrait, in this chapter, because it so vividly illustrates how language portraits can make explicit the links between language, emotion, identity constructions and a wide range of human experiences. Through his portrait, Samson manages to express what a deeply embodied experience language is. What this data also shows is how language cannot be separated from our identities, our aspirations and the relationships we have shared with people and places throughout our lifetimes. This data also reveals the interactive process of meaning-making as both Samson and I read and interpret his “art” and reflect on it together through the course of the interview.

As Bochner and Ellis (2003:508) explain, “as a form of language, art can become reflexive, turn on itself, invite us to question our own premises, to ask, how do I see? What can I know? How do I know what I know?” It opens our eyes to new ways of seeing, our minds to new ways of questioning and provides a different avenue of expression where language may fail. The visual representation (the language portrait) acted as guide in this process, providing powerful metaphors - through shape, colour and placement on the body - that made a more empathetic understanding of Samson’s narrative possible. Busch (2018: 3) states that “the principal concern of body-mapping is to bring to the fore the experiential perspectives of the participants, in a collaborative process with a sense of self-empowerment”. A big part of the empowerment comes from the fact that autobiographical narratives are transformative in the way that “they shift the power relationship between researchers and participants [...] making the object of the inquiry into the subject and granting the subject both agency and voice” (Pavlenko 2007: 280). It is through these reflective processes that the researcher and participant co-construct meaning from the portrait and this provides a natural flow into the interview.

Here I must stop and give some background information on the nature of Samson’s interview. This interview was uncharacteristically long, close to two hours. It produced very rich data that touched on many intersecting issues such as gender identity, which I can only touch on in this chapter. His narrative was also characterised by many instances of branching out into side stories that in themselves provided valuable insights but prolonged the interview process. His interview was also challenging to transcribe as there was a fair amount of codeswitching. The codeswitching however adds a necessary dimension to the data and, in the moment, following was not difficult. The challenge came in during transcription when I had to find the proper spelling and translation in the languages I am not sufficiently proficient in. My solution to this was to once again make contact with Samson and ask him for the spellings and meanings of some of the things he had said. This proved to be a better option than asking anyone else as slight differences in spelling and meaning can occur among speakers of the same language. Therefore, the instances of codeswitching and their translations appear in the transcription as Samson spells it and understands it.

### 2.5.1 His portrait



Figure 1: Samson's language portrait

Samson represented eight languages on his language portrait. Sesotho (purple), isiZulu (blue), English (red), Afrikaans (grey), Sepedi (green), isiNdebele (yellow), Tshivenda (brown) isiXhosa (lime). At the beginning of his interview Samson started off by saying how language for him is a part of his “identity work”, it links him to certain life experiences and to the places where he has lived. Our subject, Samson, expresses how both inward and outward forces have at various times restricted where, when and how he uses language and as such have threatened his autonomy. Social factors, for instance, have affected where he felt comfortable to speak his own mother tongue. Busch (2016: 2) argues that biographical approaches “can be particularly productive in addressing topics such as language and emotion, language and subject positions or identity constructions, or language attitudes linked to language ideologies and discourses on language and language use”. Samson touches on various aspects of his identity (family history, gender identity etc.) and shows us the conflict that language can create in his identity construction.

For instance, a language that he sees as his mother tongue, Sesotho, is also one where he must fight to prove that he is an authentic speaker. The ideologies connected to the various languages and the expectations that he felt were sometimes imposed on him in order to belong, also affected his relationship with those languages. Some languages he has deliberately silenced as a way of dealing with hurt, a form of protest or as a way to preserve the joy held by them. He also describes the ways he has used language to empower himself, oppose what he experiences as injustice and reclaim his agency. Repertoires draw from multiple voices and discourses and are continuously shaped by social interactions from the present and the past. As such linguistic repertoire “forms a contingent space both of restrictions and of potentialities which includes anticipations, imaginations, fears and desires” (Busch 2016: 7). These conflicts, joys and anxieties are clearly represented on Samson’s language portrait and the seemingly random deviations from the main narrative provide references as to how certain experiences and emotions have come to be associated with certain languages.

Talking about what language is to him he says:

**Samson:** In a lot of ways uhm... it’s more than just a part of my... ok, in a large way it’s part of my identity work but then uhm... in many ways also a... timeline, a history, periodical of sorts? For me, because I can use the languages I’ve learned to trace and link them to certain experiences in my life. And this of course kind of correlates with where I’ve lived, actually when I look at it.

Throughout his interview we see the ways in which he links language to different aspects of his identity at particular times in his life. We also see how these relationships change over time as he has to position himself in varying new situations. He reveals feelings of conflict when it comes to certain languages such as Sesotho and English. He describes the relationship with those two languages as “complicated”. In the case of Sesotho, once he steps out of the safety of home, he feels that he has to fight to be recognised as authentically Sotho amongst others who may see themselves as norm providers. With English, he feels that this is a language that is and isn’t his. English is the language that both empowers him yet at the same time threatens the place of Sesotho which is very precious to him. Also important is his rejection of certain identities. The extreme case being that of Sepedi which is the language of his father. Although he can speak it, he deliberately separates himself from it and refuses to be identified by it because of past trauma and his personal rejection of the ideologies that he attaches to the speakers of the language and by extension to the language itself.

Samson performs multiple acts of agency and constructions of identity through his linguistic repertoire. Busch (2012: 511) notes how as participants categorise and explain the relation between their linguistic resources “terms such as ‘sister language’, ‘body language’, ‘secret language’, ‘language of repression’, and ‘language of joy’” are often used to represent languages/codes. In his interview, Samson refers to his languages of joy and agency and

explains sadness and regret by referring to one of the languages as a “flightless bird”. Throughout his interview there were occurring themes in the way that he described his languages and how he used them. As part of the thematic analysis, I have assigned four categories for his languages in accordance with how he described them in his narrative. These are, languages of identity (The languages of his mother and father respectively), languages of agency (The languages that he states have helped him navigate the outside world), languages of protest/resistance ( The languages that he insists on speaking or silencing as acts of defiance and languages of emotion (The two languages that carry two emotions to an extreme degree) . Within these categories, more detail will be provided of what I have only briefly mentioned so far. In his own voice, Samson shares his lived experiences of these languages weaving together both past and present experiences.

### 2.5.2 Languages of Identity (Genealogy)

The two languages of genealogy are Sesotho and Sepedi. These are the languages spoken by his mother and father, respectively. The nature of the relationship he has with either parents is reflected in the relationship that he has with both languages. The first to be addressed is Sesotho.

**Sesotho:** Sesotho is represented in purple. It is the language of his mother a language that he experiences as nurturing. Samson gives three representations of this language. He represents it as a very prominent eye through which he first saw the world and as the veins in his body. These two reflect his personal, internal experience and interaction with Sesotho which he describes as “peaceful”. However, he also states that his relationship with Sesotho is “complicated”. The complications arise when Sesotho interacts with the outside world. He uses the hair to represent the conflict that he attaches to typical expectations of being a young Sotho boy and conformity to those gender norms. Another area of conflict comes when he must defend his ‘Sotho-ness’ to the outside world, in terms of how he speaks the language and practices the culture. The coil in the hair is meant to represent the conflict.

**Samson:** It’s my language in a very personal sense. In the sense that uhm *hoba mosotho* [to be a Sotho/Sotho person] to me it’s not very much a cultural identity. *Hoba mosotho* to me is in the same way as uhm... it’s about as much of my identity as it is about saying I am human. It does not necessarily imply where I belong or where I fit and what not because of the spaces that are available and hence a lot of purple is very much on the inside, right and then as far as my identity goes, it’s in the hair.

I used the shape of the eye as saying that this is my mother tongue at the same time, right. It’s how I first learnt how to, you know... it’s like a sensory experience. My first sensory experience. My first, you know, beyond sensory experience... the world was through Sesotho. That’s how I learnt to reason, know how to have relationship with the world, between my senses, how I first learnt to reason. It was through that.



Samson goes on to talk about the ritual of cutting his hair as a prerequisite for belonging in his community as a young Sotho boy, hence his identity as a true Sotho man is better represented by uncut hair. This is the Sesotho that is displayed outside of his body, the Sesotho that also comes in conflict with the outside world. Samson's portrait provides both visual and verbal descriptions of his embodied experience of language. Busch (2012: 520) highlights that "languages insofar as they constitute the subject are embodied by him" and so the role of the body is important "in relation to body and memory". As mentioned earlier, it is agreed upon by many scholars that the importance of the body in research and in the construction of knowledge cannot be neglected. With language portraits, participants can think and express themselves in both pictures and words. This makes it possible for them to make explicit connections to bodily experience by literally emplacing language on the body (silhouette).

This process of thinking in pictures "contributes to foregrounding the emotional experience of language, power relations, and desire" (Busch 2012: 521). Judith Butler (1997 cited in Busch 2012) addresses "the issue of the relationship between language, subject, body, and power" and highlights the importance of language in constituting the subject. Kramersch (2006: 100) speaks of the subject as "a symbolic entity [that] is not given but has to be consciously constructed against the backdrop of natural and social forces that both bring it into being and threaten to destroy its freedom and autonomy". In him making clear the difference between what he sees as just being a human and what he sees as his identity, we see a clear instance of what Kramersch refers to when saying that the subject is a symbolic entity.

In the section below we take a closer look at the link between language, identity and social norms as embodied by the hair.

**SM:** You say that it's in the hair. I want to know the significance of the hair because you have dreadlocks and you say that your Sotho-ness, you represented it primarily in the hair. What's the significance of that?

**Samson:** Uhm there's a very... ok I actually... for a long time uhm my hair has been quite a, you know, an area of contention but for very personal reasons. I guess we can speak of them structurally, right. I mean speaking on a very gendered experience, uhm my hair has been a very important part of my identity because it was always uhm...in a lot of ways it made me a part of society but it also in a lot of ways it made me outside of it. And that informed my identity in the sense uhm when I was growing up, I would, I cut my hair, right. But every time I cut my hair, it was a way of me bonding and getting closer with society and participating in those gender roles and gender norms, you know, uhm *tsa hoba ngwana wa moshimane* [of being a Sotho boy/ boy child] and all of those things which brought me closer, you know, and brought me deeper within the community. I mean you go to a barber shop, you know, uhm like, *e bile wa bona* [in fact you see] it's not even barbershops. *O ya ko Saloon* [you go to the Salon], and hence you see even now I

tend to switch to Sesotho when I'm talking about, you know, growing up because... and even when I, like when I try to articulate ideas that are very personal to me I tend to go back to Sesotho.

**SM:** You go ahead I'll stop you where I don't understand.

**Samson:** It's about my identity because uhm in as much as Sesotho, like I have a very tumultuous relationship with it going outside. I mean when you look at the inside, right, it's very straight smooth lines and what not. So...

**SM:** I see that. Are those veins?

**Samson:** Yes, it supposed to represent a very stable and harmonious kinda uhm relationship with Sesotho. You know, by myself, you know, in personal spaces. In spaces like with family. Like very in close spaces, I'm very comfortable and I don't really have a... it's not really a battle or contestation, you know. It's my language, it's my mother tongue. It's how I know the world and I'm very comfortable, I'm very easy with that. It's when it meets the world, even though I retain it, it becomes very distorted and contorted because it then calls upon an identity that I don't necessarily subscribe uhm, you know, with because I grew up in a township. I don't have... I'm not part of the history that has *ko mahaeng* [the homelands] or a, you know, a larger, you know, the homeland kind of history. So for me *ikasi* [the township] is kinda where I was born and grew up.

**SM:** So that's your culture, that's your tradition? You have a kasi tradition.

**Samson:** Yes.

**SM:** So you don't have the uhm you know like I'll go to Lesotho and we will have *umsebenzi* [Zulu: a traditional ceremony]. You don't have any of that?

I mean even when that happens uhm *mosebetsi* [Sotho: traditional ceremony] is done, it's tailored to the way we do it *ko well ko hae re baKwena ke baha Tsoku* [at home we are baKwena of Tsoku] and that's my mother's side of the family.

**SM:** Mahatsuku? Is that the surname?

Yeah, Tsoku, that t-s-o-k-u and then the totem is the crocodile, *Kwena. Kwena ha e tshetsha*. Which basically means that uhm I guess it slithers [lurks]... as close as possibly just beneath the surface of the water before it, you know, (he claps his hands) grabs. And uhm we have traditions that have, probably are not the same as the ones, if we go to see *baKwena ba dulang* [the baKwenas who live] you know in the homelands, whatever, they're probably not the same. I think we have very established kinda traditions within the family itself *baKweneng*. These are always contested. You know when I claim *hoba Mosotho* [to

be Sotho] uhm, you know, amongst people from like the Freestate, Lesotho, you know. It's always, it's always seen as if I have to fight to, you know, *hoba Mosotho*. So hence the coil, (the coil in the figure's hair) although I still maintain and grab...

**SEPEDI:** Sepedi is represented in green. It is his father's language which he deliberately refuses to accept as his own. In most South African cultures, conventionally, the cultural identity is taken from the father, which in this case would be Pedi. Sepedi is a language that he rejects just as it rejected him (his father left them when he was very young). It is also a language, in his experience, that imposes expectations on him of hyper masculinity which he also associates with his father. He has therefore represented it as pubic hair.

**Samson:** Sepedi here is represented in the green. Uhm I have decided to use that, you know, uhm in various parts of the body which are usually associated in constructing gender and sexuality, I guess. You know? So pubic hair, armpit hair and I've included it at the tips of the hair. I've purposefully avoided facial hair uhm because Sepedi is not a language that I wanna...It's not a language that I feel, I speak in.

**SM:** But you know it?

**Samson:** But I know it. I can speak it fluently but then it's not a language that I feel I speak in. It's a language, uhm, I don't believe I authoritatively speak in because it's a language I've always associated with my father.

**SM:** Is your father Pedi?

**Samson:** Yes he was. And the thing is my parents got divorced when I was pretty young and he pretty much faded from my life. And in so fading when I went back. When I went to St. George's College - because this was like pre crèche time. When I went to St. George's College, uhh this is like grade one to grade three. The predominantly spoken language around there was Sepedi and that space is a very gendered and a patriarchal kind of space. And somehow, I because of... I don't know, people said my nose I guess and what not, I resembled my father quite a lot and there was always this expectation of this performance of manhood. You know, that uhm was always not me but was always imposed upon me and expected of me. Uhm and hence it's there and you know, I put it at the tips of like the uhm hair because uhm it wasn't until I made a friend recently... It wasn't until I made friendships, you know, outside and independent of Sepedi being the language that my father speaks, being the language of my paternal side of the family that I'm unfamiliar with. You know, this side of the family that somehow is clothed with shame right. Uhm because of the divorce and... I mean whenever I would bump into any Sepedi speaking person, especially grownups. 1st



thing they ask me is “*yoh, ngwana Si*” [Sotho/Sepedi<sup>3</sup>: *yoh Si*’s child] *yabo* [Zulu: you see]. But then at home *Si* was this... it was almost like a swear word. That’s my father’s name, uhm Simon. It was almost like a swear word, a dirty word.

Like here it is, these people are expecting me to just somehow adopt this person, you know. And my thing was, I don’t mind *uSi* being a swear word and what not because... he’s not someone I will... much like the language, that I will use to identify myself with, right. So I don’t mind how ya’ll use it. It doesn’t really, it uhm... to go a bit into the profane, it doesn’t really fuck with me. Uhm and the people will say, “oh I saw your father at this and this place” and I actually think to myself “oh ...okay... Uhm what am I expected to do with this information?” you know. And *yah* [yeah] and when I went to St. George’s College is in Groblersdal.

Groblersdal is the 1st town you got on you way to..... **(He directs me).**

It’s on the cusp of Mpumalanga and Limpopo.

And I remember the last time I was like going to Limpopo. The last time I was there was for my father’s funeral, right and uhm I remember uhm at the time, at the funeral, it was so significant that I look like him. It was so significant and people were like “ooh your mom did a great thing bringing you here, you know, to at least see him off”. And I remember being asked if I wanted to see him and I was like ok cool, I’ll go see him. I really didn’t want to. And then I remember seeing this skinny person inside of this box and he may as well have been... You know, it was like, show me a corpse of someone who’s just died on the street. I didn’t know what to even say! It was the first time, you know, we even being part of such a ritual of seeing... Of seeing a person. What are you supposed to say? I only learnt later on that you suppose to give your final goodbye and be like “hey dad I’m here and blah blah blah.” And then I remember I was just silent for a moment. I was just like...

**SM:** How old were you?

**Samson:** I was about 16 or so.

**SM:** So Sepedi. Sepedi is your association with you father. Sepedi is in your hair...

**Samson:** At the very tips.

**SM:** Ok and you speak it well but it’s not really something you use often?

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<sup>3</sup> The two languages are related enough for there to be shared vocabulary and sentences that sound the same and share meaning.

**Samson:** *Yah*, it isn't. It isn't. It connects me in a different way to ...It's in my hair because it connects me in a different way to uhm heredity in the sense that uhm because of people that I met, the friends I made in school. Because of the friends I made later, in school, growing up. I developed a new relationship with *iSepedi*. With other Sepedi because instead of Sesotho. To them Sepedi was what Sesotho was to me. And because I could not speak Sesotho, I could speak Sepedi and reach into those people intimately. And I had a very different intimate relationship then with Sepedi, right. And hence when I say that *ke moPedi*, [I am Pedi] right, it began to signify more than just saying that, you know... it began to signify more than just genealogy. It became something that I could... A cultural identity I could inhabit and hence even at the tips of my hair. But it's still in a large portion and way, remains a very patriarchal kind of, you know, sore sensitive point. You know...

His description of his relationship with Sepedi is full of stops and starts. It is clear that this is something he feels strongly about and, even with great difficulty, he wants to make sure he is understood. You will notice that this particular section is full of those seemingly random deviations from the narrative that were mentioned earlier (The last time he went to Limpopo, the divorce, the funeral, etc.). These are referred to as small stories and can be defined as “the telling of ongoing, past and future or hypothetical events that do not always follow the typical narrative structure in regard to chronology” (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008: 5). These small stories seem to arise and interject, midsentence. However, without these seemingly random tangents, a lot of what he wants us to understand about this relationship with Sepedi would be lost. As he reflects on how and why he uses different codes and language, these “stories” present as random interjections that provide pockets of memories about everyday events that he attaches meaning to, specifically with regard to his linguistic repertoires.

These stories fill in the gaps and explain why he feels distance, from the language and the culture. They elaborate on the identity that is thrust on him and that he refuses to take on. The visual mode helps participants to break free from the linear and sequential structure of narration by steering “one's vision toward the whole (the Gestalt) and toward the relationality of the parts” (Busch 2012: 518). Unlike verbal modes that require a neat start and end, being able to take in the relational parts of the whole “allows contradictions, fractures, overlappings and ambiguities more easily to remain unresolved” (Busch 2016: 8). Small stories may at first glance seem like unimportant digressions from the perspective of an interviewer but this retelling of significant events in time “provide[s] a way to locate sections of data that offer rich insights into the subjectivities and positioning of those involved in the interaction” Ryan (2008 cited in Bristowe 2014: 42).

The portrait provides a reference, through the green tips in his hair that he later explains as a change in his relationship with Sepedi. Another prominent feature here is that in the whole time that he talks about Sepedi, he never really uses Sepedi. Revealing that this is still a language that he distances himself from. He also says that he

avoided facial hair as this is not a language that he speaks in with authority. In contrast, Sesotho, English and isiZulu are all represented on his face. The last two are what I have chosen to call his languages of agency.

### 2.5.3 Languages of agency

English and isiZulu are the two languages that he refers to as his languages of agency. Both helped him to “navigate the world” though they do not have the personal connection of Sesotho that first taught him how to see the world. At the bottom of his portrait he has made red (English) bricks surrounded by blue (Zulu) mortar to represent their functionality in his life.

**SM:** I see bricks in Zulu and English?

**Samson:** Ok, let me go straight to the bricks. IsiZulu and English were the languages for me growing up which I learned as a way of navigating the world, not necessarily being introduced to the world but navigating the world. I don't really consider them as uhm... uhm... I use the red as a brick because I don't... I have a very complicated, I think, relationship with English in the sense that in a lot of ways it is my language and in a lot of ways it's also not my language. It's one of those languages that I've used as a, kind of like a road that I've been traveling upon.

**ISIZULU:** Samson's relationship with isiZulu is an uncomplicated one. He has no personal or emotional connection with it, however, it has served important functions in his life thus far. IsiZulu is the first language that he associates with being able to stand up for himself. It is a language that has served him well and empowers him. Hence he has spots of blue on his elbows and knees to represent the flexibility the language has afforded him. He carries the ideology that Zulu is a language of aggression that seems to stem from popular discourses in his community, and perhaps personal experience, and so he has placed it on the finger tips.

**Samson:** Uhm I wanted to first start to using isiZulu as the mouth piece, the first proper mouth piece I had because it was with isiZulu that I first... and that was the first uhm language that I actually uhm learned, well I think, like when I look back on it... I associate it a lot with uhm, you know, aggression. Where I first had to really fight for things, to stand my ground, you know uhm, claim things, you know.

**SM:** You did that in isiZulu?

**Samson:** Yes. IsiZulu is how I learned, not that I only did it in isiZulu but that's how I learnt to do it well.

**SM:** Not Sesotho?

**Samson:** Not Sesotho.

**SM:** Why?

**Samson:** Not Sesotho because it would feel like a... contamination I guess. Uhm and Well now it feels like a contamination. I don't like fighting in Sesotho.

**SM:** Why? Is Sesotho your language of respect?

**Samson:** Yes, yes. IsiZulu is a language I pick up, I wear, I kinda take up like clothes. It's not my skin but then I wear it like clothes.

**SM:** Right, and this Zulu uniform, you wear under which circumstances? List the times when you wear your Zulu uniform.

**Samson:** Ok, the first time I remember wearing the Zulu uniform was when I first was uhm, you know, in a strange other township and when I went to visit relatives. When I first left the security of the home. Uhm isiZulu, that was like, you know, the language that I had to pick up very quickly. I mean, traveling, you know, by taxi. Uhm, long distance. Uhm, it became the language that I could use, you know, to uhm kind of go places and hence it also is kinda like the mortar around my bricks.

It's in my fingertips. To indicate, I guess, the violence uhm but it also can... because a lot of the aggression that I met, I can link in a lot of ways to isiZulu. And I dance on the edge of tribalism here, I'm aware but then it's how... *Ko kasi* [in the township] there's a running joke that you don't mug someone *ka Sesotho* [Sotho: in Sesotho], you mug them in isiZulu.

[Laughter]

Like you don't go, you don't go to GP Street and then you wanna take someone's wallet or whatever and be like, "*ngfe, ngfe phone ya hao* [give me, give me your phone]. *Ngfe wallet* [give me the wallet]..." No, you go there like and you must *ngesiZulu* [Zulu: in Zulu] say, "*letha le phone, letha le wallet* [give me that phone, give me that wallet]". So even conflict, like when I first started seeing conflict and started growing up around conflict you know...

**SM:** And so you say that it's your language of violence as well?

**Samson:** Yes

**SM:** Or standing up for yourself?

**Samson:** Standing up for myself, survival I guess. Right, uhm it's my language of agency as well. Hence it's at the joints as well. Uhm because it's where I first start to... I don't know, bend, be flexible, fight back.

**ENGLISH:** English is a language he describes as his own but also not his own. It has empowered him even more than isiZulu. Above his Zulu mouth piece he has drawn what he says is a red loud speaker. Aside from it forming the path he walks on, English also in some instances becomes his cape that gives him super powers. Similar to Sesotho, he feels that the relationship that he has with English is a complicated one. In this case the complication lies in the fact that, to a certain extent, English threatens the position of Sesotho in his life. English has become so part of him that he cannot distance himself from it as he can with isiZulu and it seems to compete for the same spaces in his life as Sesotho fills. He represents this by drawing English alongside Sesotho in his veins and in his hair. When he speaks about English there is an obvious tension that comes through in his narrative.

This fear of the invasion of English is not unique to Samson. Other studies have also found the existence of this tension in multilingual participants across local and international contexts (Mckinney 2007; Bristowe 2014). In many countries across the world, English is the language of opportunity. Such is also the case in South Africa, “as in many parts of postcolonial Africa, English dominates the political economy” (Probyn 2009: 123) resulting in the majority of schools choosing English as the medium of instruction. Parents, hoping to provide better opportunities for their children, will push for their children to have access to languages of perceived success which in many cases is English. Parents may choose to send their children to English medium schools and might even choose to speak English at home (Mckinney 2007; Purkarthofer 2019). However, many people experience English as a threat to the languages they hold dear because it leaves little room for the practical use of any other language.

For some people there is also a fear of becoming more proficient in English than in their mother tongue. For others there are feelings of guilt because this has already happened. Probyn (2009: 129) speaks about an ambivalence toward English expressed by teachers and learners in her study as “they recognised its instrumental value but were concerned that their home language and culture was being eroded by English”. This is something that Samson also expresses. Whether or not to speak English and how frequently it is spoken becomes a matter of language loyalty and an attempt to preserve one’s cultural identity. In the South African context this is a common dilemma, particularly with people who were given the opportunity to go to former model C<sup>4</sup> schools. Their identities are threatened and their authenticity in black communities becomes contested (Mckinney 2007; Bristowe 2014). Samson and most of my other participants went to these former model C schools. Much as they appreciate the opportunity to learn English, they will often say that English was forced on them.

This is how Samson relates his own experience with English:

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<sup>4</sup>Former Model C schools are government schools that are administrated and largely funded by a governing body of parents and alumni. Some of the country's best schools fall into this category, and fees are somewhere between private and regular government school fees. The term "model C" is still commonly used to describe former whites-only government schools.

**Samson:** The complicated relationship with English is that uhm, whereas isiZulu taught me to be flexible and stand my ground and fight, it was never personal. Whenever I think. It's very seldom that I think in isiZulu, for instance. Uhm but it's very common that I think in English

**SM:** Even more than Sesotho?

**Samson:** Uhm that's the trouble. I don't think it's more than.

**SM:** It's equal, equal?

**Samson:** Uhm, I think that. Ok, it might be more than but I then I think that's the wrong question.

**SM:** Ok what's the right question?

**Samson:** I think meaning. Something that leans towards more uhm meaning, right. Uhm I'm going to think a lot of times in English, because of the uhm academy and how, you know, it takes up so much place in my life. And hence it's supposed to represent firstly, a chamber echo kinda thing? Before it become like uhm...

**SM:** Chamber, echo? Make me understand.

**Samson:** In the sense that, it's how I learnt to speak loudly.

**SM:** Ohhhh, ok.

**Samson:** Yes, it's how I first learnt how to speak loudly. If isiZulu taught me how to speak up for myself, English taught me how to shout, I guess.

**SM:** Wow! Is that why it's there? (pointing to the portrait) Cause for a moment there I thought that was a gag.

**Samson:** No, no... and in a sense, kind of. You know it's a bit of like both, right.

**SM:** Ok?

**Samson:** Because for a long time it was a gag...

**SM:** English was a gag. Why was it a gag?

**Samson:** Yes. For a long time it was a gag because it uhm, I had a... for a long time it like became kind of like a zero sum game with Sesotho.

**SM:** A what game?

**Samson:** A zero sum game with Sesotho

**SM:** What is zero sum game?

**Samson:** Uhm like uh, what is it? Mutually exclusive.

**SM:** Alright.

**Samson:** In the sense that... I felt a lot of times that I either had to articulate myself *ka Sesotho* or in English to be uhm authentic about, or to be as clear about how I feel.

He later mentions that Afrikaans was forced on him. I then asked if that was not the case with English as well. He answered as follows:

**Samson:** Although it [English] was forced on me, I cannot deny completely my complicity in taking it up and personalizing it because it also became a means of access for me and hence the torso is like that (points at the portrait).

On his portrait English joins Sesotho in his body from the neck to the feet. The two become intertwined. This is where the conflict lies. English protects him, it helps him counter negative stereotypes and opens doors for him. He cannot do this in Sesotho but he does not want Sesotho to lose the position of importance in his life.

**Samson:** Uhm so later on, English for a long time becomes uhm my personal language that helps to empower me. It gives me the kind of access, the kind of mobility, the kind of fortitude I think that Sesotho originally gave me but I can no longer find because I'm in all these spaces now. Like I'm in a boarding school. I mean Ben Viljoen. You know, I'm moving in places where my whole identity is basically being reduced to uhm you're lower class, you're literally poor, whatever. Even though I had never felt you know, poor, under privileged, whatever but here you are, all these identities are now like put on you kinda vibe. So English becomes a means for me to escape that. I mean it's also how I learnt how to navigate uhm even gendered experience for instance. It was because of my proficiency in English, for instance, that I think I was able to uhm learn... I always go back to uhm an event in primary school, in boarding school, where uhm I stood out like a thumb. I was the queerest of the kids. So I remember there was a time when uh... the guys... like everyone for some reason had somehow, had already been punished. These were days when corporal punishment was still a thing.

**SM:** Punished for what?!

**Samson:** Somewhere, somehow they'd done something that earned them a jacking. We used to call them jackings then and I was the only person at the time who hadn't been. So the boys started conspiring, I guess homophobia also contributed to that, uhm to try and get me punished. And so they set me up by trying...



Someone broke the dustbin, I think, and then you know said that I sat on it - cause I was big, I still am - and said I sat on it and broke it. And that was a very big deal because the headmasters hated replacing things all the time that we broke. And I was approached. And you know, it was through English, right, that I was able to very persuasively and convincingly let the headmaster know that “look, you know better than anyone that I don’t have many friends. You know better than anyone that, you know, uhm this is not in my character. You know better than anyone that I’m very much aware of how big I am. So I’m not going to be going around sitting on dustbins, where I could fall inside them”.

**SM:** And as you’ve grown and as you’ve moved to Stellenbosch. Where would you put the languages that we’ve just spoken about now? How has your relationships with those languages changed, if they’ve changed at all, and what tools... how have did you use them here?

**Samson:** Uhm here... here uhm I like to use uh English as a cape. And the reason is, in similar ways as it was in primary school, it’s also become my language of agency I guess. Because uhm all the other languages that uh, you know, I speak in this space, they’re mute. They’re muted rather.

He then goes on to give reasons for the muting of the other languages.

**Samson:** Firstly, I don’t think I have people to speak them with. Secondly, I don’t think there’s much of an interest or even an awareness that other languages actually do exist in this university. Thirdly, language here is uhm... it’s as good as a pen. It’s, it’s a mere tool of uhm... as significant as it is, it’s undermined and it’s seen as disposable. So it’s a mere tool of getting from A to B. It’s always a means and never an end.

#### 2.5.4 Languages of protest

Having mentioned that many of the languages he speaks are muted in this space, it is apt to look at the languages whose voices he deliberately fights to hear or ignore. Busch (2012: 520) speaks of how , in spaces of super-diversity “speakers participate in varying spaces of communication” each with its own language regime - its own set of rules, orders of discourse, and language ideologies - in which linguistic resources are assessed differently” (Busch 2012: 520). Within these spaces speakers must position themselves in relation to these rules, “either by submitting to them willingly or reluctantly or by transgressing them” (Busch 2012: 520), in accordance with the evolution of their linguistic resources with each changing environment. How they choose to react to these regimes is influenced both by the past experiences and evaluations that they bring with them from other spaces as well as the present ones Busch (2012). The assessment of every other linguistic resource that Samson has in SU spaces, aside from



English, is seen as irrelevant. In this section we see how Samson positions himself in relation to these regimes by fighting for what he feels is oppressed and resisting what he experiences as oppressive. In this section he explicitly refers to “power moves” that he has had to make using language, in the time that he has been at SU.

**ISIXHOSA:** The colour for isiXhosa is lime and Samson represents it as a door and as breasts. This is a language he has actively fought to see and hear more of. He makes connections between this language and the “free the nipple movement” which to him is all about disrupting dominating regimes.

**SM:** And the isiXhosa is the last one here. This is the one where I was like, what is that that you’re drawing? Is this a bird cage?

**Samson:** It’s a door, it’s supposed to be a door.

**SM:** Ok tell me, isiXhosa. You came across isiXhosa for the first time here?

**Samson:** Yes, and it’s also one of those very uhm... it... it feels... grotesque has the wrong connotations and denotations but uhm... and vulgar too but then. *A ke e behe so* [Sotho: Let me put it this way] *ngesiXhosa, ikrwada*. [Xhosa: in isiXhosa, it is rude/crass]

**SM:** Ok so it’s not a rude language?

**Samson:** Yes

**SM:** It’s not crass either, it’s just rough... it’s just rough... I think that’s the best we can come up with.

**Samson:** Yes

**SM:** Ok. Why is it rough? Is it the sound?

**Samson:** Not even the sound. Its uhm the way it’s... or the speakers whom I have encountered. The way speakers that I’ve encountered use it. Uhm I mean I’ll take something as I mean, as profane in all the other languages that I know as it is. Like saying “*hayi wena ungumngqundu*” [Xhosa: no man you are (swear word)] you know, kinda vibe.

And I’m like wow! In every other language that is like a real proper insult! Not even *ngesiNdebele* [in Ndebele] which is very open, I think for me you know with insults, to say anything. But that is like a... and it took a while, especially with the friends of mine like who are Xhosa, for me to realise that this person isn’t trying to be offensive at all.

**SM:** So now why did you make that part? (Pointing to the chest on his portrait)

**Samson:** Ok, and I represented it as beasts because, especially exposed breasts. Because it became uhm.... a relation... it kind of made me [conscious] of how I think about... even the way we think about women's bodies. Uhhh...I'll take it back to the free the nipples movement, right.

**SM:** When was that?

**Samson:** That was about three or so years ago. This is a movement that started by uhm... let's just for now, say white feminist who come from a heritage that writers like Michael Foucault writes about in saying that Victorianism, right, created this super conservative culture where even piano legs had to have skirts. A very conservative clothed kind of culture, right. Uhm and hence nudity becomes a very big disruptive, you know, kind of moment.

IsiXhosa to me represents where uhm the conflict. Where that comes from because taken from a... you know, from a black experience, you know, for lack of a better word. Nudity is not something peculiar. Well nudity rather let me say nudity is something that is much more associated with genitalia, just the genitalia, that is and not necessarily women's breasts and things like that. But then that nudity was reproduced in colonial violence. In the gendered extremities of colonial violence, you know. Having exposed breasts for instance. I mean was something that uhm when I'd go to Monsterlus, for instance. When I'd see it, uhm after having been at school for some time it would be like ooh whoa whoa whoa!! But then after some time you go back to being like oh *ke motho fela* [Sotho: it's just a person], just walking by. So isiXhosa was a very kinda like, kind of uhm... it was that experience but very much aggressive, intense, in that moment.

**SM:** Do you not think you see Xhosa that way because one of the fights against so much Afrikaans at this University, one of the things used to disrupt is "let us introduce isiXhosa"?

**Samson:** Yes!

**SM:** Had you not thought of it that way before?

**Samson:** No, no.

**SM:** I'm asking because you associate this with, you know, colonisation and how it's the white people that came with the whole thing of bare breasts are nudity. Uhm and for us it was never a thing and now uhm you were saying that when they were trying to shake the whole patriarchal vibe, they used nudity to do it

but when Open Stellenbosch<sup>5</sup>, and you were a big part of that, was just shaking things they were using we want to see more isiXhosa.

**Samson:** Yes, yes, yes. Wow that actually is like uhm...I didn't realise, I didn't that realise I was doing that I guess.

**SM:** Those were the lines that... this is my interpretation but am I misinterpreting this?

**Samson:** No you're not. I didn't realise I was doing that. I really didn't realise.

This is a moment where through dialogue, knowledge was co-constructed by contributing an outsider perspective to what he only sees subjectively. By offering a different perspective connections are highlighted that, though already there, were not as obvious to him. Earlier in the interview when he refers to languages being "as a good as a pen", he talks about how he has always advocated for isiXhosa and Kaaps.

**SM:** So if you're telling me that it's [language] like a pen, right. Then uhm why all the stuff that we've had? The discussions. I mean, you know, language policy. Afrikaans, no let's introduce isiXhosa, no English is the language of the coloniser. If it's as insignificant as a pen then why all the...?

**Samson:** Because the insignificance here, that is constructed here, is not the whole story of what this language is. For me personally, I don't speak isiXhosa but I was advocating strongly for the inclusion of isiXhosa, right, and iKaaps

**SM:** Oh is it? You were advocating for the inclusion of iKaaps as well?

**Samson:** Yes with Tim Steenkamp [he names a friend also involved in the Open Stellenbosch movement] and the lot, as part of Open Stellenbosch. Because I understood what it's like to have uhm a language that is so much wider than just being a means of communication but also as an identity marker and the same with the Sesotho is for me, right. In the very personal way that it is for me. It's how I first met the world, right. Although it may not be how I first started speaking with the world but then I could easily replace isiXhosa with Sesotho in another person. And that's why it was important and why it remains important.

**SM:** Do you think anything has changed since the time that you've been lobbying for more recognition of isiXhosa and...?

**Samson:** Yes, I believe things have changed but not nearly as much as they have to.

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<sup>5</sup> "Open Stellenbosch was created to challenge the hegemony of white Afrikaans culture and the exclusion of black students and staff. Open Stellenbosch is a movement of predominantly black students and staff at the University who refuse to accept the current pace of transformation" The Daily Maverick (2015). <https://bit.ly/33ccOk6>

**SM:** What has changed?

**Samson:** What has changed is uhm the assumption that we move with English and Afrikaans as though they're the only languages spoken in the whole universe. As though it's a given. That has changed significantly. They must still, to a certain extent, be justified as to why. And what has not changed is a lot of the justifications sometimes are not good enough. They're not good enough. And again, isiXhosa continually is muted and is used to uhm, as a poster I guess, as opposed to something really taken seriously. I mean you only look at the translations in emails for instance in isiXhosa. You need only look at uhm how certain words in isiXhosa, I mean signage for instance... You need only look at how, how appallingly, you know, it's done.

**SM:** So you also drew it here as a door.

**Samson:** I also wrote it as a door because uhm it then symbolised for me a whole new world.

**SM:** How so?

**Samson:** A whole new world in the sense that uhm... it made me think that. With these..., I could have easily drawn this picture without isiXhosa. But then I said no man, isiXhosa is very important here because I believe I'm still in the learning phases of isiXhosa and how it functions. More than just how we speak it but uhm... I mean more than just uh as a language of conveying information but as a cultural identity, I guess. Leaning more towards that way. And it opens me up to new people. I mean, you know, we could think of language, I guess, also as a kind of philosophy that it carries through that culture. And it's like I met new people and the newest people that I've met have been people who identify as Xhosa.

**AFRIKAANS:** This is his second language of protest but in the opposite way to isiXhosa. Afrikaans is the language that he deliberately dismisses.

**Samson:** It's grey. Uhm it's in the uh... It's a few stones here and there. I've used it to navigate around spaces like for instance around high school. I went to, I first started at an English/ Afrikaans high school. Both my primary schools were in English but then the second language was Afrikaans. And learning Afrikaans, I remember uhm, it was completely... I could not, I could not make connection *ka* Afrikaans.

**SM:** Connections with people?

**Samson:** It was difficult for me to learn. Yes, it was difficult for me to learn. Because it felt like I was learning... It's strange for me to say it. I felt like I was learning... I was properly learning a new language!

**SM:** New, new? No connections to anything else?

**Samson:** It felt so unfamiliar, it's so... It gave me the feeling of like literally walking into a whole new world. And I was forced to learn it. So it, that was the one thing. Hence it like, it kind of like disrupted even what I imagine could have been a very symbiotic relationship between my Sesotho identity slash language and English identity slash language learning.

**SM:** So you were forced to learn it. What do you mean by that?

We had to take up a first additional language. Uhm and at the time, the conversation, even with my parents, was that uhm, you know, you go to a former model C school, uhm the additional language or so called African language you're gonna learn, right, was Afrikaans. So the only languages that you use in class were either Afrikaans or English. So here's a language uhm I have to now pick it up and I have to run with it.

I remember it was grade in 4. It was the first time I properly felt, you know umh... It was a strange transition going from St. George's College to Middleburg primary school because I guess the standards were very different but then uhm I remember... there's a... There was a week I won't forget. Uhm Miss Smith, she was my grade 4 English teacher. I had switched to Middleburg primary school when I went to grade 4 and I remember uhm we had to do these exercises every day. And I remember uhm I had missed an exercise on the page and then that was the time she put like a big red stamp "incomplete"! Then I remember I went back, I did that exercise, and then I think I missed the next day's exercise and then it was another big stamp! And that really pushed me back and then I remember when I came back the third time, I had done the whole week's exercises. And then she started being like "oh ja you should have just left spaces here". But then I kind of was able to redeem myself. But then with Afrikaans, I did not even have that agency to kinda, you know, redeem myself when I made mistakes.

**SM:** Because it was that difficult?

**Samson:** Yes, it felt like I was always on a tumble. I always felt unintelligent.

**SM:** Ok so Xhosa is muted. You came here, all the other languages in your repertoire were muted and then English, Afrikaans. How did you use them here? Did they grow? Did they...

**Samson:** So that's the center. Afrikaans has kinda stayed in the middle. It's stayed stagnant.

**SM:** Is it Stagnant?

**Samson:** I feel it's stagnant, I feel it's stagnant.

**SM:** Even here, in a place that's so full of Afrikaans?

**Samson:** Uhm I refused to speak it, when I came here. I refused to.

**SM:** Why? Even from like the first time you got here?

**Samson:** Yes, yes.

**SM:** Have you been refusing all these five years to speak it?

**Samson:** Uhm, yeah! Well most of them. Not entirely. And there was no particular decision to not speak Afrikaans. It was being in a room, walking into a room and then people are speaking Afrikaans and then you trying to highlight the fact that “yo, you are speaking a language that I most likely do not understand because of where I’m from” and how do I make you aware of that without, you know, I guess uhm shifting the focus of the social gathering. So if it’s at a meeting that I’d walk in to, then I would then let them speak in Afrikaans and then I would respond in English. And that would tell me, based on their reaction, what kind of person they are.

A person who is considerate would realise that I am speaking English, I understood Afrikaans and then if they’re a person of conscience they will then enquire and say “oh you understand Afrikaans” and then most people would ask, I say “yes I do understand Afrikaans”.

I remember the time I was rather fluent at it. Especially, you know, conversational/colloquial Afrikaans and a bit into the academic side of it. Although not in the law discipline that’s still very new. And you know, I’d intentionally create a tension in saying that “but I’ll continue speaking in English”. Because I do not... because I mean, as much as we try to avoid it, languages have a kind of social capital in a sense. And for me to try speak Afrikaans would feel like I am jumping over walls to try and get into this club. And my interest is not about getting into the club, it’s about opening the club up entirely.

**SM:** So do you think there’s a closed space that Afrikaans as a language creates and can you describe that?

**Samson:** Yes, and it’s not Kaaps, it’s totally not Kaaps. It’s totally not the Afrikaans that is spoken, even in Kylemore, you know, uhm which might not necessarily constitute Kaaps I guess. But then it’s not formal Afrikaans. The Afrikaans of apar...It’s the Afrikaans that has the history of apartheid. Formal.

**SM:** So if you were to say Kaaps and the other Afrikaans spoken in Kylemore uh what kind of Afrikaans is that? If this one is the Afrikaans of apartheid, what is the other Afrikaans?

**Samson:** The other Afrikaans is the Afrikaans of uhm...I’ll use this building, I mean, as an example. It’s the Afrikaans that the cleaners speak in. It’s the Afrikaans that, in the same way that I had to learn English to negotiate power relationships, you know, that I’ve come to be somewhat dependent upon. A lot of uhm well majority of the cleaners who speak Afrikaans are coloured and they come into these jobs and they’re

taken on as being able to speak Afrikaans to the pleasure of what is assumed to be an Afrikaans, you know academic, professorship, whoever who is in charge or in power. And that apartheid formal Afrikaans is spat upon them to give orders and instructions. And it's assumed that you understand Afrikaans, it's enough for you to understand Afrikaans, to receive orders and do as you're told. And that is that!

But then Kaaps and the kind of Afrikaans that is spoken by, you know, the cleaning staff in particular, is very intimate. It has a history. *E tsoana ha hulu* [Sotho: it's very similar] in a lot of ways like Sesotho, right. Because this is the language that you speak to... it's a language that they raise their kids on. It's a language that they speak about your favourite foods about. It's a language that you sit around the table intimately. It's that language you talk about your secrets with. So when I speak Afrikaans to uhm... you know, you know uhm lower level staff. When I speak in Afrikaans to lower level staff, specifically let's say in this building, right. It's something totally different to me speaking Afrikaans in a meeting uhm I guess.

**SM:** So you do speak Afrikaans then to the lower level staff?

**Samson:** Yes.

**SM:** And that's not selling out? That's not jumping over walls? What is that? What act are you doing when you are talking to them in Afrikaans?

**Samson:** In a lot of ways it feels like uhm going into a community where you will be welcomed as another person not another species, if that makes sense. It's the difference between uhm... I mean and we don't talk, we don't talk shop. We hardly ever talk shop. You know, we talk about personal things. We talk about... It's like talking with Jimmy and them. It's like talking and being *ekhaya* [Zulu/ Xhosa: at home] essentially and *s'khuluma sinjalo* [Zulu: talking as we are]. So it's having a casual conversation amongst equals.

**SM:** Ok let's go back to the meeting where you refused to speak uhm in Afrikaans right. Now you showed that you do understand Afrikaans. So can you fault the people in the meeting then for carrying on in Afrikaans? Because clearly you understand but it's ok you can still answer in English. Was that not meeting you half way?

**Samson:** No! You see that was the thing about Stellenbosch as well. That was the reason why, you know, we fought against the T<sup>6</sup> option as well, right. The assumption was, you can at least understand Afrikaans. So if a lecturer tends to go off in Afrikaans, you should be able to keep up. And our contention was No! So then now you're shifting all this labour upon me. You don't know what it takes for me. You cannot

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<sup>6</sup> T- option is the option offered at SU where lectures are presented 50% in English and 50% in Afrikaans

comprehend, you know. I mean if it's so difficult for an Afrikaans... for, you know, a capital A speaking Afrikaans person...

**SM:** What's capital A?

**Samson:** Uhm capital A Afrikaans that's uh apartheid kind of, super white Afrikaans. If you feel like its jumping hoops saying my name. Imagine what it's like for me to do more than just say your name but to learn, to communicate, articulate myself, do all those things that language lets me do, right, in Afrikaans. I mean Afrikaans was never like just a second language I learnt. It was probably like the fourth/fifth language I learnt and it was by far the most difficult one of them all, that I have learnt. Afrikaans could have been as good as French to me. And the moment there was about saying that "no, the structure must change to realise that it's not business as usual". In as much as uhm, and I hate to go on this rant but it kind of... To concede and speak in Afrikaans in that meeting and to concede and speak Afrikaans then, would be in a way for me to say that I am joining an apartheid University. I am joining, I'm being part of, a member of an apartheid, Afrikaans, intended, you know, white supremacist space. And for me, I cannot join such a thing. I stand totally opposed to it.

So Stellenbosch University has to change! It has to change in character if it's going to, you know, be a part of, you know, the kind of nation we're trying to build. Where we say that, you know, we're going to live as equals.

### 2.5.5 Languages of Emotion

**ISINDEBELE:** Samson describes isiNdebele as a language of "intimate childhood joy" as such he chooses not to speak it in an effort to preserve what it means to him. This language is attached to a person he seems to hold dear, Ma Mtshweni, and to the place where she lives, Monsterlus (he pronounces this as Monsterloss). He represented it as yellow lines between and above his hair, which he describes as the wind in his hair. One can pick up the joy and nostalgia and almost how he seems to float when discussing isiNdebele. He is completely relaxed and not at all struggling with making himself understood.

**SM:** And why is it flying randomly above your hair?

**Samson:** (Sigh) IsiNdebele is one of my languages of joy. Yes, a very intimate childhood joy. I mean my mom is a teacher. Uhm I moved with her to go to Groblersdal, that's when I started primary school and what not. Uhm and it's in the hair because I used to stay with a person uhm... Ma Mtshweni

**SM:** So is it still part of your hair? Is it like the extensions?



**Samson:** Not necessarily, I think it's the wind in the hair. Yes. Uhm and it's so because Ma Mtshweni is actually uhm this woman who... because I was very young, over weekends my mother wanted me to [inaudible]. She would leave me at her house and it turns out that they have actually a far older history. It turns out that when my mom first went to Groblersdal for work, she's the woman who kind of like protected her, took care of her, showed her the ropes, what not, what not. Especially during the divorce! Just before the divorce. And so I just assumed she was my grandmother. I assumed she was actually my paternal grandmother. So I'd go to her house, *ke ko di plaaseng*, (on the farms) like it's a homestead/farmstead and *amaNdebele a ne* [Zulu with slang at the end: they are Ndele people, right]. And so I remember thinking to myself like, oh my goodness the way that ... the way we laugh *eMonsterloss*.

**SM:** *Kanjani* [Zulu: how]?

**Samson:** *eMonsterloss*, the way we laugh! *Iyoh!* It was so, it's so vulgar but it isn't violent. It was the most amazing thing I've ever met, right. There is this expression *khona* [Zulu: there] "*eyi lomrathana*" right?

**SM:** What is *umrathana*?

**Samson:** Uhm *umrathana* I gue... uh... I don't, I don't even know properly what *umrathana* is but then I know what is meant when you say that *umuntu ungumrathana* [Zulu/Ndebele: a person is umrathana].

**SM:** What does it mean?

**Samson:** And it literally is like. It's like saying *motho ki skroplapo* [a person is a cleaning rag].

**SM:** Ok skroplap. *Isdwedwe* [the Zulu version]?

**Samson:** *Yebo! Uyabona. Into enjalo ne.* [Zulu: Yes! You see. Something like that, right]. But then it was said like a joke.

**SM:** But then not like as bad as saying, listen you're such a scrub?

**Samson:** Yes, it's like saying that *hayi wena urabishi man* [Sotho: gosh you're such a rubbish man]! And isiXhosa has a bit of that you know. I mean...It (isiNdebele) is very playful in very vulgar ways and it was the first time where I heard like a, you know... I, I heard like an older person swear in front of me and everyone laughs and it's a joke and it wasn't offensive to laugh as well.

**SM:** I hear you. It was a relaxed space.

**Samson:** Very Relaxed!!

**SM:** Do you use Ndebele a lot?

**Samson:** I don't and I think I choose not to

**SM:** How proficient are you?

**Samson:** I cannot read or write it.

**SM:** Why? Do you choose not to?

**Samson:** Because I feel like somehow it preserves that pocket of joy in my childhood

**SM:** Right? You don't wanna use it anywhere else.

**Samson:** No. Yes, I want it entirely to myself.

**TSHIVENDA:** This language is one that he wishes he had never learnt. He describe it as “a flightless bird” and he says he would have been happier if he had never learnt it. The memory of a painful relationship with his former friend, Rudzani, has ruined the language for him. Similar to Sepedi, his experience of Tshivenda is of patriarchy and demands made on his gender identity.

**Samson:** Tshivenda is uh... Ok. I first learnt Tshivenda because my best friend in high school was uRudzani and it's through him that I learned Tshivenda, right. We have a complicated relationship because at some point he developed uhm romantic feelings for me and then I really wasn't into that. And then it became abusive, right. So in as much as it opened an... Like hence I, I tried drawing an ostrich. I tried to draw a flightless bird, in the sense that it's supposed to be one of those languages up there. My jolly free languages that I can like keep to myself as that period. A part of myself that I feel that I can look back upon with such great, you know, nostalgia but then it feels ruined now. Because the person who introduced it to me was such a joyful, good person at some point and then it got to a place where it became very uhm violating and violent.

**SM:** So then how did that affect Tshivenda for you? Is it something that you still use or not really?

**Samson:** It's something I use in a lot of ways like uh Afrikaans. You will never gossip about me speaking Tshivenda. Nor will you gossip about me, by extension, speaking Xitsonga. Cause uhm you get an ear for it. Although I can get by with it and I can, you know, respond and what not. Uhm in the far off distance it has too many expectations of me. Expectations that I'm not willing to meet. Very patriarchal expectations of me, in one sense. Uhm in that sense and it's different from Sepedi because instead of wanting out of me a dominant kind of manhood, here it wants a substitute woman, you know, kind of vibe? Because uRudzani was like the kind of person who really wanted me like... wanted me in a sense to be his girl, I guess and I

wasn't really interested in that. And I mean uhm it counts, physicality counts. How you carry yourself. You know. Uhm from my experience of how to be, you know, Tshivenda and the gendered experience and identity, that is. Uhm, so it could have been a joyful language but it's come to a place where I like uhm I feel like I would have been happier with my life if I hadn't learned it, with everything that happened.

The growth of both the languages of emotion has been halted for two very different reasons. For isiNdebele the purpose is to keep the childhood joy untainted and for Tshivenda it is simply to forget it and the hurt it represents. Not every single theme from this interview could be included here but just through discussing the language categories, it is clear how language portraits function in the research of linguistic repertoires.

## 2.6 DISCUSSION

This chapter has looked at the practical application of the art-based, multimodal, biographical research methodology of language portraits. The example of Samson's portrait and interview vividly illustrates how this methodology works and the type of rich data it can generate. Language portraits utilise creativity and multimodality to disrupt the usual patterns of thinking about and processing ideas thus making it necessary for participants to tap into their other senses. The tactile activity of drawing, the stimulus of seeing multiple colours and being asked to think in pictures make this an activity that engages with many bodily senses. This gives one more access to ways of disentangling complex experiences and ideas that "bypasses the purely intellectual, leading to a more authentic and complete glimpse of what a particular experience is like or of what people think and feel" (Weber 2008: 46).

In this chapter, the advantages that this methodology offers are clear. The creative process of visually representing their linguistic repertoires and the reflection that goes with it produces the biographical narratives that reflect the participants' life trajectories and foregrounds their emotional experiences (Busch 2012). This process allows participants to do a similar deconstruction of their own language history to that of Derrida (1998 cited in Busch 2012: 521) in his auto ethnography in 'Monolingualism of the Other'. Through reflecting on what they see on their language portrait and the freedom of going between the visual and verbal mode, they become the primary researchers for their auto ethnography.

Though some meaning may be co-constructed with the researcher through questions and discussions, the power to deliver and provide an interpretation of the data is given to the participant. The multimodal method offers a starting point by inviting participants to dive into the imagination, calling on their own creativity. This forces a new way of looking at what could otherwise be ignored as a mundane experience and revealing what is often overlooked or buried under those experiences. By reflecting on one's own art work and trying to understand and make your meaning clear, there remains no space for well formulated answers that conform to what is perceived as logical, rational or acceptable. Once those barriers are bypassed it becomes easier to reach raw emotion and memory.

A further advantage that this chapter highlights is how naturally personal narratives flow from this activity. Within those narratives, small stories are produced which can point out contradictions and ambivalence and the subjectivity/body dimension. Small stories are thus important as they are always a site of identity negotiation. They also provide added, often crucial, information that contextualises the larger narrative and brings a deeper understanding of the situation. The narratives then form autobiographical data which has the advantage of being easy to relate to. This is simply because these are stories of real people, told by the person directly which makes the content, interesting and engaging. Hence, autobiographical narratives hold a unique appeal in applied linguistics because of their aesthetic value (Pavlenko 2007).

Lastly one of the defining features of this methodology is multimodality. In the context of this interview, multimodality extends to more than going between verbal and visual modes but also includes the act of codeswitching which added a different dimension of expressive freedom for Samson. Switching between different languages also enriched the data by making the connections between various languages, different places in time and personal connections he has to them very explicit. Wei (2011) speaks of all these forms of multimodality as translanguaging. He defines translanguaging as “both going between different linguistic structures and systems, including different modalities (speaking, writing, signing, listening, reading, remembering) and going beyond them” (Wei 2011: 2). In this sense the language portrait exercise can be seen as doing just that, as sense is made by going between various modalities.

When we translanguaging we create what Wei (2011: 2) refers to as “translanguaging spaces”. These are social spaces where multilingual speakers can create “by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance” (Wei 2011: 2). In this interview, codeswitching in the narrative can also be seen as creating a translanguaging space. In most cases during this interview the codeswitching was in the form of just a word or sentence here and there or sometimes a different inflection on words. However this still allowed Samson to say things as he felt them or as he remembered them. The presentation of events may vary greatly depending on which language is used to tell them.

The creation of such a space eases the interaction, removing any limitations that may result from being confined to a particular language. Making use of different linguistic resources can build different layers of connection and rapport between the participant and researcher (Pavlenko 2007). This was the case when Samson would speak isiZulu to me or use familiar cultural references (e.g., references to cultural rituals, and shared terms for insults in the various languages we know). Wei (2011: 2) also speaks of the way that within translanguaging spaces a sense of connectedness can be established through “socio-cultural practices, especially multilingual practices” and that sense of connectedness in turn affects an individual’s identity positioning.

Providing the opportunity for the story to be told in the language that the memory triggers also becomes highly significant when analysing the data. When we look at the languages that Samson switches to, they are normally the ones that he has positive relationships with, Sesotho, isiZulu, isiXhosa and isiNdebele. He uses Sesotho a lot when speaking of the past or trying to say things in a very indexical way. He uses isiZulu as way to relating to me and also indexing certain associations he has with it. He uses a specific isiNdebele word to recount a happy memory.

In contrast he never uses Sepedi, Afrikaans or Tshivenda words anywhere except for “*yoh ngwana Si*” which could be either Sesotho or Sepedi. In this way he creates distance between himself and those languages. Samson’s portrait gives insights into the evolution of his linguistic repertoire over the course of his life. It displays just how effective language portraits are in providing ways of expression, such as images and metaphors, to better unlock the biographical narratives that give us insight into Samson’s lived experience of language from a first person perspective.

## CHAPTER 3

### HARRIET: CREATIVITY, CRITICALITY AND DISINVENTION

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section focuses on the theoretical concept of linguistic repertoires. The chapter starts with a brief overview of the history and development of this concept. In particular, the discussion on repertoire is framed around how the concept provides counter arguments to invented notions of language categories and the ideologies that drive them. This chapter will then use the language portrait of one participant, Harriet, as a point of reference to discuss and illustrate the multidimensionality, interwoven and embodied nature of linguistic repertoires.

#### 3.2 THE THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT OF LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRE

The notion of linguistic repertoire was first introduced by John Gumperz (1964), an early sociolinguist, who initially called it *verbal repertoires*. He defined verbal repertoires as “the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed in the course of socially significant interaction” (Gumperz 1964: 137). In this way the repertoire can be understood to be a whole that is made up of “all the accepted ways of formulating messages” (Gumperz 1964: 137), such as various languages, registers, dialects and routine manners of communication in everyday life that can reflect contextual and social differences.

Recently, calls by authors like Makoni and Pennycook (2007) and Reagan (2004) to ‘disinvent language’ and question what ‘language’ is, have brought the need to draw on Gumperz’ work once more. Makoni and Pennycook (2007) argue that the categorising of languages, much like tradition, history and other social structures, which are often accepted as a natural part of society, are in fact inventions driven by ideologies of the time to suit and serve specific agendas. Language has often been instrumental in agendas such as that of the Christian/colonial project (Makoni and Pennycook, 2007) and continues to be used in nation-building processes (Blommaert 2009) with the continued glorification of standard forms and official languages that index nationhood. Along with these language inventions comes “an ideology of languages as separate and enumerable categories” (Makoni and Pennycook 2007: 138). Gumperz’ understanding of the repertoire as a whole with variants from which speakers could choose was a significant move away from the notion of languages being separate bound entities.

A very real result of these inventions is seen in “how language policies have been constructed, how education has been pursued, how people have come to identify with particular linguistic labels” (Makoni and Pennycook 2007: 138). Both Reagan (2004) and Makoni and Pennycook (2007) agree that this way of thinking is both socially and historically problematic. Historically the problem is that language, as Reagan puts it, is “a moving target” constantly

in flux and “thus any effort to demarcate the boundaries of a particular language are inevitably at best able to provide a snapshot of the language at a particular time and place” (Reagan 2004: 44). Socially, categories fall short because language varies depending on various social factors such as who we speak to (e.g. social distance, gender etc.) and where this interaction takes place (e.g. in/formal settings, geography).

Reagan makes the bold claim that “there is arguably no such thing as English [...] or any other language” (2004: 42) and suggests rather that language is “ultimately a collection of idiolects which have been determined to belong together for what are ultimately non- and extra-linguistic reasons” (Reagan 2004: 46). This falls in agreement with Gumperz’ assertion that as a linguistic entity, repertoire bridges “the gap between grammatical systems and human groups” (Gumperz 1964:151) by giving us the tools to accomplish our communicative aims, linguistic repertoire allows us to move flexibly beyond invented categorisations by offering us options that equip us to function within different communicative contexts. Gumperz developed this concept of verbal repertoires on the basis of research that he conducted in two small rural communities in Norway and India with a population of 1500 and 3000 respectively.

His study was rooted in linguistic anthropology using an interactional approach where he, from an outsider perspective, observed speakers’ linguistic behaviours. Gumperz (1964) used the speech community as his framework of analysis, defining it as “any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction over a significant span of time and set off from other such aggregates by differences in the frequency of interaction” (Gumperz 1964: 137). His study was based on the assumption of a stable speech community and within such a community the verbal repertoires provided a range of expressions and means of conveying a messages, suited to the nature of the interaction. His study of linguistic repertoires was more synchronic as he studied a stable group of speakers/speech community at a specific point in time (Gumperz 1964), providing what Reagan might describe as a snapshot.

However, society and how it is structured has changed significantly since then and stable speech communities can no longer be used as points of departure in understanding linguistic repertoires. It is now necessary to rethink this notion considering current phenomena such as “increased mobility, migration, or participation in transnational networks of communication” (Busch 2015: 340). It is also crucial to take a more diachronic approach which considers the development and evolution of the individual’s repertoire through history, acknowledging how past, present and future discourses interact in forming people’s linguistic repertoires.

Busch (2012: 521) acknowledges the constant flux of language through time and that repertoire “evolves from linguistic interaction and is experienced on both a cognitive and an emotional level”. Understanding language with a focus on repertoire brings the emphasis to the interconnected interaction of language as experienced and used by individuals. A focus on repertoire is less concerned with what languages index or when certain languages should



be used, according to their distinct invented categories thus defying categorisation by external ideologies in favour of learning from everyday real life practices. Busch acknowledges the role of time and multiple discourses by adding Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia to her conceptualisation of repertoire. The term heteroglossia encompasses "the dimensions of multidiscursivity, linguistic diversity, and multivoicedness [that is] inherent to any form of living language and establishes a 'dialog of languages'" (Bakhtin 1981a in Busch 2015: 342). With this incorporation Busch (2015: 356) suggests that the linguistic repertoire can be understood as:

A heteroglossic realm of constraints and potentialities: different forms of language use come to the fore, then return to the background, they observe each other, keep their distance from each other, intervene or interweave into something new, but in one form or another they are always there.

Furthermore, Busch (2012, 2015) suggests a poststructuralist expansion to our understanding of repertoire that considers more than just context, rules of grammar and social conventions but takes into account time-space aspects, an individual's history and their biography as important to investigate. From this viewpoint the "subject is considered as constituted in and through language and discourse already established before" (Busch 2012: 510) and so an understanding of repertoire must also consider the "the body dimension of perceiving, experiencing, feeling, and desiring" (Busch 2012: 510). It is all these experiences, carried within the subject, that determine which forms of language come to the fore and when. Even as one form/code /language is used it draws on all the other linguistic resources, simultaneously present and interwoven in the forms being foregrounded at the time. An expansion of the notion of linguistic repertoire acknowledges that community, time, space and the individual are all unstable categories - constantly in flux. It is the interaction of all these unstable categories that forms a person's linguistic repertoire. This is a continuous, lifelong process because "someone's linguistic repertoire reflects a life, and not just birth, and it is a life that is lived in a real sociocultural, historical and political space" (Blommaert 2009: 424).

This being said, an outside perspective is no longer enough when studying linguistic repertoires in this manner. Busch (2015: 346) suggests an approach that complements "the third person perspective by a first person perspective based on biographical narratives". Through the use of language portraits this type of data can be obtained and can help in drawing conclusions that reflect not only what the researcher objectively observes but the individuals' lived experience as well. The previous chapter provided background knowledge on the methodology of language portraits, with Samson as our central example. This chapter is centered on the language portrait of Harriet, who displays her linguistic repertoire both visually and lives/performs it throughout her interview. Her language use is playful, creative and boundless. Her repertoire provides her with fluid identities and the means to assimilate to and accommodate others in social interactions. When Harriet speaks, she makes very little attempt to



separate codes. In so doing, she not only illustrates how they are interwoven and in constant dialogue with one another but also how at ease she is with the ways that her linguistic repertoires index her life trajectory. Furthermore, she is unperturbed by how others may evaluate her linguistic choices or choose to categorise her.

### 3.2 MEET HARRIET

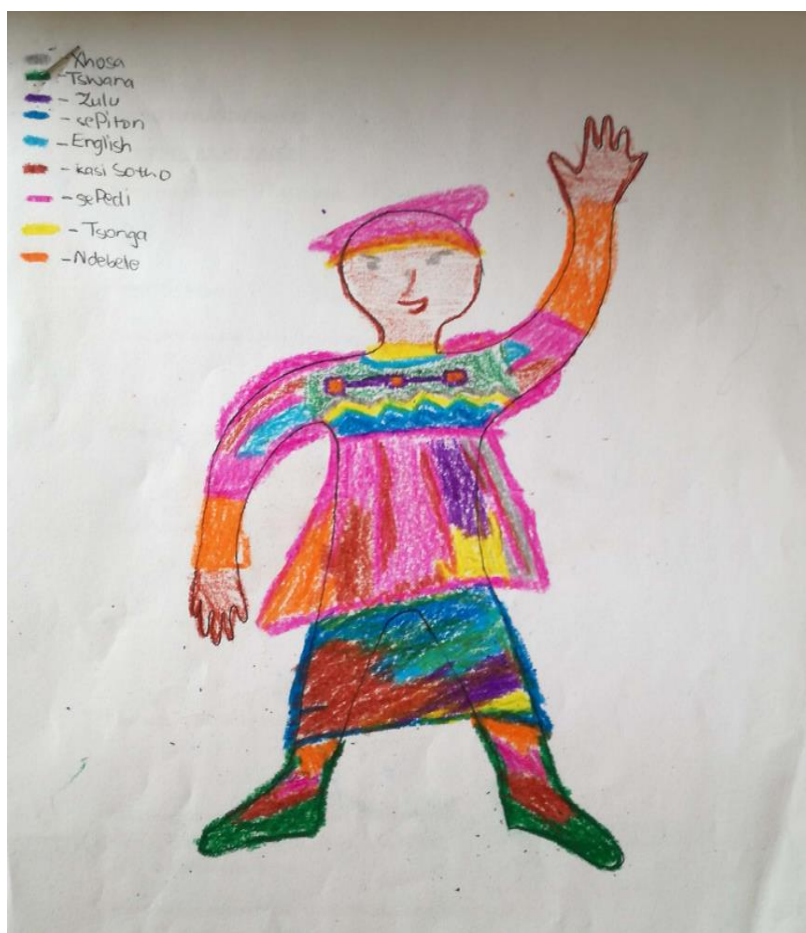


Figure 2: Harriet's language portrait

Harriet is a student at Stellenbosch University, who forms part of the linguistic minority group as defined in this thesis. She listed seven of the official South African languages as part of her linguistic repertoire as well as two non-standard varieties that are indexical of where she comes from and the people she lives among. What was most exceptional about her language portrait was how it reflected how interwoven her repertoire is as the colours all seem to melt into each other. Harriet sees language as what connects her to everyone in her environment and beyond it. Languages in her eyes have no boundaries and flow one into the other through various interactions. For her, language does not index nationhood but gives resources for the performance of multiple identities. She recognises the shared history of African languages and the continued sharing of languages across geographical boundaries.

When she describes her portrait she acknowledges the languages that make her South African and that connect her to the rest of Africa.

**Harriet:** This human *ne* (the portrait). There' a lot of ... she just looks African.

**SM:** She looks African...

**Harriet:** *Yah...* I don't like to say South African. I say African.

**SM:** Why don't you like to say South African?

**Harriet:** Because it's like I'm being limited to the official languages and then looking back with the history of the languages, they come out of South Africa. Like Ndebele, there's a Ndebele in Zimbabwe, you see. So then I don't see why I should say I'm South African while I can say I'm African.

### 3.3 A BEAUTIFUL MESS

Harriet's representation of her linguistic repertoire, as portrayed in her language portrait, is what I would describe as a beautiful mess. Her representation is one where the codes she uses seem to have no boundaries, contrary to many invented notions of multilingualism. She uses her everyday language playfully, creatively and assertively to engage with others and it offers her flexibility to position herself comfortably within various spaces. If we are to break down the invention of language, an understanding of how individuals perceive language and all that comes with it is paramount. Makoni and Pennycook (2007: 138) state that the "intention in disinvention is not to return to some edenic pre-colonial era, but to find ways of rethinking language in the contemporary world". This process involves looking "at languages and their relation to identity, geographical location and other social practices" (Makoni and Pennycook 2007: 138). While fully acknowledging the existence of categories, we must recognise that they are all discursively constructed and that "dealing with categories is always a matter of hierarchies, opposites, and conflicts" (Busch 2012: 519). These conflicts are evident in people's linguistic choices, what we choose to silence or foreground in order to comply to or defy these categories. Busch (2012) gives an example of a man whose two languages represent opposing national identities. In his explanation of his language portrait what strongly comes through is a description of himself "as a subject constituted in the field of tension between his two languages and their constant co-presence" (Busch 2012: 515). The man sees these languages as separate and at war within him because of their social categorisations. A linguistic repertoire approach would sooner see these divisions as parts of the same whole, which work together and reflect the life he has lived. Harriet seems to naturally take this approach to language. She is not at war within herself possibly because she does not attach strict social categories to language and focuses more on how languages connect and overlap.

Harriet's portrait displays how traditionally, she associates herself with the Pedi culture in how she has dressed her body silhouette in traditional attire and the prominence of pink (to represent Sepedi). As this is the language of her father<sup>7</sup>, she is socially categorised within the Pedi culture and the assumption may also be that this is her first language. However things get interesting when she has to explain what she really feels is her first and strongest language. She specifically has two non-standard varieties that she sees as her home language and that she associates with her sense of identity and belonging. The first being what she refers to as Kasi Sotho (represented by brown) and the second, which she acquired later, being Sepitori (represented in dark blue). Both these languages are urban varieties that are born from interactions with numerous languages (often considered standard forms such as Sesotho and Setswana) within the same community. Banda (2009: 2) makes the point that "African languages "have existed side by side for significant periods of time, complementing and supplementing each other in multilingual symbiosis". Much of the multilingualism reflected in Harriet's portrait is a given norm in the African context. It is therefore erroneous to think of multilingualism in Africa as "monolingual streams of distinctive languages in their equally homogenous speech communities" (Banda 2009: 1).

### 3.4 MOTHER TONGUES

Pink is quite a prominent colour on Harriet's portrait. It represents Sepedi, which is the language that she calls her home language. It is the language of her father and so the language of her cultural identity. That cultural identity is also illustrated in how she has decided to dress the figure in a traditional Pedi blouse called Hele (see figure 3). Harriet introduces herself to me as Sepedi. Sepedi is her official image, the social category that she wears and strong proficiency in the language can easily be assumed to be part and parcel of that. Even in her description below, it is made clear that this is an identity she wears for cultural purposes. Bristowe, Oostendorp and Anthonissen (2014) have a similar case where a participant expresses his awareness of his Zulu cultural identity and acknowledges that, to society, he is seen as Zulu. His portrait is covered in blue (the colour used to represent Zulu) to portray the image he projects to the world. He however points out that, contrary to what people have assumed, Zulu is not his first language or mother tongue. Inside his portrait are veins, beneath the blue, that represent the languages that he acknowledges as his own (Setswana and Sepedi).

The assumed link between culture and mother tongue is a common one (Rudwick 2004; Bristowe et al. 2014), although not necessarily an accurate depiction. Sepedi was also the language of instruction for most of Harriet's school career so it holds high esteem and an official status as one of the eleven official languages. This may also be why she says that it's in her head. However, as we continue with the interview, we see that this is not the

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<sup>7</sup> In families where the mother and father are from different cultural groups, it is considered the norm in most black South African contexts for the children to take the cultural identity of the father.

language that she uses the most. It is only the one that she culturally associates with and the closest official and standard form of language under which she can categorise herself. She initially calls it her home language but later we see that this is merely the box she would tick on a form because what she really considers as her language is a non-standard variety called Kasi Sotho. Banda (2009: 4) argues that “in late modern multilingual African societies, rather than “a mother tongue”, there are “mother tongues” that constitute speakers’ linguistic repertoires”. For Harriet this truly is the case.

Describing Sepedi:

**Harriet:** It’s my home language.

**SM:** It’s your home language. It’s Sepedi?

**Harriet:** It’s the language I was taught, the language that I’m taught like to wear it. It’s uh, it’s inside my head.

**SM:** It’s in your head?

**Harriet:** *Yah*

**SM:** Ok, and it’s there as well. It’s most of... is this a blouse? What is this?

**Harriet:** *Yah*, it’s like a blouse. The traditional Sepedi attire there’s like this shirt, they call it *hele* and then it’s got like some shoulders –*nyana* [colloquial diminutive form] so, and then...

**SM:** So this is actually the traditional Sepedi outfit that she is wearing?

**Harriet:** *Yah*



Figure 3: Traditional Pedi Attire

Harriet comes from a typically linguistically diverse township called Tembisa, located to the North of Kempton Park in Gauteng. Gauteng is notably “the most multilingual province in the country” (Bristowe et al 2014: 231). Within the South African context, areas like townships - particularly in Gauteng - tend to be richly diverse linguistically owing to the fact that people of different language groups live and interact closely with each other within the same community. It is not uncommon for residents to develop a mixed variety that is used within their community. In fact, according to Banda (2009: 4) within the African context, in late modern times “urbanisation, hybridization and multilingualism are the rule rather than the exception” which makes identifying one mother tongue problematic. For Harriet, Kasi Sotho is what could conventionally be referred to as her first language/mother tongue. Harriet uses first language and mother tongue interchangeably to refer to the language that she speaks the most and identifies as her own. She calls Sepedi her home language with the strong emphasis being that her family’s cultural identity is Pedi. On her portrait, she has coloured her face and hands brown to represent Kasi Sotho. She goes on to explain how she uses this variety even more than Sepedi.

Kasi Sotho is also interspersed all through her portrait, in between various other languages and codes. It is her starting point and though it may come to the fore or fall to the background, it is interwoven into every other variety.

**Harriet:** Uhm mostly of my time *akere wabona* [you see] like Tembisa, a lot of languages. We spoke Kasi Sotho. We greeted in Kasi Sotho, we around Kasi Sotho so then, *yah...* and then at like my mom’s side because I spent, because I spent most of my time there, it’s Ndebele. So then it was Kasi Sotho, Ndebele and then even when I went to my mom’s home, they spoke Kasi Sotho here and there but then it’s more like in Ndebele.

**SM:** But you are specifically calling this Kasi Sotho.

**Harriet:** Uh ha

**SM:** Not Sotho?

**Harriet:** Not Sotho

We digress but she goes back to further explain why Kasi Sotho is in her hands

**Harriet:** Ah, it was the language I spent most of my time around because I went to crèche uhm, grade R and then... it was crèche, grade R and then grade one. So then most of my time I would spent at *ko crèche ’ng* [at crèche] and then they spoke Sesotho, even *ma tishere* [even the teachers]. And when I go home they’re speaking Sepedi and then I’m like “ok I get you” but *yah...* [giggles]. Even my cousins from my father’s side they were like “*yoh rena re bolele Sepedi* [yoh we speak Sepedi]. You’re speaking Sepedi? That’s not Sepedi”.

**SM:** Alright. So even your Sepedi is like a kasi variety of Sepedi?

**Harriet:** *Yah.* When I'm around people from Limpopo and I say *kori* "no *Ke tšwa Limpopo*" [that "no I come from Limpopo]. They're like "*hhe?!? Limpopo where?*" *Kere ZB* [I say ZB] and they're like "uh uh, you don't sound like you're from ZB". [laughs]

**SM:** Is Kasi Sotho also in your face?

**Harriet:** *Yah!*

**SM:** And it's also got like spots all over, is it your skirt? And your feet. Tell me exactly why...

**Harriet:** I mix it everywhere. Like even if I try speaking pure Pedi, I will deviate and then use Kasi Sotho. And then Kasi Sotho, I would use it a lot *le Sepitori* [with Sepitori].

Secondary to Kasi Sotho is Sepitori, which she acquired later in life but seems to be "taking over" the role that Kasi Sotho has held in her life so far. Ditsele and Mann (2014) explain in depth the origins and specifics of Sepitori. Here, I only offer a brief definition from their work. In line with Setswana and Sepedi morphology, the word 'Sepitori' is made of the prefix 'se' to indicate 'the language of' and the word 'Pitori' which is a loose rendition of the name Pretoria (Ditsele and Mann 2014). So simply stated then Sepitori is, in name and reputation, the language of Pretoria. According to Ditsele and Mann (2014: 160) "Sepitori is neither written, nor formal. It is a mixed language" whose "syntax is the same as that of Setswana and Sepedi".

**Harriet:** It's like dark blue

**SM:** But Sepitori is not in your hands and it's not in your feet. So do you feel it's less useful?

**Harriet:** I got exposed to it at around... I think it was around high school somewhere there and then that's when I learnt Sepitori.

**SM:** Right, were you learning it from friends?

**Harriet:** I went to Pretoria [laughs]

**SM:** Ahh you went to Pretoria. So Sepitori is owned by Pretoria?

**Harriet:** It's owned by... That's why it's Sepitori.

**SM:** Where is Tembisa?



**Harriet:** Normally I say it's in the middle of the airport and Pretoria because I can't say Johannesburg because Johannesburg you go past the airport inside. So then it's like in the middle.

**SM:** Cause you're saying to me, I always thought that Tembisa was in Pretoria but now you're saying...

**Harriet:** It's near Pretoria.

**SM:** So why were you only exposed to Sepitori so much later in your life?

**Harriet:** I never went to Pretoria [laughter]. Everyone was like *yhoo* Pretoria it's very fast, it's corrupt! *Hhe hhe hhe* [blah blah blah] and I was like ok, fine. And then I went to Pretoria with my mom and I was like but this place, it's nice. It's clean, it's open it's got historic buildings. The people are cool. The life here, it's relaxed. Why are you all saying bad things about Pretoria? And then I started going there and hearing Sepitori.

**SM:** How do you feel when you use Sepitori?

**Harriet:** The thing *ne kori* [is that] my mom's family, some of them they live *ko* [in] Pretoria. Like *ko* Mamelodi, Soshanguve (both Pretoria townships), and all that. So then when I hear, when I speak Sepitori, I just miss them.

However this takeover is not one that she experiences as threatening. This could be due to the point made earlier that "African languages have existed side by side for significant periods of time, complementing and supplementing each other in multilingual symbiosis" (Banda 2009: 2). Sepitori in her repertoire seems to exist as an extension of Kasi Sotho, almost a sister language to which she naturally gravitates.

**Harriet:** And then now like my friends from Tembisa, they speak Kasi Sotho. It's like their language. *He ba bolela Sesotho sa ko kasi, ke araba* [when they speak the Sotho of the township and I answer) they're like "no, wena *o bolela Sepitori*" [no, you're speaking Sepitori] not *polelo ya mo Tembisa*" [what we speak here in Tembisa].

**SM:** So you haven't noticed the change even?

**Harriet:** I have.

**SM:** So Sepitori right now is busy influencing your Kasi Sotho?

**Harriet:** It's like taking over cause when they speak *ka* [in] Kasi Sotho. *Bareng?* [What do they say?]. . . cause they use Sotho but then it's the simplified Sotho *ne* [righ]. *Nna* [I] I would use certain terms *ke di*

*bolele ka Sepitori* [I say them in Sepitori] and they would say no. Like “*wang understand-a*”. *Nna*, I would say “*wa ntlhaloganyana, wa ntshwara*”

**SM:** And “*wang understand-a*” is more Sepitori?

**Harriet:** *Wang understand-a* is like, *ko Tembisa bare* “*wang understand-a*”. [in Tembisa they say “*wang understand-a*”] They would use that, *wang understand-a*.

Sepitori has also become the language that she uses to interact with friends on campus from other provinces who speak either Sepitori or the closely related languages like Sesotho and Setswana.

**SM:** So here like the languages that you use in your friendship circles. What would those be?

**Harriet:** Most of my friends *ke... ba tšwa Hamanskraal* [they come from Hamanskraal]. So then it would be Sepitori and then I have some Northwest. So then because, I did Tswana *ko* [at] my 1st primary, it’s a bit rusty because it’s now mixed with Kasi Sotho and Sepitori but Sepitori *ke ampor’ ke Setswana* [is almost like Setswana] so then *di tlhakane plekeng e one* [they meet at the same place/point] So then *yah* so...

### 3.5 CREATIVITY AND LEGITIMACY

Both these varieties have different accents, special inflections, performance aspects and alternative vocabulary that differentiate them and index belonging to certain townships, though geographically Tembisa and Pretoria are not that far apart. Harriet moves between both with ease. To an unknowing listener these codes/varieties may sound relatively similar but to the speakers, the tiniest nuances and changes in vocabulary say who you are and where you come from. One could say that the boundaries between these two varieties are “determined not by linguistic criteria, but rather by extra-linguistic criteria” (Reagan 2004: 46). It’s not a lack of mutual intelligibility that sets them apart but a performance that identifies speakers as in or out group member of the communities that these varieties represent. It is the shared knowledge of what new meanings are now carried by words that existed before and the combinations that make them mean differently.

The linguistic creativity, apparent in this process, “involves the production of something ‘appropriate’, a concept [relating] to usefulness and adaptivity within task constraints” Deumert (2018: 3) This creativity “does not involve randomness, or idiosyncrasy: what is produced has to be comprehensible to others” and as its purpose is to serve non/extra linguistic criteria, the result should be associable with social meaning (Deumert 2018: 3). Four of my participants including Harriet are from Gauteng townships, three listed Sepitori as part of their linguistic repertoire and described it as their real home language. They all introduced themselves to me initially as first language speakers of either Sepedi, Setswana or Sesotho. All four participants made it clear that as speakers of their



respective official languages, they are often not considered legitimate speakers of the language by those perceived to be norm providers (such as Sotho from Free state/ Lesotho or Zulu from Natal etc.).

Varieties such as Sepitori and Kasi Sotho represent the values of people who embrace the non-standard nature of their repertoires, no longer to be held hostage by expectations to fit the mould of standard forms that no longer serve a purpose in their context. Through their creative linguistic expressions they are now norm providers of a variety they take ownership of. In their paper about language and youth identity, Bristowe et al. (2014) also had participants who spoke linguistic varieties that would not traditionally be classified as languages. These were Tsotsitaal and Skhothane.

Similar to Kasi Sotho and Sepitori they “represent forms of stylisation and performance, emphasising the flexibility, creativity, hybridity and diversity of township life and its linguistic expression, and further emphasises the need to understand language in terms of repertoires” (Bristowe et al. 2014: 240).

Harriet then explains how she feels Kasi Sotho differs from a more standard variety of Sotho.

**SM:** What makes Kasi Sotho different from Sesotho?

**Harriet:** *Yoh!* A lot! *kori* [it’s] like if I were to speak to a Sotho person and be like “O kae o phetse joang? [How are you?] “*o sharp?*” [You good?]. And then they’d be like “*no, ha re bue jwalo*” [no, we don’t speak like that].

In the next bit of the conversation, she notes some phonological choices and stylistic changes that she makes that make the difference between whether her sentence is standard Setswana/ Sesotho or Sepitori/Kasi Sotho. Noting again how language boundaries are arbitrary moving targets, Ekkehard Wolff (2000 cited in Reagan 2004: 44) states that “no two speakers of the same language speak alike, nor does the same speaker use his/her language the same way all the time: variation is part of language and language behaviour”. Harriet has many linguistic resources to draw on. For the sake of assimilating or being better understood, she has the option to make slight variations to the languages she speaks, depending on her conversation partner. In the following section she states her personal preferences, how she can pick and choose what conventions she adheres to or flouts.

With reference to Kasi Sotho:

**Harriet:** And then for me I don’t use the “h” a lot. I keep the “kg”, it’s mixed with a bit of Tswana-*nyana*, Pedi...

**SM:** Tswana is the one that uses the “kg”, so that’s the “kg” sound *ne?* (Makes the sound)

**Harriet:** Mmm, *yah*.

**SM:** So you prefer to use that?

**Harriet:** *Yah*, I use that.

**SM:** More than the “h”?

**Harriet:** *Yah*, because with Tswana they would say “*u kae?*”, how are you and then with Tswana it would be, “*Ke siame*” and then with Sotho it’s “*Ke phetse hantle*” and then with Sepedi it’s “*Ke gabotsi*” and then we’re like “ah no, *ke sharp*” [no, I’m good] “*ujwang, Ke sharp*” [how are you, I’m good].

**SM:** Ok so “ke shapu” just works for you... ok. So it’s (Kasi Sotho) a very relaxed Sotho?

**Harriet:** *Yah* it’s relaxed.

**SM:** And it mixes a lot of things I guess

**Harriet:** *Yah*, it does.

### 3.6 ROUNDING OFF TO THE NEAREST MOTHER TONGUE

Harriet codeswitched a lot during our interview. She, like Samson, had to be consulted when I transcribed her interview. You could clearly see that, for her, this kind of interaction was the norm. There was a natural expectation from her that I too would at least be able to understand her, even if I couldn’t answer her in her language of choice. Harriet’s language use is characteristically non-restricted. She uses her full range of linguistic resources to express herself and represent ideas, establish relationships and perform identities. Whether it be a change in code or accent, she explicitly draws on “a broad range of earlier voices, discourses, and codes” displaying a “linguistic repertoire [that] forms a heteroglossic and contingent space of potentialities” (Busch 2012: 521). She comes from a background where even interactions at school were multilingual and her knowledge of the world, reflected in her linguistic choices, makes her someone who makes space for people’s linguistic diversity while expressing her own, creatively and unapologetically. One such (linguistic) choice is the openness to learn. From a young age this has been how she could make space for herself and others to freely interact across languages. When asked how she goes about choosing what to speak in multilingual settings she answered as follows:

**Harriet:** The dominating language is the one I’ll use. Because, apparently, let’s say it’s people who speak English *ne* and then they’re speaking in English, I’d speak in English. And then if they’re speaking in Afrikaans and English, I would use English and then if, if they’re speaking some of the African languages I would look at which one they’re speaking and then I would assess how good am I with that one and then

I would use uhm English and then ask them if they understand my home language and if they say “yes a bit” then I wouldn’t use it a lot but then I would try to use theirs and then I would tell them that ok, “If I want to say something like this, how would I say it in your language?” And then they’d tell me and then I’d try to put it in their language.

**SM:** So for you it’s a constant learning experience?

**Harriet:** Yeah

**SM:** But it’s been like that even when you were at home.

**Harriet:** *Yah*

She used mostly English in our conversation but only to accommodate me. English plays a minor role in her life and features mainly for practical purposes. I could see that she could not express herself, to her satisfaction, in English without using her different codes nor would she ever want to. English takes up a tiny space on her language portrait. It is represented by a light blue, as a necklace, and a bit in the *hele* on the arms. There is also a tiny bit on her skirt which is a mix of many colours that are almost inseparable.

**Harriet:** *Yah* it’s like a necklace and the arms.

**SM:** And then it forms part of the blouse in the arms. Is that all?

**Harriet:** No, it’s around here.

**SM:** Oh see it’s a little bit of the skirt. It’s not a lot of English...

**Harriet:** No .I grew up in a township, we barely speak English.

**SM:** So English is useless for you at home?

**Harriet:** Sometimes, you know sometimes my siblings like to speak English and then we just speak in English but then it’s more like that language we just speak *nje* [just]... because you wanna speak...

**SM:** So what are the uses of English in your life because English is very small on this person.

**Harriet:** It’s very small. Like even in class. English during high school, English was taught in Sepedi [She laughs]

**SM:** Explain that. So how was English taught?

**Harriet:** The thing is like in class, they’d be like “ok *ke* period ya English” ok cool. “Today *re tla bolela ka di* [we will talk about the] noun”. [Bursts out laughing]

So English was taught in Sepedi and sometimes the teacher would come and say *kore* uhm “we’re speaking strictly English” ok cool! First 10 minutes, strictly English after that it’s gone! You speak any language. Whether you are Zulu, you spoke Zulu.

Moving to Stellenbosch, a big adjustment for her was the increased presence of English and absence of diversity. Specifically that she could no longer assume that everyone understands multiple languages, as it was at school and in her community.

**SM:** You know what’s nice about your school? It’s the fact that you had English but you always had access to different home languages. Do you, do you miss that here at Stellenbosch?

**Harriet:** I do.

**SM:** What kind of adjustments have you had to make?

**Harriet:** The English part and being around a lot of people of white colour. Cause in Tembisa it’s like black and if it’s not black then it’s like a bit of Indians. So then it’s just that. And then coming to this area, there’s a lot of white people around. So then getting used to that and then getting used to speaking English most of the time.

**SM:** If you come across, let’s say your white friends now and you have to speak 100 percent English how does that go down?

**Harriet:** They must understand. English, it’s not my mother tongue. I speak English rounded off to the nearest mother tongue [giggles]. They just have to understand but then I try my best.

**SM:** You speak English and you round it off to the nearest mother tongue...

**Harriet:** Because I would take time. Because sometimes I try to speak and then in my head it’s like in home language and then I would keep quiet for a while and just say “something like, like,” I’m busy translating it and then I put it out in English.

**SM:** So it’s been hard work?

**Harriet:** *Yah*

**SM:** Any other adjustments?

**Harriet:** It would be that and then adjusting to that fact that not every black person you see knows all languages and not all of them are from South Africa. *Yah*, so then I might see a black person I might think ok maybe she's, she would understand Zulu or Sotho and *hayi ke* [Zulu: no then]none.

Some of the languages listed as part of Harriet's linguistic repertoire are languages she has more of a receptive competence in. These include isiZulu, Xitsonga, and isiXhosa. In various parts of her interview though you see how open she has been to learn, whenever she engages with speakers of these languages. This happened primarily at school, in class.

**Harriet:** In class we mixed. I have a Zulu, I have a Zulu friend so then I try my best to speak Zulu but then she speaks to me in Pedi.

**SM:** Do you like that exchange?

**Harriet:** I love it! Then we have that thing. When I text her, I try to type in Zulu and then and then she types to me in Pedi and then we just correct each other and laugh.

Later she relates an incident when a girl from the Eastern Cape joined their class:

**Harriet:** *Yah* and there was a girl in class, Sisipho, she was Xhosa. She was the only Xhosa in class. Sisipho Mda. She came, I think it was in grade 10 and then grade 11, grade 12. And then she said she was from Eastern Cape and were like "*Eyi* you Xhosa, teach us Xhosa!" because we spoke the Gauteng version of Xhosa.

### 3.7 RECEPTIVE MULTILINGUALISM

Harriet's receptive multilingualism practices are similar to those observed by Singer (2018) in the Waruwi community in North Australia, and it was evident that she expected the same of me and others. "[R]eceptive multilingual practices involve people speaking to one another in different languages" (Singer 2018:1). Not every language that she listed as part of her repertoire was one that she spoke fluently but with all of them she had an adequate receptive understanding which made it possible for her conversational partners to make themselves understood in the way that best conveys their message and represents who they are. From her observation, Singer found that among the Waruwi residences, although "only speaking a language is seen as socio-politically relevant, receptive multilingualism allows people greater scope to index aspects of their identity through language choice without the concomitant pressure of forcing others to speak that language, with its particular socio-political associations" (Singer 2018: 3).

In Harriet's case and in the case of most of the participants in this study, this type of conversation was a normal part of what they perceived as being South African. This is also why codeswitching was a standard feature in all the interviews. Although not recorded here this was common among most of my participants, especially those from Gauteng. In Singer's study "the social and linguistic diversity in Waruwi is seen as essential to social harmony rather than as a barrier, underscoring the need for people to assert diverse identities instead of everyone identifying as the same" (Singer 2018: 3). Similarly, Harriet and many of the other participants use this receptive multilingualism to make room for others to express themselves freely and to create a space where every speakers' identity (including their own) can be performed, as expressed through their language use. In so doing people's diversity is acknowledged, accepted and even celebrated. Such interactions also make it possible for people to truly introduce themselves through a display of their repertoires that inevitably reflect their life trajectories.

### **3.8 DISCUSSION**

The first thing that grabs one's attention when looking at Harriet's language portrait, is the creativity and the representation of the components of her repertoire as being inseparable. In the previous chapter we touched on the notion of translanguaging that could be described as communicating in creative and multimodal ways that are not bound by any preconceived systems and categories. Wei (2011: 2) describes translanguaging as "both going between different linguistic structures and systems, including different modalities (speaking, writing, signing, listening, reading, remembering) and going beyond them". Wei (2011: 4) highlights how multilingual speakers seem to have the innate capacity to assess a situation and, using the languages they know, to make choices that "create space to their benefit using the linguistic resources available to them in a situation-sensitive manner". Harriet effortlessly displays this capacity as shown in the data. She sees the freedom of using her languages as a basic right that she tries to afford to others as well. She uses her linguistic repertoire as an entity that bridges the gap "between grammatical systems and human groups" (Gumperz 1964: 151).

She draws from her knowledge of the world and people and through her interactions, creates a space that Wei (2011) would refer to as a translanguaging space. Wei (2011) describes translanguaging spaces as spaces formed through multilingual practices where different identities, values and practices do not just co-exist, but combine to generate new ones. Harriet's relationship with language and interactions with speakers of different languages exhibits a pattern of merging values, identities and practices that eventually results in boundaries and categories melting into each other. She is constantly open to learning and incorporates that new linguistic knowledge into her repertoire to help her connect with others. Her linguistic practices here on campus show how she is constantly assessing her situation and moving between modes to create connections with those around her. She will use even

her rusty Setswana and her few words of greeting in Xitsonga in creative ways to make those initial connections and with time, through sharing language, the barriers of language begin to seem invisible.

Harriet's language portrait and language practices may very well stand in agreement with Reagan's (2004) statement that there is no such thing as language but rather "a collection of idiolects which have been determined to belong together for what are ultimately non- and extra-linguistic reasons" (Reagan 2004: 46). In the data we see that as Harriet explains the differences between the languages that she speaks, she also highlights some of her own preferences that deviate from the norm (e.g. choosing to use "kg" instead of "h" as a way of blending what is in her linguistic repertoire). Harriet embodies Gumperz' understanding of the repertoire as a whole with variants from which speakers can choose. She makes effortless yet deliberate linguistic choices and displays the creativity and criticality that Wei (2011) suggests is an integral part of translanguaging. He defines this creativity as "the ability to choose between following and flouting the rules and norms of behaviour, including the use of language" (Wei 2011: 2). Criticality he refers to as being able to challenge and question norms and position oneself flexibly and strategically in various communicative situations (Wei 2011).

Harriet sees languages as connected. She starts her interview by refusing to say that the figure she has drawn is South African because of her acknowledgement of our connectedness through language to the rest of Africa. Harriet displays that boundaries exist fundamentally in our minds. It is where they are conceptualised and they are made concrete in the material world through repeated discourses and ideologies.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **IN AND OUT OF PLACE: SPACE SPEAKS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The focus of this chapter will be on the concept of space and the different semiotic resources used to construct it, navigate it and interpret it. In the previous chapters, I took a primarily subjective view of linguistic repertoires as embodied, emotional and reflective of people's life trajectories (Busch 2012, 2015). Along with other researchers (Blommaert et al 2005, Busch 2015), Oostendorp (Forthcoming: 3) argues that an "important addition to the notion of linguistic repertoire is the acknowledgement that language rarely makes meaning without the use of other semiotic meaning-making resources". One of the research questions of this thesis is how space interacts with the linguistic (semiotic) repertoires of participants at SU to create exclusion/inclusion on the SU campus beyond class settings.

To address this question I had to find a method to supplement participant interviews with data of the physical spaces that participants may refer to as inclusive/exclusive. In a second round of data collection, I made use of the participatory photo interview method to collect data about physical spaces at SU and how participants experienced them. Participants were asked to take two photos of spaces that make them feel welcome or unwelcome, respectively. They would then submit these via email with an explanation about why these pictures were chosen. This allowed participants to explicitly talk about the connections between semiotic resources, space and feelings of being in and out of place. This method, the participatory photo interview, generated the data around which the discussion in this chapter is structured.

People's experiences of a space influence how they feel they can position and carry themselves in a given environment (Blommaert and Dong 2010; Pennycook and Otsuji 2014). Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck (2005: 203) argue that "spaces themselves have an influence on what people can do and can become in them." One reason that they give for this is that changes in our spatial environment are often also changes in linguistic environment and can affect "our capacity to deploy linguistic resources and skills and imposes requirements on us which we may fail to meet" (Blommaert, et al. 2005: 198).

This can result in feelings of isolation and disempowerment, as one struggles to conform to these new requirements. This can also be accompanied by feelings of loss as the rich linguistic resources that one does possess are not recognised or are silenced. An example of the fluctuating values of repertoires in differing spaces can be seen in the implementation of formal language policies at public institutions and how language use is regulated in public



institutions by evoking and imposing “scale-specific regimes of language” (Collins 2011: 625). The institution decides which languages hold value and those who are part of the institution must conform to it. In so doing, different values are placed on the languages that people may enter that space with. This in turn alters how people can express and represent themselves in that space, especially when proficiency in the valued language is low. It is clear that “social spaces, are shaped by speech - by what can and cannot be said in particular venues, by how things are said, and by the way they are heard” (Livingston in Pennycook and Otsuji 2014: 165).

Pennycook and Otsuji (2014) bring the theoretical concepts of space and repertoire together in the coinage of the term spatial repertoire which refers to the sedimented language practices of particular places. This perspective highlights how “linguistic resources become available in relation to the activities, people and organisation of particular places” (2014:180). Pennycook and Otsuji (2014) make a distinction between the concept of place and space by saying that space is a given while place is what is interpreted within that given, physical space. Within the specificities of space, “places are where (location) language practices (locution) occur as people bring their own trajectories into relation with the people and objects around them” (Pennycook and Otsuji 2014: 165). Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) point out a recent turn in scholarly focus towards spatialization rather than space. They define spatialization as “the different processes by which space comes to be represented, organized and experienced” (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010: 7). In this thesis, I won’t put too much emphasis on the distinction between space and place. I will simply speak of space to refer to both what is given (space) and what is interpreted (place) but with a primary focus on what is interpreted or what Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) refer to as spatialization.

Thurlow (2019) emphasises the point that spaces are not merely where communication takes place but that space itself is communication and should be taken more seriously in linguistic research. We need to take careful consideration of spatiality and how people use space, whether consciously or not, as “a powerful meaning-making resource” (Thurlow 2019:100). Part of the power that space has to make meaning lies in the fact that spaces are never neutral (Blommaert and Dong (2010). They always belong to someone and “are filled with norms, expectations, conceptions of what counts as proper and normal (indexical) language use and what does not” (Blommaert and Dong 2010: 368). When looking at linguistic repertoires, people’s social interactions and freedom to participate, it is crucial to look at space and how its composition can empower or disempower people. “Feeling *out of place* is one of the key obstacles to any sense of belonging, agency and participation”. (Stroud and Jegels 2014: 197)

My study is however not only interested in the connection between space and repertoire but makes a further connection, that of embodiment. Busch (2015) highlights the multidimensionality of linguistic repertoires and notes how bodily and emotional dimensions of language are often neglected when studying them. Authors like Fuchs and Merleau-Ponty (cited in Busch 2015) developed the concept of body memory which is seen as experiences

from the past that fuse together to form “bodily patterns of interacting [which are] established and constantly updated from childhood onward” (Busch 2015: 352). Busch further suggests that emotionally charged moments or repeated situations form part of our linguistic memory and become part of our linguistic repertoire. These experiences present “in the form of explicit and implicit linguistic attitudes and habitualized patterns of language practices” (Busch 2015: 350). From this approach, we are able to trace how emotional and bodily experiences became part of the individual’s linguistic repertoire.

As mentioned above, the interplay between linguistic repertoires, space and belonging is a necessary area of investigation. This interplay formed a salient theme in many of the interviews with participants who mentioned discomfort in spaces on and around the SU campus and often linked these discomforts to language use. In the data presented in this chapter, it is apparent how space acts as text and context that powerfully conveys unspoken messages as participants move through the spaces and interpret the multi-sensorial inputs that they take in and process. In many instances it is what *is not seen* and *not heard* within the spaces that are the most salient.

#### **4.2 CAPTURING SPATIAL SENSORIAL CONNECTIONS**

As a way of capturing and understanding spatialization in SU spaces, from the participants’ perspective, I drew on the work of Sarah Pink from the field of sensory ethnography. In an effort to not only observe but also share in her participants’ experiences within the spaces they inhabit, Pink walked with participants and videotaped the walk. According to Pink (2007: 246) “‘walking with’ can bring us closer to understanding how other people perceive their multisensory environments, constitute place through everyday practice and live ‘in their bodies’” (Pink 2007: 246). She suggests that this method of walking “can produce empathetic and sensory embodied (emplaced) understandings of another’s experience” (Pink, 2007: 250). Casey cited in Pink (2007: 245) makes the point that “‘place should be seen as ‘event’ and therefore far from being static sites, [places] are themselves continually changing in accordance with their own proper dynamism”. In this chapter, space is thus seen as never neutral and dynamic.

Similar to Pink (2007), this study attempts to gain an empathetic understanding of how participants experience the spaces they move through at SU. However, in this case the data was captured without the involvement of the researcher. As this is a space that I too am familiar with, I tried to avoid imposing my own perspectives of it on the participants by rather not being with them when they walk through campus and collect images for the purpose of this study. The method employed thus becomes more akin to the participatory photo interview method discussed by Kolb (2018). Kolb discusses the effectiveness of this method as used by a team of scientists in an interdisciplinary study. Their aim was to develop “sustainable future scenarios for seven villages in six provinces” by asking participants to answer the question of “what to maintain and what to change in the selected villages?” (Kolb 2018: 2). Through the photo interviews, the scientists were able to gain local understandings of these

questions and estimate how well their study would be supported (Kolb 2018). This method invites participants to answer research questions “by taking photos and explaining their photos to the researcher” (Kolb 2018: 3). These photos and explanations provide a subjective perspective of the experiences of participants and their local contexts, hence foregrounding the participant’s voice. The benefit of this method is that it allows “the research discussion to start with real places and real experiences” Kolb (2018: 5).

Participants were asked to mindfully look at the spaces they move within every day, on and around the SU campus, and identify elements in their environment that makes them feel like an outsider or like they belong. They were asked to capture this with a camera (on their phones) and provide an explanation of what the image represented for them and the feelings it evoked. This was done in their own time both the pictures and accompanying explanations were submitted to me via email. Eight participants completed this task, five males and three females. Three were staff members and five were students. Two participants were first language Sotho speakers, two were Venda, two were Tswana and the other two spoke Zulu and siSwati respectively. Their ages ranged between 19 and 29 at the time of data collection.

The participants submitted a variety of images. These included, landscapes, signage, buildings and artefacts. For some participants the pictures were of a specific place and the elements that constitute it. One participant chose to describe the space in a voice note. With this exercise they must be able to answer and provide examples to the following questions: “What about these spaces makes me feel at home?” and “What about these spaces makes me feel like an outsider?” This data gave a different lens to gain an understanding of how the participants perceive their context and position themselves within it as well as the role of language in creating these spaces. The following section looks at the data submitted by six of these participants and how they explain their experiences of various spaces at SU. We begin with Ray and Khanyi and their reading and interpretation of landscapes.

#### **4.3 MORE THAN LANGUAGE: LANDSCAPE AS A SEMIOTIC RESOURCE**

Two participants, Ray and Khanyi, sent pictures of landscapes as spaces that they experienced as welcoming. This necessitated taking a closer look at the concept of landscape as a semiotic resource that is read and interpreted similarly to conventional linguistic elements in an environment, such as text. Abrahamsson (1999: 51) describes *landscapes* as symbolic “reflections of cultural identities, rather than of the natural environment”. In an attempt at defining the term “landscape” he starts off by noting that in English the word “implies both a physical scene and its pictorial representation” (Abrahamsson 1999: 51). He further goes on to trace its etymology to an earlier form, *landscipe*, recorded in the 8th century as meaning “an area” (Abrahamsson 1999: 51). In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the term then developed into *landscape* and now referred to “both an area and a painting thereof” (Keisteri 1990 cited Abrahamsson 2009: 51). This development came as a result of how English artists were using the term to refer to Dutch landscape paintings.

The word in Dutch at that time, *lantscap*, meant the everyday surroundings in which farmers lived, and the English equivalent, in the form of *landskip*, a picture of such surroundings, a rural scene. Thus the word “landscape” in its very early meaning, denotes the manner in which an environment is observed (Keisteri 1990, 33), but also shows a clear connection to the cultural landscape associated with human activities. (Abrahamsson 1999: 51)

Abrahamsson (1999) suggests looking at landscapes as semiotic resources, with symbolic functions that can be assigned meaning. We give the environment definition and form “from a particular angle of vision and through a special filter of values and beliefs” (Greider and Garkovich in Abrahamsson 1999: 52).

The meaning we make from the semiotic resources of landscape is thus “always construed in the act of socio-cultural interpretation” (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010: 2). Socio-semiotics provides us with an analytic tool for exploring such meaning making processes as it “studies both signs and social contexts: the connection between ideologically charged sign systems and the material culture of everyday life” (Abrahamsson 1999:52).

Our interpretation of nature also reflects the process of trying to make meaning of ourselves in relation to our environment and other social actors within it, “to ‘place’ someone, to ‘know one’s place’: this language of social existence is unmistakably geographical” (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010:6).

Both Ray and Khanyi had been in Stellenbosch for less than a year at the time of data collection. They sent pictures of landscapes that reminded them of home as places that make them feel the most welcome. Figure 4 and 5 are from Ray. He says the following about them:

“This is what makes me feel at home. It reminds me of the mountainous landscapes of Pretoria and also provides me space to reflect on positive possibilities of my life. My happy place”.



Figure 4: What makes Ray feel at home



Figure 5: Landscapes that remind him of home

Similarly, Khanyi also sent a picture of scenery that makes her think of home.



*Figure 6: Comfort in the familiar suburban space*

Khanyi is originally from Mpumalanga province but lived in Gauteng before moving to Stellenbosch. For her, the differences in the landscape of Stellenbosch remind her the most that she is not at home (She explains these differences more in depth later). The figure 6 above however is of surroundings that look more familiar and make her feel welcome. This is what she says:

**Khanyi:**

“This is a photo that makes me feel at home in Stellenbosch. I usually see this kind of view during my morning runs. I love seeing this because it reminds me of the beauty of creation and really it’s a familiar scenery. One that I can find anywhere I go. It’s the beauty of winter mornings, a glimmer of light, bare trees to signify a cold season. It’s home because there is nature and creation all around us and that as much as it differs it really is the same. I’ve seen this kind of scenery many times in Gauteng, Mpumalanga and here so that’s why whenever I see it I feel at home”.

Ray and Khanyi found the most welcoming spaces to be those that carry symbolic reference to what is familiar (home) in a space where everything at that point was new. Although they are not physically seeing or experiencing the landscapes of their respective homes, they have a cognitive map of it which Abrahamsson (1999: 52) defines as “the mental representation or cognition of the layout of a familiar landscape”. What they are doing here is assigning symbolic values to the landscapes as a means of familiarizing their environment and trying to place themselves therein. This process is what Bruun and Krogh cited in Abrahamsson (1999) refer to as landscaping, which “gives rise to emotive bonds to the landscape, as well as silent knowledge about it, [and in this way] the landscape acquires meaning” (Bruun in Abrahamsson 1999: 53). It then becomes easy for Khanyi and Ray to read



these places as welcoming. Through landscaping they create meaning by transferring knowledge and emotions carried in their cognitive maps of home to the landscapes that they see as similar in Stellenbosch. They impose what they know on what looks familiar to better navigate the space. By making this connection they create their own spaces of belonging.

When Ray had to show a place that made him feel unwelcome he sent a picture of a building situated somewhere in central Stellenbosch with the following comment.

“That’s one place that reminded me that I was once not welcome/didn’t feel like home. This was the most desired place that I wanted to reside in when I came to Stellenbosch. Even though there were vacant apartments available, I wasn’t allowed to apply to the apartment.”



Figure 7: You may not apply

The building/landscape on its own means nothing, however the symbolic value that’s been assigned to it, by Ray, through interactions with others within the space is what produces meaning. Banda and Jimaima (2015: 666) highlight how “producers and consumers of signage are active managers of the ecology of semiotic systems in place for meaning-making”. This meaning making process is ongoing and dynamic “as space is continually imagined, reimagined, created and reinvented as people draw different meanings out of the semiotic material in place as interceded by communication needs, memory, sentiments and perceptions of producers and consumers” (Banda and Jimaima 2015: 665). This building has become a sign of being unwelcome as a result of emotionally and ideologically charged interactions between social actors in the space. This scenery has become a visual symbol of the verbal exchanges informing him that he “wasn’t allowed to apply”. In answer to questions of knowing one’s place this building symbolises a door shut in his face as he tries to become part of this new environment.

As mentioned earlier, placing oneself in relation to the environment and other social actors in it is a big part of making sense and meaning of a space. It is how “people make sense of their social identity” (Jaworski and Thurlow

2010: 6). As a newcomer to the town, this incident spoke volumes to Ray about how he is positioned by others in his new environment. According Jaworski and Thurlow (2010: 6), people's "place of residence offers a map of their place in society: we produce not housing but 'dwellings of definite sorts, as a peasant's hut or nobleman's castle'. The above image may well become a representation, in Ray's mind, not just of being unwelcome at that specific complex but also in that suburb or even in the town as a whole. In this process of trying to find and know our place, space is contributing to the creation of identities "through the process of geographical imagining, the locating of self in space, claiming the ownership of specific places, or by being excluded from them, by sharing space and interacting with others" (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010: 7).

To explain what made her feel unwelcome, Khanyi decided to send a voice note instead of a picture. Her voice note is transcribed below.

"uhm, what makes me... not feel at home, let me start with that. Ok. So, yesterday I went to Cape Town but I was in the CBD mostly and I was, like... and I was driving around and because Cape Town can be a bit busy and the highway... the CBD, you don't feel like, that... there's not that much of nostalgia. Uhm but then I came back, when I was driving back to Stellenbosch. As I was coming in to Stellenbosch or towards Stellenbosch, I realised that this area or this part of the Cape is surrounded by so many mountains. Like it's just mountains all around. It's beautiful but it's very, very different and it makes you feel like you're in another part of the world because it's my first time seeing this kind of landscaping. I'm not used to it, it's very new. So that... at that moment you definitely feel like whoa where am I? You know. And then I started thinking, what makes this so different from Gauteng? Gauteng is mostly cities, tall buildings and just people. All around it's busy! Like there's not really much to say of Gauteng when it comes to nature cause it's just buildings everywhere and when I moved from Nelspruit, Mpumalanga, to Gauteng. Obviously Nelspruit is more green, it's more nature green and it's like surrounded by nice trees. So Gauteng was very different but what made the transition from Nelspruit to Gauteng bearable or much easier was the fact that in Gauteng, as much as the atmosphere, the landscaping, the nature or surroundings was very, very different and might be overwhelming but because there are so many people and its diverse people you feel like you can find a spot and belong. You feel like everyone is there to take part in something, to belong to be part of something. It's not that difficult in Gauteng to find a place where you can belong.

And in Gauteng there's not that one language or one people that dominate. It's just a mixture of everything and we have a saying that no one is from Gauteng. You see during the festive season in Gauteng, less busy, because everyone goes back. Now that's the beauty of being in Gauteng it draws people from all around South Africa and so we come together and we create this one family, this one unit. Where it doesn't matter what language you speak, it doesn't matter what the colour of your skin is, you just belong. So that's what

made it easier for me to transition from Mpumalanga to Gauteng. As much as the nature and landscaping was very different but the environment, the diversity, the people around, you know, you almost actually forgot that you're not home because in some way you find yourself belonging. You just don't forget that you're in South Africa, like it's so diverse and that's the very nice thing about it. You find someone speaking Zulu to someone who's Sotho and they're having this conversation in two different languages but they understand each other, that's the beauty of Gauteng. People make the effort to learn other people's languages and even though they never learn how to speak them but we can have like a decent conversation in our own different languages and we understand each other. That's the beauty of it. Whereas here in Stellenbosch because it's so different for me anyway, personally, I feel like I'm in a different part of the world because of the mountains and landscaping which is very beautiful, it's very, very beautiful it's just that it's so different and already with that now thing in my ... I don't know head or mind or whatever, I realise that I'm in a different part of the world and then I come here and you don't get that sense of I belong. Because you can go a whole day without hearing your own language. You can go a whole day, not even your own language but diverse languages. You know, you don't hear them and it's so sad because then I feel like you just have this longing for feeling like I'm in South Africa where everything is diverse, where we speak everything. Where you hear Afrikaans, English, isiZulu, Venda, being spoken all around you. That is what is missing about Stellenbosch. This diversity that is enriched in South Africa is missing in this part of our country. You know, uhm... Just always... also you get reminded about the fact that we are so different because you cannot help but notice that, hang on you know there's just this one thing that's missing and that's hearing, like hearing all these different languages being spoken all around. For me I think that's what's missing".

Earlier Khanyi had expressed that the image that made her feel most welcome is the one that reminded her of home. I also discussed how this could be attributed to how she could impose her cognitive map of a familiar space to one that is new but shares similarities. This act of landscaping results in her imposing meaning on what she sees and interpreting the space as welcoming. However in her description of what makes her feel unwelcome, she again refers to nature but in this case how she experiences it as "very, very different". In this instance Khanyi interprets the landscape as one that alienates her, one in which she cannot find a sense of belonging. Bladh (cited in Abrahamsson 1999: 52) makes a distinction between "material landscape" and "meaningful aspect of the world" or meaningful landscape. He defines material landscape as what we see with our eyes, "the landscape we are tied to for our living; it contains the plants and animals, as well as soil and water" (Bladh in Abrahamsson 1999: 52). In Khanyi's case that would be the beautiful mountains all around her. The meaningful landscape is translated into a semiotic landscape, "shaped by the complicated interrelation between perceptions, actions and experiences related to language, and culture" (Bladh in Abrahamsson 1999: 52). Khanyi makes meaning of the material



landscape from her experiences of people, culture and specifically language (those she hears or doesn't hear) and lack of diversity within her new environment. Although she enjoys the beauty of what she sees we see in her narrative how the meaningful landscape transforms, the physical landscape into what Abrahamsson (1999: 52) refers to as "an arena for conflict". This conflict forms part of her interpretation of the landscape and she cannot feel welcome in the space. She embraces the diversity of South Africa in terms of the varying landscapes but it is clear that the lack of cultural and linguistic diversity that she finds in this new space is in conflict with her mental framing of what South Africa is, making the already strange landscape look all the more foreign. This leaves her feeling like she is in a different country.

Khanyi touches on the fact that she feels a dominance of one culture over others when she says "in Gauteng there's not that one language or one people that dominate". The main manifestation of this dominance is the language she hears and sees the most in Stellenbosch (Afrikaans) but most importantly the absence of all other languages. She states that, "you can go a whole day without hearing your own language[...] not even your own language but diverse languages [...] and it's so sad because then I feel like you just have this longing for feeling like I'm in South Africa where everything is diverse". In this statement we see what frustrates and alienates her most. She feels an erasure of all other language groups and people as opposed to an equal mix of cultures as experienced in Gauteng. "Irvine and Gal (2000: 38) define erasure as "the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible".

Although she has moved between provinces before, and there too she experienced how the landscape differed dramatically, she did not feel out of place. Through her narrative we gather that the feelings of alienation come more from how she experiences a lack of diversity and a longing to interact in different languages. When taking into account the relationship between "material landscape" and the "meaningful aspect of the world", Abrahamsson (1999: 57) argues that "change in the landscape can challenge cultural expression, and thus have sociocultural impacts". What she lacks in this new environment is "diversity". It is not what she sees that makes her experience the landscape as so alien but it is what she *doesn't hear*. She, like many of the other participants, speaks many of the official South African languages but in this space those languages have no place. It could then be said that in this mountainous landscape she too has no place. I must therefore agree with Dlamini-Akintola (2019: 58) who argues that "a landscape therefore embodies both the natural and cultural heritage of the people in it thus it is said to contribute to people's identity and sense of place". Where Khanyi and Ray sent images and descriptions of landscapes, in response to the question, the next participant sent me images of the same place at different points in time. The next section thus looks at how place/space can be seen as an event.

#### 4.4 DYNAMIC SPACES: THE EVENT AND THE UN/INVITED

One of the participants provided images that illustrated Casey's suggestion that "place should be seen as 'event' and therefore far from being static sites" (cited in Pink 2007: 245). This data comes from Samson who shares his interpretation of one of the popular shared spaces on the SU campus called the Rooi Plein (the Red Plain). The Rooi Plein is a square in the central part of campus, characterised by the red brick paving. It is one of the main social hubs where students from all faculties converge. Samson sent two different pictures of the Rooi Plein, each picture for him represented an event that resulted in certain interpretations. Note how in the welcome moments, his repertoires are not silenced as opposed to the scenario where he feels unwelcome. When he feels unwelcome he is silenced and that silence is conveyed not only as the absence of speech but even in his body posture. According to these events and the semiotic elements that constitute them, he has felt both welcome and unwelcome in that same space. With the image in figure 8, he explains the elements at play in the time when the Rooi Plein is a welcoming space. He provided his own captions for each picture.



Figure 8: Laughter on a rare warm day in winter with friends

He explains that:

"The *Rooiplein* is a hallmark of the Stellenbosch University 'collective' - no, combined - imaginary. I find it would be very difficult for anyone who has ever dedicated years to this locality to not see in the back of their minds those red bricks when asked "Stellenbosch University – *where?*"

"This is a place where I can speak in all the various languages my tongue can dance upon seeing a face that reminds me of the many other places I call home"

For Samson, the Rooi Plein is a symbol of Stellenbosch University and a place where he can share happy times with friends and speak freely in all the languages that he can speak. To him this is a place where things happen, where history is made and the past is challenged. It is indeed the place where many significant events take place on this campus. It is often the site for mass student action such as silent vigils and protests, as was the case during the #FeesMustFall<sup>8</sup> movement. According to Samson, this is also a public space where you see all sorts. The very privileged “It is here where often the excesses and delights of wealth shimmer with golden blond light and a pungent fragrance of vegan speciality breads dripping Channel no 5” juxtaposed with the very poor “while the perfume of shit weighs down on another too busy shaking up dustbins to cough up one more day away from hunger”. When he feels comfortable there is laughter and there is a liberal use of all the languages that he associates with various places that he has called home. His tongue dances.

In chapter two, Samson listed eight official languages on his language portrait. In that chapter we see how each tells a story of portions of his life thus far and how he enjoys being able to switch between languages. He mentions that his “tongue can dance upon seeing a face of the many other places [he] calls home” in this particular image of the Rooi Plein. In this picture you see what seems to be a small gathering of people (his caption indicates that they are friends) who seem to be sharing the space harmoniously, possibly even sharing food. In his language portrait interview, Samson spoke of how all his other repertoires are silenced in Stellenbosch but this dynamic space seems to hold the potential of being the exception. The elements that make up this space/event - bodies, memories linked with to the faces that make him think of home and possible language diversity - allow him the freedom to behave in a certain way. Samson’s account illustrates how the spaces we find ourselves in affect the value and function of our sociolinguistic repertoires (Blommaert et al. 2005). Space also affects what we can and cannot do as it “legitimizes some forms of behavior while disqualifying or constraining other forms” (Blommaert et al. 2005: 203).

What we also see here is that space is dynamic, it both shapes and is shaped by what happens in it and those participating in the event. This stands in agreement with the point made by Blommaert et al. (2005: 203) that “space does something to people though we realize that people in interaction semiotically create and modify space”. In the case of Samson, it is not just the space but the actors in it that make it a space where his previously silenced tongue dances. Peck and Stroud (2015: 133) argue “for extending linguistic landscape studies to also encompass the body as a corporeal landscape or ‘moving discursive locality’”. Similarly, in answer to the question what can be considered linguistic landscape, Shohamy and Waksman opted to view linguistic landscapes as “an ecological arena that goes beyond written texts of signs and includes oral language, images, objects, placement in time and space, and also people” (Gorter 2013: 197). Linguistic landscape must go beyond written signs in order to make

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<sup>8</sup> During 2015 and 2016, university students all over South Africa took part in the #FeesMustFall student protests which addressed a large number of issues including the high cost of university education, curricula, student and staff transformation, and language.

sense of the complete picture. It should rather take an ecological angle of looking more at how the ‘organisms’ - in this case everything we have come to consider semiotic elements - relate to each other in the co-construction of meaning within that space.

A lot of how Samson interacts with the space is also influenced by the movement of bodies in the space. Kusters et al. (2017: 226) refer to bodies as being “semiotically charged”. Within a space “bodies mean because of their entanglement with other semiotic resources, and with other bodies” (Oostendorp Forthcoming: 5) and so should be included as meaning-making resources in the semiotic repertoire. The important role of the body as a semiotic resource comes through strongly as we look at linguistic repertoires, landscaping, and spatialization. This is because, among other things, bodies hold history, feelings language and silence. All of these elements form part of the bodily dimensions whose importance should not be neglected when looking at linguistic repertoires (Busch 2015).

It should therefore be understood that not only are linguistic repertoires connected and experienced through the body but also that “bodies are also simultaneously creating meaning” (Oostendorp, Forthcoming: 18). This meaning varies as bodies move between spaces and interact with other semiotic resources in those spaces. Samson’s use of language is likely linked to the memories of the places he calls home triggering what Busch refers to as “habitualized patterns of language practices” (Busch 2015: 350) that have come to form his repertoire. This is a space that makes him feel at home enough to metaphorically speak freely.

In figure 9, the physical space doesn’t change but what/who constitutes it does. In this case/event there is no longer space to interact as he had previously described. He associates the next picture with feelings of being out of place.



*Figure 9: Men in Black shields on standby and not a single black student problem in sight*

In this picture, the context has changed. You now see an absence of black bodies and see the presence of riot control. From this vantage point one also sees the prominence of the statue of Jan Marias<sup>9</sup>. The same space that makes Samson feel welcome is also the space that makes him feel the most unwelcome. He calls this the “The dual story of the RooiPlein” and refers to the Rooi Plein as “a place of immense history for me/*us*, the them and *theys* too”. I have picked a few of Samson’s key statements in explaining this change.

“Both my chosen photographs speak. Yet they both speak in a language of contesting silences. In a way this is more or less how exclusion and inclusion in Stellenbosch University tend to use the same terminology and instantiate themselves at unexpected intervals. Spaces of inclusion here are often resting uneasily over paved instances of trauma.”

“For it is here students have gathered to either raise the apartheid flag or hang Jan Marais with a tire ready to burn with resistance. It is here where often the excesses and delights of wealth shimmer with golden blond light and a pungent fragrance of vegan speciality breads dripping Channel no 5 while the perfume of shit weighs down on another too busy shaking up dustbins to cough up one more day away from hunger.”

“It is where an art project is a security risk that commands ‘Men in Black’ surrounding the silhouette of an old - dead - white man”. (Referring to the statue of Jan Marais).

“But for those days I see this red walk path, and hear the deafening silence of surveillance off a high point knit picking futures like hazards ready for expulsion - I remember to look down, stay quiet and simply go get what you were sent for and nothing more.”

The second image is a reminder of what happened during the #FeesMustFall movement. At the height of this movement, universities across the country employed private security forces to protect university property. One particular security agency was known colloquially by the students as Men in Black. This image is a reminder to Samson of how students’ movements were policed and he experienced this as a restriction specifically on the movements of black students, “Men in Black shields on standby and not a single black student problem in sight”. When “not a single black student problem is in sight”, there is no longer space to interact as he had previously described.

We cannot dispute that bodies, - “in particular, visible aspects of the body such as skin, hair and facial features have been used to discriminate on the basis of race, gender and sexuality” (Shusterman 2006: 4). These perceptions

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<sup>9</sup> Jan Marais was a South African mining magnate and politician. In 1915 he bequeathed £100,000 (worth about £1 billion today) to establish the University of Stellenbosch



of different bodies give and restrict access (to some and not others), evoke evaluation and construct identities in particular ways, determining what and how they mean in time and space. According to Peck and Stroud (2015: 133) “In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, the question of which bodies fit into what spaces remains highly contentious [as] historically, the white populace, although small in number, have had bodies which *count*”. Also note how Samson associates this period of restriction with silence. His tongue is no longer dancing. What he sees is a place “where an art project is a security risk that commands ‘Men in Black’ surrounding the silhouette of an old - dead - white man.” What he experiences is “the deafening silence of surveillance” This silence is carried in his body as he remembers “to look down, stay quiet and simply go get what you were sent for and nothing more.” Staying quiet and looking down is what many oppressed groups have had to do in the spaces of those in power. In saying this he makes it clear that the space belongs to others and he has no voice in it.

Stellenbosch University was previously an exclusively white space which is now open to all. Even so, the physical spaces and the bodies that move through them hold histories that interact with the present to make meaning. To understand this interaction we must note how “landscapes are invested with ‘layered regimes of historicity that invest the present landscape with meaningful relationships between the past and future’” (Train 2016 cited in Bock and Stroud 2018:15). In this narrative the only ‘symbolic’ body that counts is that of the dead white man, Jan Marais, who is ‘protected’ by the riot police. As in Bock and Stroud (2018:13) here also “apartheid remains a structuring motif in the way young South Africans perceive and talk about themselves, their possibilities of mobility and their sense of ‘comfort’ in place”.

Samson’s account is one that brings back memories of a time where black bodies in spaces such as SU were a problem. Though this has changed “contemporary white spaces are also populated by the ghosts of black ‘transgressions’; traces of incursions - imagined or real - remain, such as the existence of razor wire on the walls of gated communities” (Peck and Stroud 2015: 133). Semiotic artefacts like, the razor wire and the statue of Jan Marais can be read and interpreted in ways that are nostalgic and comforting to some and as obstruction, restriction (of bodies) and pain for others. The statue of Jan Marias, for Samson, stands as a reminder of the apartheid history that signifies who the space belongs(ed) to. This is because “perceptions of place are not just filtered through ocular engagement with landscapes, but constructed through the embodied (and multisensorial) *interaction* of people with place and its semiotics” (Bock and Stroud 2018: 13).

Samson’s description of the duality of the Rooi Plein exemplifies how space is not static and can be seen as an event, constituted through everyday practice. A lot of what made Samson feel either welcome or unwelcome was the movement of bodies within the space, particularly the freedom or restriction thereof. In this example you can see that space is made up of many moving elements, some permanent like Jan Marias and others more transient like the different bodies moving in and out of that space. With each of these changes/events, the messages read

from the space differ and in turn put constraints on his bodily movements as well his linguistic expression. This emphasises again, that bodies should be included as semiotic elements that can be read and that interactively create meaning within a space. It is the history carried in Samson's own body that influences his reading of the Statue of Jan Marias. Bock and Stroud (2018: 13) frame apartheid as a Zombie landscape that "retains its force as a dynamic in the everyday subjectivities of South Africans". They define Zombie landscapes as "reconstructed and imagined landscapes, pieced together through *traces* of memory and the visceralities of affect these memories call forth" (Bock and Stroud 2018: 15).

This construction of space "in the sense that the 'undead' and highly racialized ways of speaking about space and place [...] continue to 'haunt' the present despite having no legal standing after two decades of democracy" is what makes it a Zombie landscape (Bock and Stroud 2018: 13). A similar haunting can be experienced by some when reading signage written in Afrikaans or, as is the case with Samson, encountering symbols of Afrikaner nationhood such as the statue of Jan Marias. Afrikaans carries the unfortunate stigma of being the language of the oppressor. Even the term used to name South Africa's period of segregation, 'Apartheid', is in Afrikaans which inevitably establishes a link between the language and that period in South African history. The last section of this chapter looks specifically at text and artefacts and how participants perceive them.

#### **4.5 BUILDINGS, SIGNAGE AND STATUES**

This section focuses on the linguistic landscape (LL) on campus in a more traditional sense, where the emphasis is more on visible text found in public spaces. The most widely quoted definition of linguistic landscapes comes from Landry and Bourhis (1997: 25) "The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings" and these combined, form the linguistic landscape of a given area. Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara and Trumper-Hecht (2006: 7) refer to linguistic landscapes as "linguistic objects that mark the public space" and LL scholars stand in agreement that LL functions as both an informational and symbolic marker that communicates "the relative power and status of linguistic communities in a given territory" (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006: 8). As mentioned earlier, space speaks and the LL of an area reflects who has the authority to speak and who is significant enough to be addressed.

In a similar line of reasoning, Shohamy (2006) refers to LL "as a public arena where language battles are taking place and where the choice of languages can establish domination of space" (cited in Gorter 2013: 197). The choice of languages and the messages used on signage are a glaring marker of who dominates a space and can also serve to indicate the ideologies carried by the dominating group(s). The significance of text in space is explicitly displayed in the way that changes in regimes are often closely accompanied by changes in signage, street names and the names of buildings. This textual representation of dominance is something that cannot go unnoticed and

unlike speech, it cannot be camouflaged or quickly adjusted to individual interactions. Said (2011: 62) comments on how LL “breaks away from an established trend within sociolinguistic research to investigate speech at the expense of written forms” whose significance should not be downplayed.

LL data often consists of large numbers of photographs, collected by the researcher, of observable signs and looking at the distribution of languages on the signs as well as the meanings that can be read from this. Said (2011: 66) however, critiques the lack of triangulation of data in LL research as the understanding becomes limited to the “interpretations of an omniscient researcher’s insights”. Instead of using visual data on its own as evidence, he suggests adding other data resources - such as the subjective perspectives of the community/participants - to substantiate the findings from the visual data.

By getting the perspectives of those whose daily experiences and movements are shaped by the linguistic landscape, the data is enriched by the knowledge provided by this insider view. The inclusion of voices from the community of the study “enables LL researchers to steer-away from hasty conclusions which do not reflect the reality of linguistic situations on the ground” (Said 2011: 66). The inclusion of participant voices, as opposed to a collection of photographs, provides “greater contextual (ethnographic) and historical understandings of texts in the landscape – who put them there, how they are interpreted, and what role they play in relation to space, migration and mobility” Pennycook (2017: 270).

In this section the focus will be on three participants, Red, Lungisani and Jabulile. They sent photos of written text visible in the spaces that they frequent on campus and expressed how they interpret them. In addition to text, Jabulile also sent an image of a statue. Their explanations exemplify how speech, text and other semiotic codes found in space “index particular localities, orient us through different levels of territorial and societal stratification including identity claims, power relations, and their contestations” (Johnstone, 2004 cited in Jaworski and Thurlow 2010: 8). How and where texts and symbols are placed indexes their value and status in a space. The language use and symbolic references will always have a target audience, whose legitimacy in the space is affirmed by being represented and addressed in its semiotic construction. This goal oriented action by the sign producers “to create particular effects in their intended recipients [is] known in sociolinguistics as ‘audience design’” (Bell 1997 cited in Jaworski and Thurlow 2010: 13). Also discussed, is how the histories we carry with us also influence how we read symbols and the power that various semiotic elements have to trigger memories and create ‘zombie landscapes’.

To represent what made him feel a little more welcome, Red, sent a picture taken in the vicinity of the Neelsie. His focus was on how the signage here differed from those at the faculty where he studies, in that it at least uses all three of the languages of SU’s language policy. Through the narratives of Red, Lungisani and Jabulile we see an acute awareness of not being the intended audience and its effect on them.



**Red:**

“The other sign at the Neelsie [referring to figure 10] has been recently changed to include English, Afrikaans and Xhosa”.

When asked if this sign made him feel welcome he said:

“Well, it’s more of an inclusive effort than actually welcomed”



Figure 10: English and isiXhosa are on the sign



Figure 11: signage that Red could not understand

The second image (figure 11) is of what makes him feel unwelcome. Red expressed that as a student who did not know Afrikaans, seeing the signage on his way to class, written only in Afrikaans, made him feel like he did not belong here.

**Red:**

“I see this sign every day when I go to the Engineering building and it’s only in Afrikaans which is a constant reminder that I’m at an Afrikaans’ (Afrikaans people’s) University”.

He further explains that:

“The sign alludes to the idea that the primary student catered for should be an Afrikaans person”

From this account we see how ownership and dominion in a space is powerfully conveyed through “the linguistic choices made on public signage [which] are indicative of their producers’ identities” (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010: 13). The sole dominance of Afrikaans in figure 11, results in Red interpreting the space as one where he, as a non-Afrikaans speaker, is not considered. The language on signs and buildings was mentioned by three of the participants who submitted images. It also was mentioned quite often during interview sessions with many of the

participants. One participant, Lungisani, highlighted how elements of this campus can make people feel either invisible or like they are invading someone else's space. Statues and the language use on permanent structures were examples of this. He pointed out how most of the permanent signs are in Afrikaans and how those in isiXhosa can easily be removed almost like everyone else in the space is just visiting.

He says the following:



Figure 12: Permanent vs transient



Figure 13: Permanent vs transient



Figure 14: Permanent vs transient

### Lungisani:

“Things that make me feel unwelcome here [referring to figure 12-14], because they remind me that the folks for whom this institution functions to service are a special interest group. We are unwelcome guests at best in the country of our birth. If I were in another country, I'd understand. If this place was in a truly independent Afrikaners ethno state, it would make better sense why the use of language to exclude in the university persists (whether or not that's ethical), but that it happens at public universities under the new dispensation is indicative of how superficial the progress we have supposedly made is.”

“Native languages are good enough for email signatures and PR slogans as you can see on the branding on these buildings, but they are not good enough for functional uses like the labelling of buildings. You have to ask yourself why it's Afrikaans and not any other language. Why not English? What's the role of persisting with Afrikaans signage everywhere? Whatever the role of this is, it has the consequence of making me feel unsettled and at worst unwelcome in the institution which I work.”

When asked where he feels the most welcome this was his response:

“This (he sent a picture of his office) could count as the place I feel the least unwelcome. My office. My space. It’s because it’s a place where I can do what I love and get paid for it. It’s fantastic! The only thing that ruins it is when someone walks in having read my title on my door (Mnr instead of Mr) and addresses me as such. That reminds me of where this space is located even when the door is closed”.

His awareness of the dominance of Afrikaans and the position given to isiXhosa was made very clear in his interview where he describes Afrikaans as brown pants. According to him, “they [Afrikaans speakers] wear the pants”. He represented isiXhosa as black shoes and a black belt. For him the language and the people are what those who wear the pants step on. Though they may seem insignificant, they are necessary to support and hold up the pants. His observations point out how “linguistic landscape items are mechanisms of language policy that can perpetuate ideologies and the status of certain languages and not others” (Gorter 2013: 197).

#### **Lungisani:**

“Black belt and shoes are Xhosa both the people and the language. The belt is holding up the pants.”

“This is what they use to step. The black, the Xhosa. It’s always below.”

“Even in the emails it’s always below its not on equal footing but it has to hold up the pants”.

For him, the prominence of Afrikaans everywhere he looks, speaks volumes about ownership, entitlement and an unwillingness to acknowledge and engage with people of a different culture and make space for them, even when you occupy the same space.

#### **Lungisani:**

“The fact that you can be in a place and live your whole life and not speak any of the languages, except the one that you grew up speaking that is, of some of the people around you says something about your willingness to interact and become embedded in their cultures, embedded in their lives caring about their lives. People use language to express that stuff”.

The current language policy at SU states that it aims to “increase equitable access to SU for all students and staff” but, as the university is situated in the Western Cape, it is committed to “multilingualism by using the province’s three official languages, namely, Afrikaans, English and IsiXhosa” (Stellenbosch University Language Policy). The description of SU’s linguistic landscape though, says otherwise. The balance in the language use still leans

mostly to Afrikaans then English and for the sake of PR, a little bit of isiXhosa. Jaworski and Thurlow (2010: 15) comment on how “most studies of displayed language to date orient to globalization as a key underlying concept behind much ongoing change in the linguistic/semiotic landscapes”. However if globalization is the driving factor, we would see a greater dominance of English. If the driving factor is the language of the region we should see isiXhosa alongside Afrikaans.

What is disturbing in the context of SU is that the language that is least visible is one of the strongest regional languages, isiXhosa. It is not immigrants but citizens of this country who have to adjust to feeling out of place where even the black language of the region is under-represented. Such struggles, of course, are not unique to SU. Mpendukana (2018: 184), on reflecting on the protest action at UCT, states that “In the post-apartheid era, racial segregation is no longer lawful, but black bodies remain obliged to contend with ever more nuanced forms of exclusion and stoppage, new forms of absence and curtailed presence, suffering daily physical and intellectual discomfort in ‘structurally white’ spaces”. This includes being the “unaddressed” within these spaces, the unseen and the unheard in the land of one’s citizenship.

The last participant in this section, Jabulile, makes reference to a statue in her department as something that makes the space feel unwelcoming. Just like the statue of Jan Marias, this bust is a sign of who owns the space. According to Bock and Stroud (2018: 8)

“Most of things that inhabit our social world and shape our conduct in it are created, installed, interpreted and used by humans [...] laypersons acting and interacting in a socio-material context do not cope with humans that conceived the artefacts [...] but rather with the meanings, ideas, constraints, possibilities and consequences embodied in and enacted by these artefacts.



Figure 15: An artefact of an unwelcoming past

**Jabulile:**

“Statues such as this one are a constant reminder that the university where I work and study was not built with me in mind, that I was in fact thought to be too inferior to participate in the exploration and dissemination of knowledge. One becomes numb to the statues after some time, but the subliminal message lingers.”

Similar to Samson, the place that makes her feel welcome is a space of coming together, Pulp Cinema in the student centre. The picture that she sent is of the sign at the entrance of the cinema. Probably one of the most neutral signs you can find, that holds no specific historical connotation. The sign is in English, a language which most of my participants experience as a neutral language, and the word itself “**Pulp**” refers more to film culture than any other. There is no fight for language or cultural dominance in this space. It is all about a society of film lovers no matter who they may be. The date of establishment, “since 2011”, is also significant in that unlike the statue in her building, this society may have been established with even someone like her in mind.



Figure 16: A neutral space to blend in

**Jabulile:**

“Pulp cinema was a place where I could hang out and relax as an introvert who was new to Stellenbosch and did not really have any close friends. What I loved the most about it was the anonymity that the darkness provided. I saw many other people slip in and out by themselves. I watched silly movies, thrillers, dramas, strange and quirky short films. But the most memorable film I watched there was *Miners Shot Down*. I



walked home by myself in tears, feeling heartbroken but feeling like I had been represented on that screen even though the story was not mine directly”.

What is also evident here is how significant it was for Jabulile to see herself represented in some way, as a black body in this space, by the film shown in Pulp Cinema of people who looked like her and whose stories she could relate to. On another personal level, she liked how it made her feel anonymous at a time in her life where she was especially shy and awkward on this campus.

#### **4.6 DISCUSSION**

This chapter focused on how staff and students from under-represented language groups position themselves in various spaces on and around the SU campus and how they experience it, despite being part of a linguistic minority at SU. From the discussion above it is clear that, more often than not, people are still alienated in the spaces that they must study, work and interact in at SU. When looking at the semiotic landscape it is clear to see why. Just from the texts alone there is a dominance of one language over others which makes no sense in terms of the current language policy at SU. Even the addition of isiXhosa in the language policy has merely been lip service when one looks at how and when isiXhosa is used and where it is placed in relation to English and Afrikaans. What’s also striking is how participants seem only to find places of belonging in places that look like home or in places that hold a specific memory of a time when this place felt a little more welcoming, such as when Jabulile saw a movie that she felt represented her at Pulp Cinema. The rest of the time it seems that people are just surviving as they move through spaces that they experience as unwelcome or, at best, the least unwelcoming but never quite their space. This is explicitly reflected in statements such as the following:

“This could count as the place I feel the least unwelcome”

“Well, it’s more of an inclusive effort than actually welcomed”

“Spaces of inclusion here are often resting uneasily over paved instances of trauma”.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This thesis aimed to explore the personal language experiences of minority language speakers at Stellenbosch University. It looked at the diverse linguistic repertoires they have and how they use them to position themselves and navigate in different spaces, specifically spaces on and around the SU campus. As mentioned in chapter one, 15 participants took part in this study all of whom provided insightful data. However, as the study continued, it became clear that I would not be able to include the data from all of the participants in this thesis. The data eventually selected for this thesis was chosen because it best exemplified the points being made in this particular study, and by the majority of the participants. It is my hope however to still make use of the data from the other participants in future papers as it contains so many potential areas of explorations that will further contribute to the field of sociolinguistics. I have included the language portraits of all 15 participants in appendix E of this thesis.

#### **5.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND AIMS**

In chapter one of this thesis, the research questions and aims were stated. The data and discussions presented in chapter two to four have endeavoured to address them. This chapter serves to summarise the findings, reflect on the research process and consider possible areas of future investigation.

This study aimed to do the following:

- a) To explore the potentialities of language portraits as a methodological tool and what kinds of understandings about language experience can be uncovered through using this research method.
- b) The aims here are two fold.
  - i. To explore the rich linguistic repertoires that minority language speakers bring with them to Stellenbosch University and how this shapes their interactions within their current setting.
  - ii. To contribute to the existing body of knowledge on linguistic repertoires

- c) To gain insight into how people read and interpret semiotic resources in the spaces they inhabit on and around the SU campus and what conclusions are drawn from their interactions with these spaces.
  
- a) Chapter two took a dedicated look at the language portrait as a methodological tool. Here, the methodology was explained and its potentialities were explored by using Samson as the primary example. I discussed the advantages offered by its art-based, multimodal nature as well as its potential to illicit meaningful biographical narratives. Samson's language portrait and interview demonstrated the workings of this method in practice. In this chapter we see the kind of narratives that language portraits can illicit. The data also explicitly displays the process involved in getting to these narratives (creating the portrait, attempting to represent language in new, multimodal ways and interpreting that representation) and making meaning of them. The involvement of the senses in this process and the connections made to memory was shown to be part of why this tool is effective in eliciting narratives that trace the development of linguistic repertoires. Lastly, we also see how the creative and biographical characteristics of this method empower the participant as they have the agency to tell their stories and are in control of how they are interpreted.
  
- b) Chapter three was an exploration of the rich linguistic repertoires that minority language speakers bring with them to Stellenbosch University and how they have used them to shape their interactions within their past and present setting. The focus was on Harriet whose portrait speaks volumes about the interwoven nature of linguistic repertoires that makes the view of languages as separate bound entities seem misguided. The data contributes to the literature that argues for a disinvention of socially constructed categories in linguistics. Harriet also displays what such a disinvention looks like in practice.
  
- c) The final chapter of this thesis focused on how participants make meaning of the spaces they inhabit, on and around the SU campus. The data showed how meaning can be read from a wide range of semiotic resources aside from the conventional meaning making resources commonly associated with the study of linguistic landscapes. A salient point was the need to acknowledge bodies and landscapes themselves as semiotic. The study was also interested in finding out how the participants interpret these spaces, particularly whether they experience them as welcoming or not. There was a definitive answer to this question. Sadly the general feeling in spaces at SU, based on the participants' reading of the space, was that of being an outsider.



### **5.3 LIMITATIONS**

On reflection of this research process, I must note two things that could in future be done differently. This study stands in agreement with the poststructuralist perspectives on sociolinguistics that, among other things, argues for a deconstruction of arbitrary categories of language. This stance was however contradicted in this study in the following ways. Firstly, in my definition of minority language speakers, I specifically looked for first language speakers of official South African languages. In so doing, I subscribed to the same categorisation that this study argues against. In my definition of minority language speakers at SU, I managed to exclude all other South African citizens who are speakers of equally legitimate varieties but whose languages are not officially recognised. This error was made apparent during data collection as a number of participants would disclose during the course of their interviews that the official language they use to identify themselves is in fact not the language they consider to be their own. Two participants in particular are self-declared first language speakers of Sepitori and Harriet refers to her first language as Kasi Sotho.

In a similar vein, the use of questionnaires at the beginning of the interview, in retrospect, seems counterproductive to the aims of the language portrait exercise. Before completing their language portraits, participants were asked to list the languages/codes that they speak as part of the questionnaire. The result was sometimes that participants would be more prone to list only the officially recognised languages. However, the other varieties would come up as they fill in their language portraits. Both these oversights make it clear that we as researchers, looking at a deconstructed understanding of language, need to find new ways to talk about language. In so doing, we will be better equipped to avoid the trap of inadvertently subscribing to the very categories we aspire to deconstruct.

### **5.4 CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY THE STUDY**

One strength of this study was its emphasis on the foregrounding of the participants' voices and making space for the participants to be co-constructors of knowledge. This study contributes to the body of knowledge that prioritises the value of the first person perspective in social science research. The photo interview method makes participants co-researchers as they have a better understanding of the spaces they move in and can contribute data that is relevant and true to their context. The whole aim of the language portraits is to highlight the perspective of the experiencing subject and enable them to express their experiences in their own voice. The data presented here adds to that body of knowledge. A further contribution lies in the multi-layered method of research applied in this study.

This study used an art-based methodological tool that provided biographical data. It also used data collected in a typical LL fashion collected by the participants themselves. In this way, participants have the power to bring data that they feel is true to their context, based on their insider knowledge. Chapter four of this thesis made some strong points about how space is constituted and what we consider to be semiotic resources that could add another voice

to current discussions in this field. Lastly, the way that this thesis has been structured and written makes a case for allowing space for subjectivity in research by foregrounding the voices of the participants and subjective voice of the researcher.

## **5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

As mentioned earlier, not all the data collected could be presented in this thesis. The current study and the data collected over all compels us to further explore the entanglements of language with social constructs such as culture and the legitimacy of non-standard varieties. It would be interesting to gain an understanding of what people really tie their identity to, culture or language, and if they feel compelled for the two to be one.

A major theme in this thesis was that of a silencing of the linguistic repertoires that participants have and an under representation of diversity at Stellenbosch University. There is a need to research possible interventions for this problem. A starting point would be to investigate ways in which we can resemiotise non-inclusive spaces to be more inclusive at Stellenbosch University. Recently, there have been some efforts made to resemiotise spaces on campus as part of the Visual Redress project, led by Prof. Elmarie Costandius of the Visual Arts Department at SU. People were asked to give phrases in their home languages that will be sandblasted onto benches in various parts of the SU campus. This presents a further area of research where the effect of this intervention on how SU spaces are interpreted, post-intervention, can be explored.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A**

#### **Background questionnaire**

##### **1. PERSONAL DETAILS**

Name and surname:

Age:

Gender:

Home province and town:

Primary School:

High School:

Are you a student or staff member at SU?

How many years have you been a student/staff at S.U?

What program are you studying and which subjects?



Where do you currently stay while studying or working at SU?

## **2. Languages**

Please list the languages you are exposed to (speak, understand, and aspire to use) and tick where appropriate.

Languages	Age	At home before starting school	In class at primary school	Playground at primary School	In class at high school	Playground at high School	In class at university	In social spaces at university	With friends	With Siblings	With Parents	At Work

**3. Proficiency**

Please list the languages from table 2 and on a scale of 1 to 4 rate yourself in each of the following areas?

1 – Completely fluent

2 – Almost fluent

3 – Very basic proficiency (can get by)

4 - No Proficiency

<b>Languages</b>	<b>Speak</b>	<b>Understand</b>	<b>Read</b>	<b>Write</b>

## APPENDIX B

### STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

---

You are invited to take part in a study conducted by **Simangele Mashazi**, from the **Department of General Linguistics** at Stellenbosch University. You were approached as a possible participant because **you are a South African student/staff member at Stellenbosch University and are part of minority language group at Stellenbosch University.**

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to explore the linguistic resources that people bring with them to Stellenbosch University and investigate their experiences of language at the University. It will look at the role of language in forming inclusive/exclusive spaces and resilience strategies used by speakers of minority language groups.

#### 2. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to fill in a language portrait that will visually represent your experiences of language and thereafter be part of an interview discussing your language experiences. This will all take approximately 60 minute and the interview will be recorded. This will all take place at the Stellenbosch University library or any place that is convenient for you. You will then be asked to walk in familiar spaces and make observations about it according to some guiding questions I will give. You will then give feedback through email.

#### 3. POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO THE SOCIETY

This study will give all participants an opportunity to state how they feel about current language practices at Stellenbosch University and voice any suggestions regarding any desired changes which could lead to more informed approaches to language diversity at Stellenbosch University.

#### **4. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

All participants are taking part on a voluntary basis. They will receive no compensation of any kind in return for their involvement.

#### **5. PROTECTION OF YOUR INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND IDENTITY**

Any information you share with me during this study and that could possibly identify you as a participant will be protected. This will be done by assigning each participant a pseudonym whenever they are mentioned in the report. All data will be stored and saved on my (Simangele Mashazi) personal computer where only I will have access to it. The information may be shared with my Supervisor (Marcelyn Oostendorp) but participants' identities will be kept secret.

All data collected (written and audio) may be used in future studies on this topics, again confidentiality will be ensured. Participants are welcome to review any of the data concerning them. I can make it available for them on request by email at **mashazi@sun.ac.za**. Once the participant has given consent and taken part in the study, they no longer have the option to prohibit the sharing of this information.

#### **6. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you agree to take part in this study, you may withdraw at any time without any consequence. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this study if for some reason you do not fit the criteria, previously stated.

#### **7. RESEARCHERS' CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact at the researcher, **Simangele Mashazi** at **mashazi@sun.ac.za**, and/or the supervisor **Marcelyn Oostendorp** at [Moostendorp@sun.ac.za](mailto:Moostendorp@sun.ac.za)

#### **8. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights

as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

.....

**DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT**

As the participant I confirm that:

- I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- All issues related to privacy, and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide, have been explained.

By signing below, I \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of participant*) agree to take part in this research study, as conducted by Simangele Mashazi.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**DECLARATION BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

As the **principal investigator**, I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the participant. I also declare that the participant has been encouraged (and has been given ample time) to ask any questions. In addition I would like to select the following option:

	The conversation with the participant was conducted in a language in which the participant is fluent.
	The conversation with the participant was conducted with the assistance of a translator (who has signed a non-disclosure agreement), and this "Consent Form" is available to the participant in a language in which the participant is fluent.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Principal Investigator**

**Date**

## APPENDIX C



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY  
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

**INSTITUTIONAL PERMISSION:****AGREEMENT ON USE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION IN RESEARCH**

**Name of Researcher:** Marcellyn Oostendorp

**Name of Research Project:** Image-ining multilingualism in transformation: The Linguistic Repertoires of Underrepresented Students in Higher Education

**Service Desk ID:** IRPSD 1009

**Date of Issue:** 5 March 2019

You have received institutional permission to proceed with this project as stipulated in the institutional permission application and within the conditions set out in this agreement.

<b>1 WHAT THIS AGREEMENT IS ABOUT</b>	
<b>What is POPI?</b>	<p>1.1 POPI is the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013.</p> <p>1.2 POPI regulates the entire information life cycle from collection, through use and storage and even the destruction of personal information.</p>
<b>Why is this important to us?</b>	<p>1.3 Even though POPI is important, it is not the primary motivation for this agreement. The privacy of our students and employees are important to us. We want to ensure that no research project poses any risks to their privacy.</p> <p>1.4 However, you are required to familiarise yourself with, and comply with POPI in its entirety.</p>
<b>What is considered to be personal information?</b>	<p>1.5 'Personal information' means information relating to an identifiable, living, individual or company, including, but not limited to:</p> <p>1.5.1 information relating to the race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, national, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental health, well-being, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth of the person;</p> <p>1.5.2 information relating to the education or the medical, financial, criminal or employment history of the person;</p>

1

Institutional Permission Standard Agreement: 13 March 2017 V1



**APPENDIX D****NOTICE OF APPROVAL**

REC Humanities New Application Form  
3 October 2018

Project number: 7919

Project Title: The linguistic repertoires and embodied experiences of under-represented language groups at Stellenbosch University: Inclusion, exclusion and resilience

Dear Miss Simangele Mashazi

Your REC Humanities New Application Form submitted on 8 August 2018 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Humanities. Please note the following for your approved submission:

**Ethics approval period:**

**Protocol approval date (Humanities) Protocol expiration date (Humanities)**

3 October 2018 2 October 2021

**GENERAL COMMENTS:**

The researcher is reminded to supply the REC with proof of permission from the Division for Information Governance, once such permission is obtained. [ACTION REQUIRED]

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

**If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: Humanities, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.**

Please use your SU project number (7919) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

**FOR CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD**

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee: Humanities before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary)

**Included Documents:**

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Informed Consent Form	Questionnaire and consent form	31/07/2018	1
Data collection tool	Questionnaire and consent form	31/07/2018	1
Data collection tool	Data collection methods	01/08/2018	1
Research Protocol/Proposal	Masters Research Proposal (S. Mashazi) amended docx	08/08/2018	
Request for permission	Letter	08/08/2018	1

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at [cgraham@sun.ac.za](mailto:cgraham@sun.ac.za).  
Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

*National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.*

*The Research Ethics Committee: Humanities complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.*

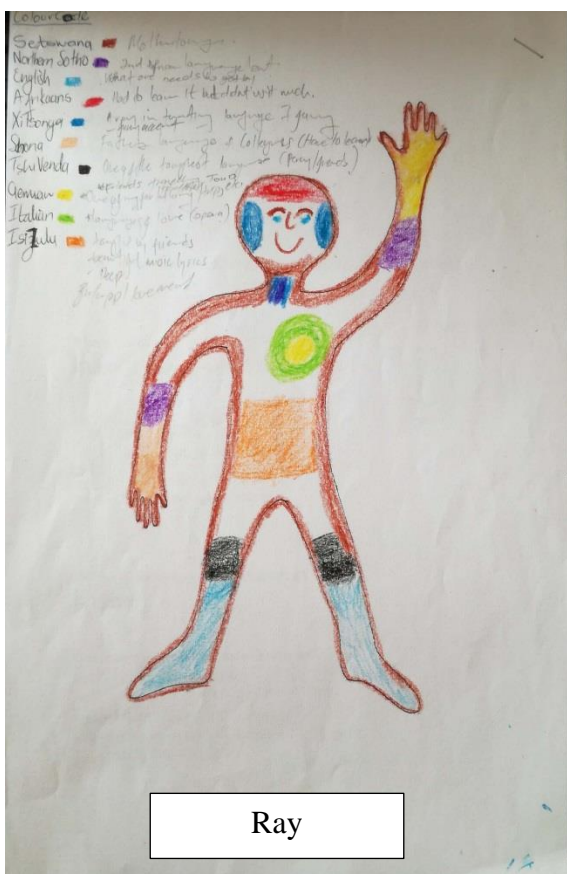
**APPENDIX E**



Khanyi



Harriet



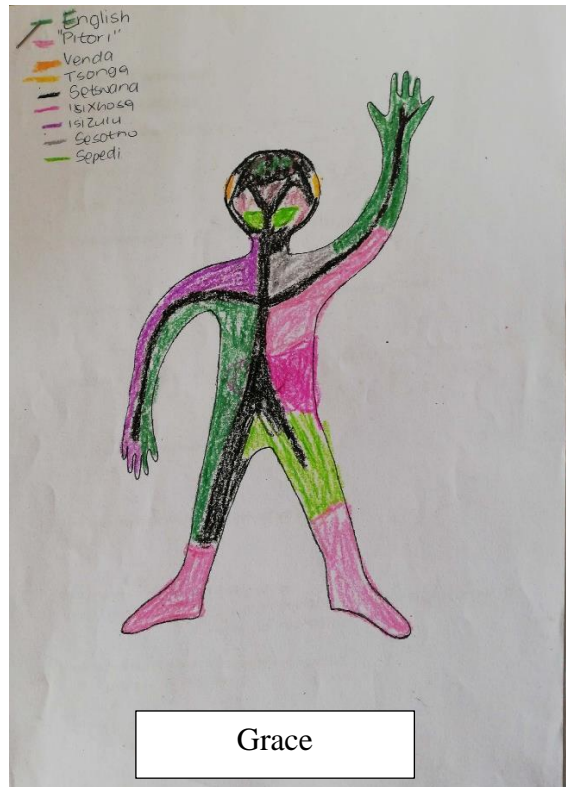
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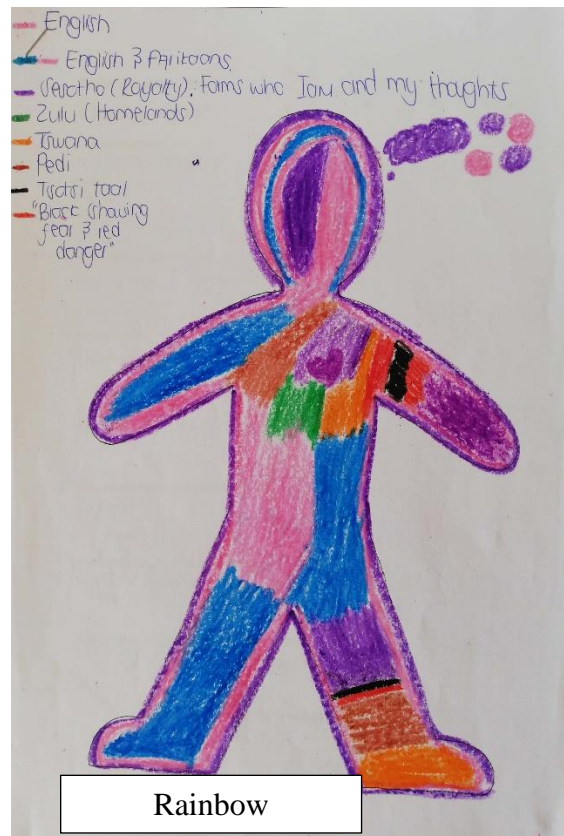
Ntombi



Grace

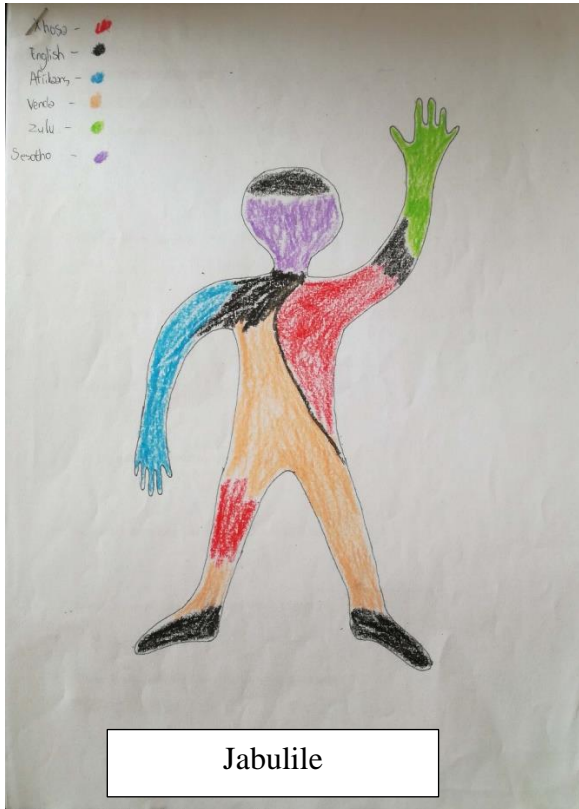


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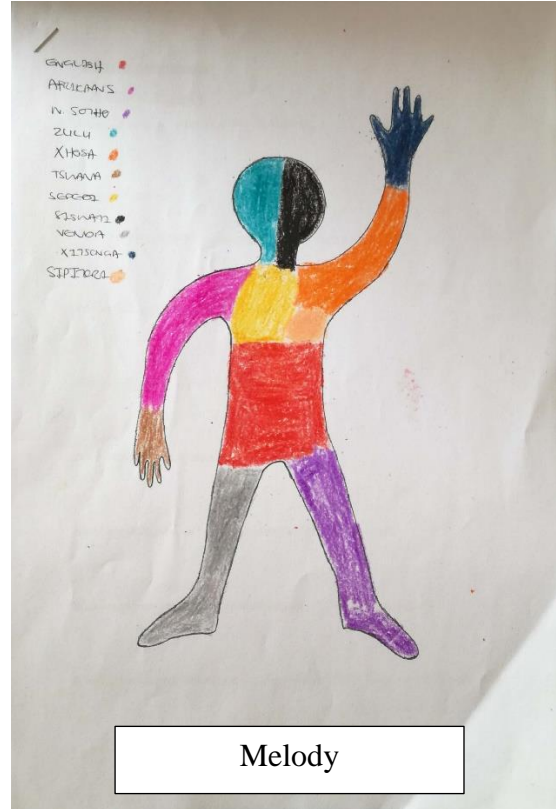


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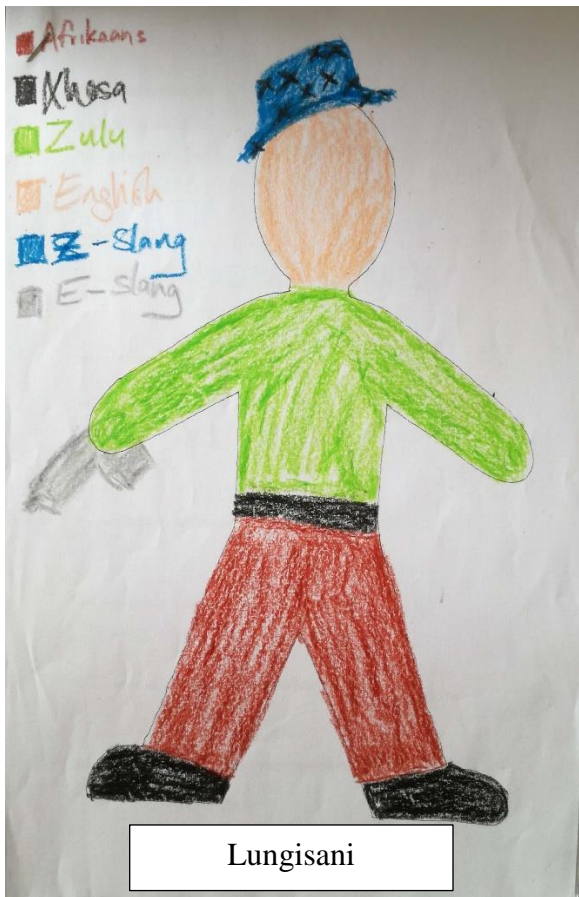




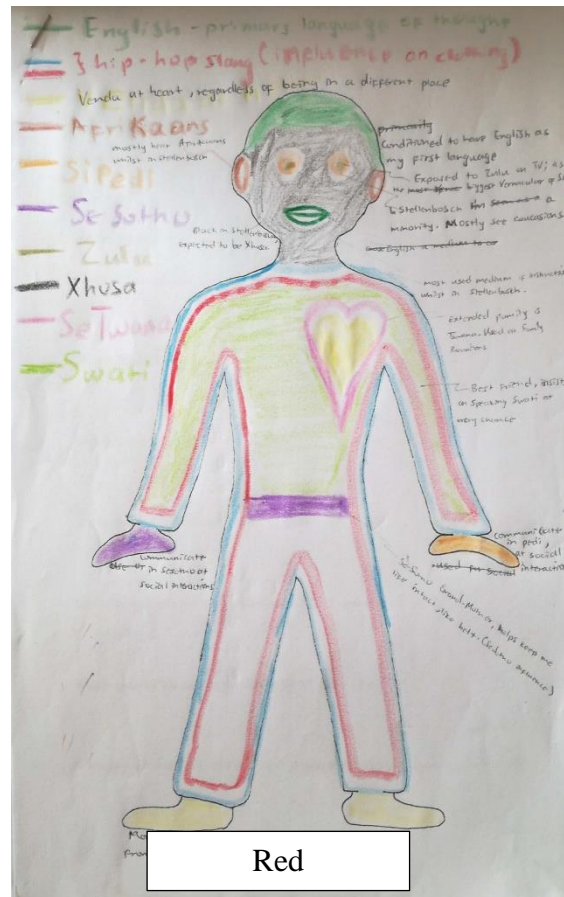
Jabulile



Melody



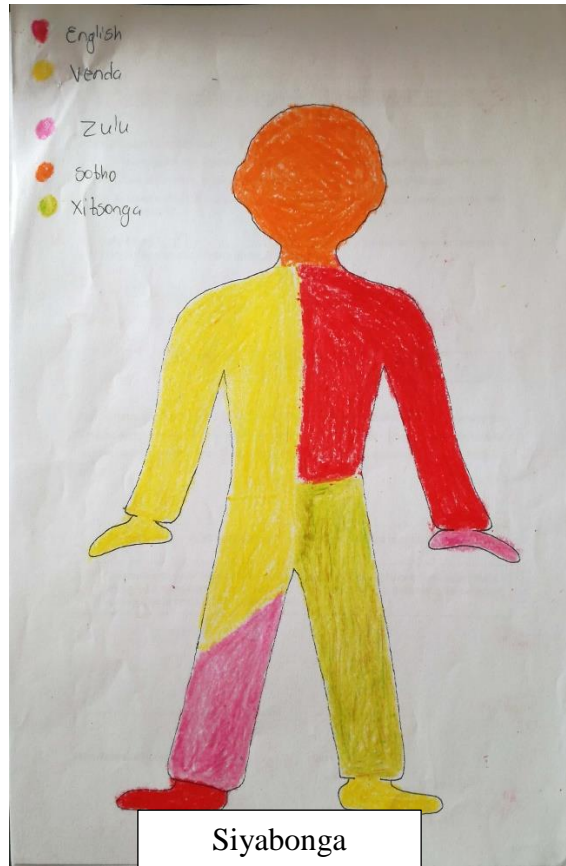
Lungisani



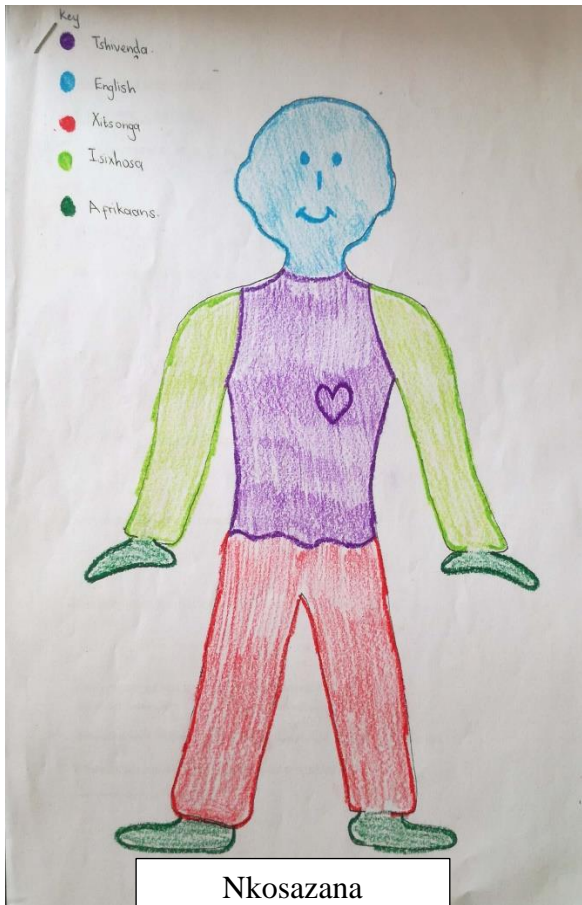
Red



Samson



Siyabonga



Nkosazana