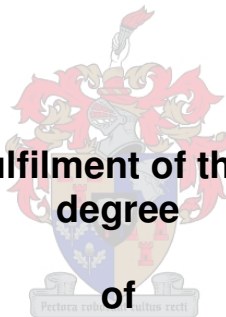


CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN USING A TELEPHONE ANSWERING MACHINE: VIEWS ON CONVEYING INFORMATION OR MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

.....
Signature

.....
Date

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SUMMARY

This study aims to ascertain whether first language speakers of different South African languages have different ways of using telephone answering machines. The study builds on the assumption that there are cultural differences in attitudes to and uses of messages relayed via answering machines. It investigates the claim that answering machines primarily serve to convey information and are less useful in maintaining relationships. This builds on work of Miyamoto and Schwarz (2006) that finds cultural groups who are particularly sensitive to the value of maintaining interpersonal relationships, have difficulties in using answering machines. The study attempts to ascertain whether there are specific differences in using recorded messaging among the various South African language groups that relate to either the conveying information or the establishing of a communicative relationship.

Oral, face-to-face communication is regarded as the primary mode of language use; written communication is then regarded as the secondary mode of language use. Interestingly, recent technological advancement has introduced new modes of communication that are oral, but not face-to-face, e.g. telephone communication and more recently also transmitted voice messages. With voice messaging oral communication takes place where speaker and hearer are removed in space as well as in time. This research considers how technological intervention may affect features of the primary mode of communication, i.e. it investigates whether spoken language transmitted by answering machine is significantly different in its functions, than when the transmission is face-to-face and or immediate. The main aim is to find out whether, people of different linguistic cultures react differently to new technologies such as answering machines.

Two kinds of data were used to test the hypotheses: recordings of actual telephone machine messages and a questionnaire testing attitudes to telephone answering machines. Data was collected (i) by means of an experimental situation in which participants from four different South African languages (Afrikaans, isiXhosa, Setswana and Tshivenda) were asked to leave messages on two different answering machines, and (ii) by asking 23 respondents from the same context and representing eight different South African languages (Afrikaans, Isizulu, Sesotho, Setswana, Xitsonga, IsiXhosa, Sepedi and Tshivenda), to fill out a questionnaire that tested their attitudes to and use of answering machines. In analyzing speech samples, I used conversation analysis, which studies the social organization of "conversation", or talk in interaction, to investigate tape recordings and transcriptions of answering machine messages.

The research finds that there are differences in ways of communicating by means of an answering machine but such differences can minimally be linked to linguistic cultures of South African communities, and thus need to be explained from a different perspective.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 CONTEXTUALIZING THE RESEARCH

According to Stella Ting-Toomey (1999:3) "the rapid changes in global economy, technology, transportation, and immigration policies are uniting the people of the world into a small, intersecting community". She goes on to say that "we find ourselves in increased contact with people who are culturally different, but who are now working side by side with us". She finds that "although we communicate with people from other language communities continuously in our everyday life, no matter how well we think we understand each other, communication can, at times, be difficult" (Ting-Toomey 1993:3). Culture is often at the root of our communication challenges, since our culture influences how we approach problems, and how we participate in groups and in communities (Lantieri and Patti 1996:6).

According to Thompson (1990:124) the concept of culture derived from the Latin word "cultura", which referred mostly to the cultivation or tending of things, such as crops or animals. From the early sixteenth century, this original sense was gradually extended to refer to the process of human development, "from the cultivation of crops to the cultivation of the mind". By the early nineteenth century the word "culture" was being used similarly to the word "civilization", and also in works which sought to provide universal histories of the development of humankind.

The concept of 'culture' which emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries can be broadly defined as the process of developing and ennobling the human faculties. The process took place by means of works of scholarship and art and is linked to the progressive character of the modern era (Thompson 1990:127). Gradually the study of 'culture' became less concerned with the ennoblement of the mind and spirit and more concerned with unravelling customs, practices and beliefs of different communities.

Raymond Williams (1963:307) writes of culture as "the signifying system through which ... a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored." Williams refers to the work of a 19th century theorist, EB Tylor, who defines culture as everything which is not genetically transmissible. The internet information site, Wikipedia, echoes Williams and Tylor by defining culture as "all the behaviours, ways of life, arts, beliefs and institution of a population that are passed down from generation to generation" (www.wikipedia.org/wiki/style-).

In this thesis I follow the definition recently put forward by Lantieri and Patti (1996:6) according to which culture "refers to a group or community with which we share common experiences that shape the way we understand the world". Culture makes us think the way we do, perceive things the way we do, and it also influences the way we see other people in the world. Many people vary in their behaviour because of gender, ethnicity, religion, social class, professional background, and so on. These differences are often reflected in the ways people communicate.

The use of telephone systems is an under-explored feature of modern-day communicative culture. Telephones allow almost immediate linkage between people anywhere on earth, who wouldn't otherwise easily communicate with each other. Telephones enable new kinds of communication and the creation of new or unprecedented kinds of social interchanges such as talking to strangers who have dialled the wrong numbers or to strangers who intended to make first contact by means of this technology. Another more recently developed mode of communication by telephone, is talking to others by means of an answering machine (Lanteri and Patti 1996:6).

Leaving a message on answering machines, talking to an agent or broker, marketing a product on telemarketing, and the like are new forms of communication developed in the past 20 to 30 years. Khan (2000:2) further state that, for a very long time in human history, face-to-face conversation was the only way human beings used to communicate, but with the invention and popularization of the telephone in modern societies, this second form of conversation has become not only possible but more widespread. Spoken conversation is now possible without it being face-to-face. In fact, with answering machines speaker and hearer can communicate one message at different times.

According to Maureen Guirdham (1999:50) "language is an essential part of culture, both because the other elements, such as worldview, can only be transmitted through language and because language itself helps mould the way the people who use it think". Culture, like language, can help to mould the way people act and think. Different language communities often have cultures that differ in more ways than one. Culture and language difference may cause people to relate to answering machines in different ways.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In considering cultural differences in using an answering machine Miyamoto and Schwarz (2006:554) refer to two core functions of communication, namely conveying information and maintaining relationships. They assume that generally answering machines primarily serve to convey information and are less useful in maintaining relationships. Therefore, if a particular cultural community is particularly sensitive to the latter, they suggest that members of that community will find it more difficult to use an answering machine than other communities who are not as sensitive with regards to maintaining relationships in standard informative communication. This thesis paper will report on an investigation of limited scope that tests whether the findings of Miyamoto and Schwartz remain valid among speakers of various South African languages. It has often popularly been noted that speakers of African languages, such as Tshivenda or isiXhosa, are more sensitive to maintaining relationship in sequences of a formal conversation, such as in workplace discourse, than are their English or Afrikaans counterparts. This study is interested in whether such differences are manifested in telephone machine usage.

1.3 AIMS AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Cultural dimensions are the shared assumptions that vary from culture to culture. The assumption is that people who grow up in the same place will share similar views about what is appropriate in everyday communication (Merkin 2005:4). This study aims at determining whether, when using answering machines, there are indications of cultural differences between speakers from different South African languages communities.

In this study, my focus is on speakers of different South African languages living and working in Cape Town. It could have been interesting and rewarding to go to other regions of the country to conduct the same kind of research there. However, since this study is of a limited scope, constraints of time and space prohibited working with a larger sample of data. This means that my study is exploratory and could have given different

results if the data had been collected among people living in a different environment and belonging to different social classes, e.g. with lower levels of formal education or less access to sophisticated technology. This research will be confined to data collected among people from the same urban environment with similar levels of higher education, although they do have different first languages and are related to different cultures.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

It appears that people of different cultures react differently to technological devices such as fax machines, answering machines, etc. In relation to this, a number of research questions worth investigating were raised, namely:

- Do first language speakers of different South African languages have different ways of using telephone answering machines? If so, what are the particular differences?
- Are there specific differences in terms of conveying information and establishing a communicative relationship among the various language groups?
- What are the likely reasons for different approaches to the use of telephone answering machines?

The hypothesis with which I am working is that there are cultural differences in communicative practices of speakers from different language communities in using telephone answering machines. My sub-hypothesis is that people with African language backgrounds will be more reluctant to leave messages on answering machines due to the fact that it raises barriers to important communicative practices of maintaining relationships. I was motivated to take this study because I wanted to prove or disprove the above hypotheses, as well as Miyamoto and Schwarz's (2006:554) assumption about answering machine, which states that if a particular cultural community is particularly sensitive to maintaining relationship, they will find it difficult to use answering machine, more so than those who are concerned about conveying information.

1.5 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The thesis has been organized into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the study. Chapter two gives a review of the relevant literature. Chapter three explains the research methodology. Chapter four presents the data and gives the analysis and interpretation. Chapter five, the final chapter, gives a conclusion of the research and makes recommendations on how the work could be taken further.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Language is the means through which we send and receive messages. The language process, whether the message is oral, non-verbal or written, works well when the intended message is conveyed. According to one model of communication, if a message is understood by the receiver, communication has succeeded; if not, misunderstanding or miscommunication occurs. If speakers and listeners come from different cultures, communication may run into difficulties that are not of a purely linguistic origin. According to Margaret C. McLaren (1998:158) "the differences in culture, values, religion and verbal and non-verbal language are all important in intercultural communication ...". She also finds that "the way people organize their thinking is reflected in the way they code and decode messages". McLaren (1998:158) maintains that "the way people communicate varies widely between, and even within cultures". The way people use answering machines in communicative interaction may vary widely. This thesis is interested in such use of answering machines between individuals and within cultures, where culture is narrowly conceived as linked to language.

In an interesting article, Miyamoto and Schwarz (2006:554) came to the conclusion that if a particular cultural community is particularly sensitive to maintaining relationships, they will find it more difficult to use answering machines, than those who are concerned about conveying information.

This research is interested in cultural aspects of uses of telephone answering machines with a view to the possibility that Miyamoto and Schwarz's findings are also relevant to the mapping of cultural difference in South African uses of telephone answering machines. The following sections will give an overview of literature relevant to the study of messaging by means of telephone answering machines from an intercultural communicative perspective. First I shall consider broad research

interests related to this theme. Second I shall consider what has been done in South African studies of cultural uses of telephone answering machines.

2.1.1 Broad interests in cultural difference in conversation

Jack Scarborough (1946:2) defines culture, as "the set of values, attitudes and beliefs shared by such a group, which sets the standard of behaviour required for continued acceptance and successful participation in that group". He further states that "culture is associated with national (or more precisely, with ethnic groups) and, more recently, with companies and organizations". Every culture has distinct characteristics that make it different from every other culture. The same linguistic feature, e.g. of tone, may have different values in different cultures. People live and behave differently according to their cultural norms and standards. In the one instance, issues are made explicit in conversation, everything is spelled out and nothing can be left for implication. This happens where members of a certain community do not have the ability to tolerate or understand diversity. On the other hand, communicators assume a great deal of commonality of knowledge and views so that less is spelled out precisely and much more is not directly expressed (McLaren 1998:106).

High context culture refers to societies or groups where people have close connections over a long period of time. Many aspects of cultural behaviour are not spelled out directly for these groups because most members know what to do and what to think from years of interaction with each other. On the contrary, low context culture refers to societies where people tend to have many connections but for a shorter duration or for other specific reasons. In these societies, cultural behaviours and beliefs may need to be spelled out directly so that those coming into the cultural environment know how to behave (Edward Hall 1976 cited in Maureen Guirdham 1999:60).

McLaren (1998:106) indicates that people from low context cultures need things to be addressed directly; to them clarity and conciseness are very important. Those from high context cultures will prefer if things are addressed indirectly; to them richness and allusions are very important. People from high context culture can become impatient with people from low context cultures when they are required to give information which they think should be known and understood. Conversely,

people from low-context cultures are uncomfortable when not given the details they expect (McLaren 1988:106).

McLaren (1998:109), supporting the idea of cultural difference, explains how greetings can be interpreted in many countries. In many countries of Western and Eastern Europe, a greeting is likely to be about health, though only the closest family and friends would expect a real answer to "How are you?" or "Ni hao". In a small country like New Zealand, it often seems as if everyone knows, or is likely soon to know, something about the background of everyone else. So, unless the streets are busy, it is normal to greet anyone you see with "Hello", "Good morning," or "Good day" or a smile or a nod. In many other cultures, however, people can quite safely assume they can slide into a crowd unnoticed. "Hello" becomes not a friendly greeting, but a polite means of avoiding communication.

In contrast, "bonjour" or "salut" supported by a handshake or a kiss ("la bise") is both more formal and more sociable. A Malaysian student in New Zealand indicates that in his culture they don't say "Hi" or "Please" or "Thank you" whenever they perform an action like making a purchase or using a launderette. So people in New Zealand think they are rude if they don't. Furthermore, queuing is a habit that is considered to be very polite and if you are not used to queuing, you may appear ill-mannered.

Relating the above argument to the use of answering machines, some people who are more concerned about conveying message than maintaining relationship, find it very strange to greet, and even more peculiar to greet a machine, but they are comfortable with leaving messages on answering machines because they just want to convey a message and not build a relationship. Those who are more concerned about building relationships than conveying messages find it difficult to use answering machines as well, because they are not able to see the person whom they want to befriend before leaving a message, and will not be comfortable since they do not know how the person being represented by the machine is going to perceive them (McLaren 1998:106).

Speech acts are defined by Edward Finegan (1989:328) as "actions that are carried out through language and also taken as part of speech events", for example, requesting, asserting, questioning, thanking, advising, warning, greeting, congratulating and so on. Finegan (1989:328) maintains that "conversation can be

viewed as a series of speech acts, and that different speech acts are differently performed in different cultures". A question arose as to whether or not speech acts are universal. Fraser, Rintell and Walter (1980:79) cited in John Flowerdew (1970:74) claim that "speech acts are basically universal, barring certain culture-specific ritualized acts such as baptizing, and excommunicating".

Hudson (1980:111) quoted in Flowerdew (1970:74) took a sociolinguistic stance, stressing the cultural aspects of speech acts. To him, "if speech act categories are cultural concepts, we might expect them to vary from one society to another, and that is ... what we find". To support his claim, he cites examples from an unusual community, that of the Tzeltal Indians of Mexico, who have an extremely rich terminology for classifying speech acts, including categories such as talk in which things are offered for sale, or talk in which the speaker has spread the blame for something so that he alone is not to be blamed.

On the issue of cultural difference among people of the world, McLaren (1998:110) maintains that, "titles are important on cards, at meetings, in course outlines, and even on the telephone". Information obtained in the Free Encyclopaedia indicates that a style of office, or honorific, is a form of address by which tradition or law precedes a reference to a person who holds a title or post. A courtesy title is a personal title or form of address which is used to address somebody out of politeness or social convention.

Compliments are given in different ways and accepted in different ways, both according to the culture and according to the personality of the receiver. In some cultures people are encouraged to accept compliments graciously. In others they are strenuously denied and may even be turned round to flatter the receiver (McLaren 1998:10). Apologies will differ for the same reasons. Fraser (1981:260) as quoted in Gabriele Kasper and Shoshanna Blum-Kulka (1993:90), defines apologies as "the offender's expressions of regret for the undesirable effect of the act upon the offended party". Apologies are called for when social norms have been violated or when an expectation of the offended party has not been met. An apology speech act intends to restore harmony between the offender and the offended; it is regarded as remedial work, which aims to change what might be looked upon as an offensive act into an acceptable one (Fraser 1981:260). Goffman (1971) quoted in Kasper and Blum-Kluka (1993:90) states that once the offence has been recognized by both

parties, the offender must let the offended person know that s/he is sorry for the infraction.

The conditions which call for apologies and the actual realizations of the apology speech acts are said to vary from culture to culture (Maeshiba et al. 1995 cited in Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993:90). In the use of answering machines as well, what a certain caller sees as important to mention, the other might see it as not necessary depending on their culture and the communication functions which they take into consideration. What one culture sees as an apology, another culture might see differently.

Speech communities have different views on what counts as an offensive occasion, the appropriate verbal remedies, and the value of contextual factors (social status and social distance of the participants). Even when making a call or leaving a message, callers might relate to the receiver in a different manner because of their social status. These differences might cause miscommunication among people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The example given by Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993:100) is the Korean social norm of using an apology expression when one feels greatly indebted to another person who has done or will do some difficult job for him or her. In American culture, however, a situation like this would call for thanks and not an apology. In some cultures apologies in a situation like, for example, not attending a party after previously accepting the invitation, are essential and profuse. In others, they are acceptable but not needed. If the habit of the person expecting an apology is different from that of the person from whom one might come, extreme yet unintended rudeness might be read of the situation. McLaren (1998:112) goes on to indicate that "in some cultures such as those of China, Korea, Thailand and Indonesia, when a person is offered food the immediate response is to refuse. The host then presses the guest and eventually the food is accepted. But, in Western cultures a refusal is often taken as a refusal and further offers might not be made. Meanwhile, the person offered might be waiting, hoping for a second offer that they don't intend on refusing."

Finegan (1989:345) states that in "American telephone conversation, opening sequences serves primarily to identify speakers and to hook the interlocutor's attention. In France opening sequences normally apologize for invading someone's privacy".

He further states that a conversation can be closed only when the participants have said everything they wanted to say. It closes with a parting expression such as "Goodbye", "bye", "see you". These instances really indicate how different people are when using a telephone, and that they say different remarks for different purposes.

As far as questions are concerned, those requiring the answer "yes" or "no" can cause much trouble. According to McLaren (1998:10) "In some cultures saying, "no" is considered rude and people will avoid it to save face both of the person who is asking and of themselves, even if by so doing they mislead the questioner". For example, the Japanese "no" if so given at all, is a deep sigh, expelled with a sound like "Saaaahh". The Chinese "no" is more likely to be worded "that may be difficult" or "I will need to find out" conversely saying "yes" may be a way of furthering harmony (McLaren 1998:10). In African cultures as well it is considered impolite to say no especially to elderly people.

Politeness is the expression of the speaker's intention to mitigate the face-threats carried by certain face-threatening acts toward another. Politeness theory states that some speech acts threaten other's face needs. In everyday life we design messages that protect face and achieve other goals as well (www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/politeness-theory).

There are two types of politeness namely negative and positive politeness. According to Finegan (1989:349) negative politeness rests on the fact that "human beings respect one another's presence, privacy, and physical space". They avoid intruding on other people's lives and their activities. On the other hand, Finegan (1989:349) maintains that "when we let people know that we enjoy their company, like them and feel comfortable with them we show positive politeness".

Finegan (1989:349) maintains that "when people of different cultures have different norms about what type of politeness is required in a particular context, trouble can easily arise". He supports his view by describing that callers in France begin telephone conversation with an apology, which rarely forms part of the opening sequence of an American telephone conversation. Obviously, members of the two cultures view telephone conversation differently: Americans generally see the act of

calling as a sign of positive politeness, while the French tend to view it as a potential intrusion.

As far as the concept of politeness is concerned, McLaren (1998:113) states that expressions of politeness are "universal but shown differently". To support her argument, she indicates that Thai and Indonesian people are extremely gracious but hardly ever use the equivalent to "please". In other cultures the equivalent to "please" and "thank you" is sometimes used in what may seem as a demanding manner.

Constructive dialogue between people of different cultures is possible only when speakers and listeners understand that the meaning of any communication resides not only in the message but in the minds of the sender and receiver as well. Even when speakers and listeners come from the same background, they may interpret a message differently according to their personality, their accumulated experience or even their mood at the moment. When speakers and listeners come from different cultural backgrounds, the potential for the message to mean different things is greatly increased (McLaren 1998:113).

Gudykunst Chua and Gray (1987) indicate that cultural dissimilarities appear to have a major influence on our communication in the early stages of a relationship. Culture is a human phenomenon; it influences what people do and think. It is both a state in which every human being exists and a process which changes constantly according to the individual, the time and the place.

Culture changes within a community all the time, sometimes significantly but more often in a way that goes unnoticed. According to McLaren (1993:14) "discoveries such as electricity, the telephone, television, computer technology, and laser beams significantly yet conspicuously changed the cultures in which they developed and those in which they are now used". Culture helps mould the individual but does not prevent individuals from differing from one another within it.

Culture is more than learned behaviour. It is the result of ongoing, dynamic events and relationships affected by the environment and by individuals in countless ways. By recognizing our own culture and respecting the culture of others, we can work towards understanding cultural differences better than we otherwise would have. We can develop the knowledge to understand how others think, the empathy to sense

how others feel and the necessary skills to cope with differences (McLaren 1998:14). By recognizing the culture of the person to whom we are leaving a message on an answering machine, there is no way that we can offend the receiver. We will learn to emphasize and not to sympathize.

Scarborough (1946:2) states that "any individual will better understand why people act, think and speak in the manner that they do if he himself understands their cultural background, and is better able to predict how those people will react to his or her own words and actions." He further maintains that, "rather than try to remember what to expect and how to behave when working or communicating with people of one culture or another, we should instead be able to apply our common sense and goodwill to act and respond accordingly if we understand the forces driving behaviour." There are various unwritten rules which guide us all the time on how we should and should not behave in each culture. Culture help us to understand who we are and how we should act. It helps us to define our identity. According to Scarborough (1946:2), "members of a culture share common experiences and a heritage that establishes and reinforces common values, attitudes, and beliefs". These characteristics define the behaviours that members should expect from one another. They do not establish the group's common identity and continuity over time but set it apart from other cultures (Scarborough 1946:2).

Differences between people within any given nation or culture are often greater than differences between such nations of cultural groups. Education, social standing, religion, personality, belief structure and past experiences are factors, amongst others, that influence and affect human behaviour and culture. Awareness of cultural differences doesn't have to divide us from each other. It doesn't have to paralyze us, nor do we have to fear not saying the right thing (Scarborough 1964:2). Scarborough (1964:2) suggests that "becoming more aware of our cultural differences, as well as exploring our similarities, can help us communicate with each other more effectively."

Another quantitative study, which took an interactional sociolinguistic approach, analyzed factors (age, gender, purpose of call and rules of mirrored form) that modify German and Australian telephone openings and identifying differences in the manner in which members of these two cultures answer the phone (Grieve and Seebus 2008:1).

On the one hand, the Australian results show that callers are more likely to self-identify in a business than in a private context. Most business callers mirror self-identification and men are more likely to self-identify than women. In addition, "callers salutations are more likely to occur in private calls than in business calls. In business calls callers aged <51 are more likely to include a salutation than 51+ callers".

On the other hand, the German results show that mirrored self-identification and salutation with a greeting is likely in both private and business calls. Age also plays a role in the inclusion of a salutation, with 36+-year-old callers less likely to include a salutation than younger German callers. Use of "Sie" (you=vous in French or U in Afrikaans) more likely in business than in private calls.

Comparative results show that, overall, Germans tend to self-identify more frequently than Australians and Australian callers are more likely to include a salutation than Germans. Mirroring of self-identification occurs in both Australian and German calls (Grieve and Seebus 2008:1).

2.1.2 South African interests in cultural difference in conversation

South Africa has been referred to as the "rainbow nation", a title which epitomizes the country's cultural diversity.

South Africa is a nation of over 47-million people of diverse origins, cultures, languages and beliefs. According to the mid-2007 estimates from Statistics South Africa, the country's population stands at some 47.9-million, up from the census 2001 count of 44.8-million. Ethnically, Africans are in the majority at just over 38-million, making up 79.6% of the total population. The white population is estimated at 4.3-million (9.1%), the coloured population at 4.2-million (8.9%) and the Indian/Asian population at just short of 1.2-million (2.5%). Historically these different ethnic groups are marked also by different languages and cultures. While more than three-quarters of the South African population is black, this group is neither culturally nor linguistically homogenous (www.cyberserver.co.za).

Nine of the country's eleven official languages are indigenous African languages, reflecting a variety of ethnic groupings which include the Nguni people (comprising the Zulu, isiXhosa, Ndebele and Swazi) and the Sotho-Tswana people (comprising

the Southern, Northern Sotho (Pedi) and Western Sotho (Tswana)). Additionally, there are the Tsonga people and the Venda.

The different languages are distributed across various regions. IsiZulu is spoken from the Cape to Zimbabwe but is mainly concentrated in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. IsiXhosa, also known as the Southern or Cape Nguni, is spoken mainly in the former Transkei, Ciskei and Eastern Cape regions; since 1986 there has been migration and establishment of large numbers of isiXhosa speakers in the Western Cape. IsiNdebele is mainly spoken in the provinces of Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Gauteng. SiSwati, the language of the Swazi nation, is spoken mainly in eastern Mpumalanga, an area that borders the country of Swaziland.

Sepedi, also known as Northern Sotho or Sesotho sa Leboa, is mostly spoken in the province of Limpopo, as well as in Gauteng and Mpumalanga. Sesotho, or Southern Sotho, is spoken in the country of Lesotho, which is entirely surrounded by South African territory, as well as in the Free State province and Gauteng. The language of the Tswana people is spoken mostly in Botswana, a country on the northwestern border of South Africa, as well as in the Northern Cape Province, the central and western Free State and in North West province. Tshivenda is spoken mainly in northern Limpopo, an area bordering the country of Zimbabwe. Xitsonga is spoken in eastern Limpopo and Mpumalanga, areas near the border of the country of Mozambique.

Afrikaans, with its roots in 17th century Dutch, is the first language of about 18% of the population (mainly the white and coloured ethnic groups). As an official language since 1925, it is spoken in all regions, across the country. English is first language to about 8% of the population (mainly the white and coloured ethnic groups). It is the language of business, politics and the media, and the country's lingua franca. South Africa's linguistic diversity means all 11 languages have had a profound effect on each other. South African English, for example, has assimilated very many words and phrases from Afrikaans and isiZulu; even endangered indigenous languages such as Nama has left some traces in South African English and in Afrikaans. All the indigenous African languages bear lexical and grammatical traces of the contact with each other and with English and Afrikaans (www.South Africa.info).

De Wet Blignaut and Burger (2002) indicated that "South Africa has a unique multicultural population-numerous population groups with different origins, cultural backgrounds, and languages co exist in this country" (@www.chi-sa-org.za/Devcon/Dewet.pdf). They further indicates that "South Africa is one place with great variety and because we are diverse, cultural misunderstandings and misconceptions are likely ..."

Govender (2008:1) reports on results produced by TNS Research Surveys who polled 2000 South Africans on their fear of other cultures as well as the importance they attach to maintaining their own culture. The study reveals that a third of the 2000 participants, mostly blacks, find other cultures threatening. 63% do not have that fear; they embrace cultural diversity. The analysis of data also reveals that working people were less likely to feel threatened. Apparently, those with upper income and those with jobs feel more secure and probably find that their experience of other cultures is now familiar. The analysis of data also reveals that a higher level of insecurity about other cultures was prevalent among the poor, and it was concluded that the reason for that might be because of their relative lack of contact with other cultures.

The research results also looked at fear of other cultures by different language groups, and found that 35% of Zulu-speakers feel threatened, compared with 25% of English, Afrikaans and Tswana speakers. When participants were asked about retaining their culture and tradition, 86% of the participants said it was an important part of cultural identity. Women also indicate that they feel strongly about the issue of retaining their culture and tradition. Roberts, one of the women who would like to retain her culture, indicated that having an understanding of another culture allowed people to relate better to each other.

Jeremy Seeking, a sociologist at the University of Cape Town, cited by Govender (2008), indicates that South Africans are adopting aspects of other cultures in their lives. Middle-class South Africans happily embrace all sorts of cross-cultural activities as evidence of their cultural cosmopolitanism. To support his argument, he gave an example of black CEOs who drive imported cars from Europe and wear Italian suits, and black women who wear white wedding dresses.

He also indicated that while a better understanding of cultures may foster better inter-racial relationships, it could also entrench a sense of difference. Seeking also maintains that, given our language and history, there are differences between understanding, accepting and embracing other cultures.

According to Seeking, there is a linguistic division in South Africa and many South Africans do not understand one another well, if at all, when they speak in their home language. The big divide is between people whose home languages are not of African origin - English and Afrikaans - and those whose languages are Xhosa, Sotho or Zulu.

As far as history is concerned, Seeking indicated that South Africans are, for the most part, either the descendants of settlers or the descendants of people native to Southern Africa. He adds that there are two very different cultural traditions. Political and economic power was used for a long time to uplift one set of cultures and suppress the other.

Rob Pattman, a sociologist at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, cited in Govender (2008:1), said that the respect for cultural differences was a post-apartheid ideal enriched in the idea of the rainbow. According to him the fact that so many people of different races find other cultures quite threatening suggests we are a far cry from living in a rainbow nation. According to "Undressing Durban", a series of articles where students and lecturers from Durban University examined people's identities and relations, it is suggested that culture is closely associated in people's minds with race. The researchers also showed that people do not engage very much with other cultures or races, let alone celebrate these. Rather they tend to stick to their own.

Another survey from TNS Research Surveys called 'World Values Study' confirmed the findings and views. A total of 3000 respondents, representative of adults (16+) in South Africa, were interviewed and the survey was carried out by Markinor and the Centre for International and Comparative Politics at Stellenbosch University. The results from this survey showed that history, culture and values are important to about 19 out of every 20 South Africans. These results reflect the pride that exists among South Africans in terms of their heritage. Looking at these results in more detail, heritage is more important to black South Africans than the other race groups. Almost all black South Africans (97%) consider their history to be important, followed

by Indians (94%), coloureds (92%) and lastly white South Africans (85%) (www.ipsos-markinor.co.za).

According to Davids (2005:02) there is a perception that blacks and whites communicate differently when using telephones. Some South Africans may relate to this need for social distance in public, whereas in African culture this desire for privacy is not as highly prized. In fact, conversations between strangers are not only welcome, but it is deemed respectful to enquire how people are.

An example given to support the above argument is of Ms Tena (not her real name) who is a member of the Xhosa community and who speaks isiXhosa. She says "I greeted an English-speaking woman on the phone one day and took some time to ask how she was. She became very abrupt and annoyed and told me to get on with things. I felt quite hurt. So now I try to be brief unless I can hear it's an African person speaking" (Davids 2005:2).

According to Davids (2005:2), in African cultures the philosophy of "ubuntu" asserts that people are interrelated and must extend themselves towards others, so banter or teasing is easily started between strangers on trains and taxis. Ms Tena further indicates that "even on the telephone this courtesy of enquiring after the wellness of another is considered to be a basic skill. Sharing information on your wellbeing is a part of talking". She also adds that, even when one is in a rush, if someone enquires after a person's health it is better for that person to take a few seconds to respond. In addition, when one answers the telephone it is polite to just acknowledge the person behind the voice. Similarly, an article obtained on itinews (South African Insurance Times and Information News) titled *Leadership culture will make South Africa great* states that basically South Africa's communities are characterized by the spirit of "ubuntu" - "a person is a person through other people". Ubuntu is characterized as a community attitude of trust, respect, sharing, community, caring and unselfishness. It is an approach through which we enable everyone around us to benefit from our own success (www.itinews.co.za).

According to Naidu's article *Pardon my language*, polite behaviour in the eyes of one South African might strike another as disrespectful depending on their mother tongue. Whatever one's take on the subject, there are intrinsic differences of

politeness between those who speak English and those conversing in indigenous African languages (www.uj.ac.za).

Basing her article on positive politeness, she revealed her initial findings focusing on the simple act of apologizing. Naidu states: "In English, one just has to say one word, 'sorry', while in African languages there are various intonations, body gestures such as eye contact and hand movements to indicate an apology". In Western society, failure to make eye contact while talking to someone is sometimes considered evasive, while in African culture, not looking a person directly in the eye can be an indication of politeness and deference (www.uj.ac.za).

According to Naidu, even the act of shaking hands sends out different messages across the cultures. "In Western culture, the handshake is firm but performed only once; in African culture it's a longish ritual which might result in two people shaking one another's hands twice or even thrice to establish warmth". From the research conducted on Naidus article, "it can be deduced that there are significant differences emanating from the notion of how people view politeness in society. It can be deduced that politeness is culture specific and dependent on cultural norms, thus there is a need to understand the similarities and differences."

The CEO of the National House of Traditional Leaders, Abraham Sithole, cited in the article *Pardon my language* also said "indigenous languages possess cultural aspects based on respect. The languages we speak, for example, have characters of respect in them. We say a child is ill-mannered when his tone is different or his choice of words is different. However, among English-speaking people, these could be construed as perfectly acceptable."

In African culture it is considered rude to raise one's voice or point a finger at an elder when speaking to him/her. To stand in the middle of the room in the presence of elders is also impolite, and children ought to sit down as a sign of humility in the presence of older people.

Another polite expression of gratitude and respect is when an African person accepts something from another person; with the head slightly bowed, he or she taps the palms of the hands together briefly before accepting the object in question. Taking an object from another person with one hand is considered rude.

Sithole said one of the basic tenets of African languages is that they are rich in terms of "teaching people behaviour". He states "we tend to behave in the way we speak and use gestures and signs to qualify what we say. There are also ways of observing protocol. For example, if I spot older black folk at a function or visit a black home I take off my cap as a sign of respect. But, generally, you wouldn't find a white person doing the same."

The President of the South African Hindu Dharma Sabha and former school principal Ram Maharaj cited in the article *Pardon my language* said that in his experience, African pupils were the most respectful. "For example, African pupils at my school used to call us 'baba' (father) as they regard all elders as uncles or fathers, and this is a mark of respect. Similarly, Indian children are taught to address elders as 'uncle' or 'aunty'. White kids, generally, are taught to use much more formal terms, like 'sir' or 'mister'."

Maharaj says the "body language" of African children is endearing and humble. "Most indigenous languages, in fact, incorporate physical and verbal aspects. When we greet in Hindi, for example, we say 'namaste' and we put our hands together. This indicates that you are making an effort in saying 'good morning', or saying 'sorry'."

This information is essential as it would make South Africans more aware of different cultural norms and encourage them to develop a greater respect and tolerance for other cultures. Naidu indicated that "understanding the differences in politeness and language allows people to avoid stereotypical attitudes and miscommunication - something that is commonplace in a country with 11 official languages". Supporting this argument a social anthropologist, Frankental, indicates that a better understanding of the ways of others might improve relationships between the followers of particular ways if they had equal access to resources, and mutual respect prevailed" (Govender 2008:1).

2.2 ETHNOMETHODOLOGY IN SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

According to Taylor and Cameron (1987:101) the term 'ethnomethodology' "arose out of Garfinkel's involvement in a research project in the late 1940s examining the behaviour of jurors". Taylor and Cameron (1987:101) maintain that "ethnomethodology is an organizational study of a member's own knowledge of his

ordinary affairs, of his own organized enterprises, where this knowledge is treated ... as part of the same setting that it also makes orderable". The focus of the interest for the researcher is not only the kind of orderliness any activity displays; rather, it is the shared methods or procedures required to produce that orderliness.

According to Taylor and Cameron (1987:102) "ethnomethodology might seem a little different from many of the currently popular models of human action which assume that actors share tacit knowledge of a system of rules which they apply in regulating their behaviour". He finds that the ethnomethodologist understands people acting in social communities as ones who design their behaviour with an awareness of their 'accountability', that is to say they are aware of the rules relevant to given situations in which they find themselves and the rules which they choose to follow (or not to follow) in the light of what they expect the interactional consequences of that choice to be. They assume that their co-interactants also know the rules and will be judging their behaviour in terms of its (non-)conformity to the relevant rule. Ordinarily the relevant rules will be followed but when they are not followed, the co-interactants can be expected to look for the reasons why. Thus rules are adhered to, not because they determine behaviour, but because actors are generally aware of the consequences of non-conformity.

According to Robert Keel (2008 @www.umsl.edu/~keelr/200/ethdev.html), "ethnomethodology extends the phenomenological perspective to the study of everyday social interaction and, it is concerned with the methods which people use to accomplish a reasonable account of what is happening in social interaction and to provide a structure for the interaction itself".

For the purposes of this thesis ethnomethodology is taken to mean the study of the ways in which people make sense of their social world. It considers the use of telephones and telephone answering machines as a form of social activity in which people belonging to the same community will follow the same set of rules of conduct. Particularly, this study is interested in how people who belong to different language communities, but at the same time to shared working communities, interpret and follow tacit as well as explicit rules for the use of a telephone answering machine.

Conversational Analysis (CA) is a field of study that developed out of ethnomethodology and is particularly concerned with conversational speech.

Ethnomethodologists who now call themselves "conversational analysts" have developed an extended application of one of the original ethnomethodological methods to be used in the study of conversational interaction (Taylor and Cameron 1987:100). The data collected in this research project will be analyzed by means of a form of conversational analysis. The following section will give some information on the development and application of Conversation Analysis.

2.3 CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

According to Ten Have (1989:2) "the basic reasoning in CA seems to be that methodological procedures should be adequate to the materials at hand and to the problem it is dealing with ..." The essential characteristics of the materials, i.e. recordings of streams of interaction, procedural analysis of these streams and the general purposes of study sets broad limits to what an analyst can responsibly do. It leaves the researchers with ample room to develop their best fitting heuristic and argumentative procedures. CA may then be conceived as a specific analytic path that may be used to reach specific kinds of clear findings of the ways in which members of society interact (Ten Have 1989:2).

Ten Have (1989:1) maintains that Conversational Analysis is "a research tradition that grew out of ethnomethodology. It studies the social organization of 'conversation', or 'talk-in-interaction' by a detailed inspection of tape recordings and transcriptions made from such recordings". (Sacks et al. 1978) cited in Ten Have (1989:24) maintains that CA aims to analyze devices and competences at quite a general level, available to anybody in a context-sensitive environment. Ten Have (1989:27) defines CA "as the enterprise of analyzing interpretations in interaction". As become clear in the Sacks et al. article, an analysis in CA is always comparative, either directly or indirectly. According to Ten Have (1989:1) "CA is a disciplined way of studying the local organization of interaction episodes".

The methodology employed in CA requires evidence not only that some aspect of conversation can be viewed in the suggested way, but that it actually is so conceived by the participants producing it. That is, what conversation analysts are trying to model are the procedure and expectations actually employed by participants in producing and understanding conversation (Taylor and Cameron. 1987:106).

Taylor and Cameron. (1987:107) maintain "the concept of the adjacency pair is, arguably, the linchpin of the ethnomethodological model of conversational structure". The operation of the turn-taking system relies upon adjacency pairs, and also nearly every other structural feature so far identified by conversation analysts somehow incorporates the adjacency pair into its formulation (cf. 'openings', 'closings', 'repair', storytelling, etc.). The ethnomethodological principles on which CA is based are most usefully and obviously employed in the notion of adjacency pair.

Taylor and Cameron. (1987: 107) maintain that without the concept of the adjacency pair, there would be no ethnomethodological model of conversation, and in turn, without the ethnomethodological principles of accountability and of the sequential architecture of intersubjectivity, there would be no concept of the adjacency pair. Heritage (1984) quoted in Taylor and Cameron. (1987:107) also argues that the methodology of ethno-methodological conversational analysis is best revealed in the study of adjacency pairs. According to Taylor and Cameron. (1987:108) "a typical instance of a turn employing such a technique is the first part of what is called an 'adjacency pair'. These are pairs of utterances (such as the greeting-greeting pair already discussed), the parts of which are regularly produced one after the other, although by different speakers. (Speaker A produces a 'first part', e.g. a greeting, and then speaker B replies with a 'second part', e.g. another greeting.)"

A basic rule of adjacency pair operation is, given the recognizable production of a first pair part, on its first possible completion the speaker should stop and the next speaker should start and produce a second pair part from the pair type that the first pair part is recognizably a member of (Taylor and Cameron. 1987:107). Other purported types of adjacency pairs are invitation and acceptance/refusal, assessment and agreement/disagreement, self deprecation and disagreement/agreement, accusation and denial/admission, summons and answer, request and acceptance/refusal (Taylor and Cameron. 1987:107). CA does not formulate hypotheses, gather details about research situations or make use of sampling techniques and statistics. Instead the reader is confronted with a detailed discussion of transcriptions of recordings of (mostly verbal) interactions in terms of the 'devices' used by its participants (Ten Have 1989:2).

Talking is the most basic and widespread linguistic means of conducting human affairs. According to Pridham (2001:2) "conversation (...) is any interactive spoken exchange between two or more people and can be: face-to-face exchanges, or

telephone conversation; or broadcast materials such as a live radio phone-in or television chat show". Conversation is constructed with spoken rather than written language. Pridham (2001:2) goes on to say that "speech is spontaneous and, by each nature, temporary because it is gone as soon as it has been spoken. It can however, be made permanent through recording and transcription. Transcription is an attempt to present, in a written form, the sound and words of spoken language." She also indicates that "the difficulty, (...) of transcribing accurately clearly illustrates the differences between spoken and written communication." To Pridham (2001:8) "conversation is obviously far more than words. Communication can take place through body language, through prosodic features such as intonation, speed, stress and volume and even through silence or laughter." To analyze conversation therefore means that we have to examine how and where we take turns and how these turns are built on to each other to structure the conversation as a whole. Conversation is not just about passing on information or getting things done. It is also about the way speakers relate to one another and choose to co-operate with one another. Understanding conversation properly, therefore, means looking at the purpose behind the words spoken. This is as important as looking at the words themselves.

It is interesting to consider how many different purposes conversations can have. By what we say, by the way we say it and sometimes even by what we don't say we can influence or reflect the purpose or function of a conversation (Pridham 2001:8). According to Pridham (2001:8) "capturing spoken language in a written form can be a time-consuming and difficult process. The physical context of the conversation which can be integral to its understanding does not, for example, form part of a transcription, nor does body language such as gestures or facial expressions". Sounds such as laughter or swearing as well as voiced pauses like "um" or "er" can be described in brackets (Pridham 2001:8).

According to Donald E. Allen and Rebecca F. Guy (1974:11) "conversation is the primary basis of direct social relations between persons. It is also a shared process which develops a common social experience". This shared experience necessarily implies an equivalence of view-point and a tendency toward consensus which is not to be seen as agreement but as an increased understanding (Allen and Guy 1974:11). According to Allen and Guy (1974:30) conversation is a continuing and

social process which fundamentally involves verbal exchanges between two persons, although more than two persons may participate. Conversation also incorporates an element of play and enjoyment which provides an element of warmth and vigour in daily human associations.

In order to structure a conversation clearly and to ensure the efficient delivery of information, speakers and listeners work together using the co-operative principle. Conversation, however, does not simply concern itself with imparting meaning. It is also used to create and maintain good relationships (Pridham 2001:45).

According to Pridham (2001:34) "conversations have both a beginning and an end, which is signposted clearly by the speaker". Questions we can ask are what marks the opening and closure of the conversation? What role does repetition play in the conversation? Pridham (2001:34) supporting the above argument maintains that sign posts are used in many conversations but where speakers are not face to face, as in telephone conversations, they are particularly obvious because without body language and a shared physical context, speakers have to signal more clearly what is happening with words they use.

Telephone conversations cannot, for example, simply finish with a silence and because speakers cannot see each other, they have, therefore, to introduce themselves at the start of the conversation more obviously. According to Pridham (2001:34) "the people speaking, the relationship between them, the circumstances they are talking in, the subject matter, and their purpose for talking can all influence the structure of conversation." According to Pridham (2001:38) "the speakers and listeners support and evaluate each other using the known building blocks of adjacency pairs and exchanges and operate with the knowledge of Grice's Maxims". Not only do the features of spoken language differ from the features of written language, but the methods used to analyze conversation have to consider that conversation exists within a social context which determines the purpose of the conversation and shapes its structure and features.

As an analytic method CA has been evaluated positively and negatively. According to Keith Richards and Paul Seedhouse (2005:xvi) CA research is useful since it "aims to identify the patterns, practices and devices through which talk-in-interaction is orderly and coherent ..." Richards and Seedhouse (2005:xviii) maintain that "a

starting point of CA enquiries is the actions or activities that participants conduct in their turns at talk".

CA has unique methodological practices which enabled its practitioners to produce a mass of insights into the detailed procedural foundations of everyday life. It has developed some very practical solutions to some rather thorny methodological problems. As such it is methodologically 'impure' but it works (Ten Have 1989:1).

Richards and Seedhouse (2005:363) explained that "CA has proved able to provide a 'holistic' portrayal of language use that reveals the reflexive relationships between form, function, sequence, social identity and social/ institutional context". According to Ten Have (1989:2) "CA leaves the researcher with ample room to develop his own best fitting heuristic and argumentative procedure". CA has been stated as a good analytical method of conversation; however some researchers, like Billig (1999), have problems with regard to this method.

What has been called a "bucket theory of context", in which some pre-established social framework is viewed as containing the participant's actions, was rejected. Instead, CA argues for a more dynamic approach in which context is treated both as the project and product of the participant's own actions and therefore as locally produced and transformed at any moment (Schegloff (1999) cited in Neil Krobov (2001:3). One of Billig's [(1999) quoted in Krobov (2001:13)] main problems with CA is that he believes it is "based on an unexamined, or naïve epistemology and methodology". In short, Billig (1999) believes it is both impossible and misleading to ever study participants "in their own terms" and that an analysis that does not incorporate (or attempts to bracket or avoid) the broader backdrop of social and cultural discourses entirely misses the point of doing social analysis in the first place (Krobov 2001:13). Billig believes that CA can never and will never be able to study participants "in their own terms because such an endeavour is one of the many scurrilous of 'realist tales'. He believes that the whole notion of getting at the unique and actual terms in which the participants speak rests on the supposedly "outdated idea that the facts can actually speak for themselves". In other words, CA seems (at least to Billig) to be saying that it is possible and desirable to uncover what the participants are actually saying (in its purest form) without polluting their actual words with our interpretive mechanism (Krobov 2001:13).

According to Ten Have (1989:2) "CA papers tend to be exclusively devoted to an empirically based discussion of specific analytic issues". He further states that "the (...) problem may contribute to the confusion of readers who are not familiar with this particular research style as they will use their habitual expectations, derived from established social-scientific practice, as a frame of reference in understanding this unusual species of the scientific world (Ten Have 1989:2).

Primarily, CA was seen to be unscientific and impressionistic, at best a preliminary, impressionistic assessment of conversational organization which, to have any real value, had to be followed by scientifically based studies using other analytical methods. This, in turn, has led to the growing isolation of ethnomethodological CA within conversation analytical studies, and to a resultant increase in the misunderstanding of both the methods and findings of CA (Taylor and Cameron 1987:106).

2.4 TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

The focus of this research is on telephone communication specifically when the "addressee" is not there and is replaced by a recorded message on an answering machine. With regard to this aspect I will consult different researchers but Kang Kwong Luke and Theodossia-Soula Pavlidou will be my main reference. Luke and Pavlidou (2002:4) indicate that "for a very long time in human history, face-to-face conversation was the only way of speech communication". With the invention and popularisation of the telephone in modern societies, a second form of conversation has become not only possible but also more widespread. In many parts of the world, telephone conversations are now an ordinary, even indispensable, part of everyday life. Not only is business regularly conducted over the telephone; social relationships are also constantly being constituted, maintained and transformed through this medium (Luke and Pavlidou 2004:4).

Luke and Pavlidou (2002:4) further maintain that "unlike face-to-face conversations, telephone calls are characterized by a lack of visual information". This may be seen as a disadvantage, but the advantage is that recordings of telephone calls can give a more faithful rendering of the original speech event compared to recordings of face-to-face conversations. Audio recordings of face-to-face conversations are less

faithful in the sense that the visual information available to the participants is not similarly available to the analyst (Luke and Pavlidou 2002:4).

Pridham (2001:8) maintains that "by what we say, by the way we say it and sometimes even by what we don't say, we can influence or reflect the purpose or function of a conversation which is not face to face, as in a telephone conversation". Pridham (2001:8) further states that "telephone conversations cannot, for example, simply finish with a silence and, because speakers cannot see each other, they therefore have to introduce themselves at the start of the conversation more obviously". Opening and closure of the conversation is therefore more noticeably marked during a telephone conversation. But this might be different while leaving a message on an answering machine. Because there is nobody receiving a message on the other side it might be difficult to some callers, depending on their cultural differences, to open and close as in real telephone conversation.

According to Luke and Pavlidou (2002:6) "in spite of new features like conference calls, telephone calls are still mostly dyadic i.e. only two speeches in conversation at one time events". To Luke and Pavlidou (2006:6) "face-to-face conversations may involve three or more participants, making it hard to identify speakers when doing transcriptions." Telephone calls tend to have clearly defined boundaries, making it possible for the analyst to study conversational beginnings and closings as well as the structure of the conversation as a whole. In the sociological approach the analyst's interest is on the universal features of a telephone call. These features may vary from situation to situation, from language to language, or from culture to culture (Luke and Pavlidou 2002:6).

Luke and Pavlidou (2002:7) maintain that "telephone calls offer a unique opportunity for the analyst to observe how different groups of people make use of essentially the same technology to achieve essentially the same range of purposes (information exchange, social bonding, etc)". Furthermore, the analyst is able to observe how they go about tackling very similar interaction tasks such as availability checks, identification and recognition, switchboard requests, topic introduction, closing, call-waiting, and more (Luke and Pavlidou 2002:7).

According to Luke and Pavlidou (2002:7) "the more (and deeply) people study telephone conversations in different communities, the more likely one can gain a

better understanding of this communication device and improve the quality of intercultural communication and increase the chances of inter-cultural understanding". According to Luke and Pavlidou "telephone conversations proceed smoothly and are usually successful, but it is clear that misalignments, even failures, do occur from time to time". In some cases, people might even develop what Hopper (1992:85) calls "telephobia". With regard to answering machines it is even more likely because it is a machine which is impersonal. Misalignments are more likely to occur in intercultural calls, where the ability to make successful telephone calls may be seen as a test for a person's mastery of another language and culture. People who are otherwise competent in a foreign language might nevertheless experience difficulties, even frustration, when trying to speak on the telephone, due to differences in conventions governing the use of this communication medium (Hopper 1992:85).

Supporting their argument on telephone conversations, Luke and Pavlidou (2002:8) maintain that "participants from different cultural backgrounds may bring with them different expectations to the conversational space of a telephone call." They elaborate this point by providing an example of Greek telephone users who expect to get immediate attention as partners in communication before the reason for calling is even introduced. German callers, on the other hand, appear to be more concerned about the possible inconvenience which their calls might be causing the other party, thus they try to avoid holding up the line for too long.

Another example given to support the theme of cultural variation was that of Lindstrom and Houtkoop-Steenstra quoted in Luke and Pavlidou (2002:15) which reported that in Sweden and the Netherlands respectively, the preference was for recipients to identify themselves rather than for callers to recognise them. Some callers, like Greek callers, do not feel conversationally obliged to identify themselves unless they assume that it is highly likely that the recipient will not recognize their voice. As Hopper states (1992:85) "a culture's telephone customs display tiny oft-repeated imprints of community ethos." Hopper (1992:85) states that "most travelers, immigrants, or ethnographers can say more about his argument if they were to be asked about differences in telephone conversations in countries outside the U.S.A".

According to Luke and Pavlidou (2002:15), "participants in these telephone calls find themselves in a multilingual situation where there's often some degree of uncertainty

at the beginning regarding the choice of the language of communication." They further maintain that "in general, the strategy employed by the participants is simply to use the language of the answering turn as the language of communication", although this default cannot be followed in every case because some callers may not be able to speak the language displayed in the answering turn. According to Pridham (2001:8) "the people speaking, the relationship between them, the circumstances under which they are talking, the subject matter and their purpose for talking can all influence the structure of conversation."

Pridham (2001:37) also maintains that "the close relationship between the speakers is also in the non-standard language that they use; speakers and listeners use the known building blocks of adjacency pairs and exchanges and operate with the knowledge of Grice's Maxims". Adjacency pairs are closely related, stereotypical pairs of speech acts which are claimed to be a recurrent feature of conversation (Schegloff and Sacks 1973) cited in Pridham (2001:37). Adjacency pairs are defined by Schegloff (1977:84-5) cited in Pridham (2001:131) as having the following features: "two utterances in length, adjacent positioning of component utterances, different speakers producing each utterance and relative ordering of parts (i.e. first pair parts precede second pair parts)". In order to structure conversation clearly and to ensure the efficient delivery of information, speakers and listeners work together using the Cooperative Principle. Jannedy, Poletto and Weldon (1994:236) state that "Grice formulated a co-operative principle which he believed to underlie language use, according to which we are enjoined to make sure that what we say in conversation furthers the purpose of these conversations". Grice argued that there are a number of conversational rules, or maxims, that regulate conversation by way of enforcing compliance with the cooperative principle.

Conversation, however, does not simply concern itself with imparting meaning. It is also used to create and maintain good relationships. To understand how members of a culture understand conversational contributions, one must be thoroughly familiar with that culture and have spent time in it as a participant, not merely as an observer. According to in Pridham (2001:37) cited in Verschueren (2005:190), Grice's theory is based on the assumption that human beings are intrinsically rational and cooperative, meaning that in their interaction with one another, except in special circumstances, their communications will be intended to be informative.

Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon (1995:138), supporting Miyamoto and Schwarz's (2006) view, "maintain that communication theorists, linguists, psychologists, and anthropologists all agree that language has many functions". One view in which there is complete agreement, however, is that virtually any communication will have both an information function and a relationship function. In other words, when we communicate with others we simultaneously communicate some amount of information and indicate our current expectations about the relationship between or among participants. They further state that "at the two extremes of information and relationship, there are often cases in which one or the other function appears to be minimized". For example, in daily greetings such as, "How are you?" and "I'm just fine," there is often a minimum of actual information. After all, we often do not really expect the other person to tell us how they actually are. Nor do we expect them to believe that we are literally "fine". Such changes are nearly, but not quite exclusively, relational.

The meaning of exchanges like the one above is simply to acknowledge recognition and to affirm that the relationship you have established remains in effect. What is of concern to us is not to establish whether or not the purpose of language is to convey information or maintain relationships, since the use of language always accomplishes both functions to some extent. From the intercultural point of view, we can see that cultures are often different from each other in how much importance they give to one function of language over the other (Scollon and Scollon 1995:138).

This research, it has to be mentioned, is not one that focuses on telephone conversations per se; it is about how intended telephone conversations become transformed into messages on a telephone answering machine. It investigates the nature of answering machine messages as a unique kind of conversation which may function as a brief communication of content or additionally as a means of constructing interpersonal relations.

2.4.1 Perceptions and attitudes related to answering machines

There are two or more practices or beliefs as far as an answering machine culture is concerned. Some people are fascinated with answering machines for different reasons. On the one hand, some like to record messages but others prefer to put an extra device, which allows caller ID, to monitor calls before actually answering them,

maybe because they believe it is fun or they do not want to talk to certain people. Some like answering machines because they could call from a remote location to check if anyone has left a message. Some are fascinated with how people talk when there's nobody at the other end of the line (Angelo Racoma 2007:1).

Some people are of different opinions with regard to answering machines. There are people who strongly believe that two-way interaction is normal, where one talks and another reacts. Most people believe that it is completely different when you are talking in person than when you are talking on the phone. After all, communication is mostly body language tone. It is believed that it is strange and unconventional when one records a message and talks to no one on the line. Some people go to an extent of describing it as "like holding a video camera to your face recording a message. You try to imagine someone is at the other end, but no one's there. Some people feel that leaving a message or voicemail seems too confrontational. For example, people like Filipinos prefer to avoid confrontation and probably feel peculiar (monologuing). These kinds of people will probably not feel comfortable using answering machines. They call themselves "texting culture", since they prefer to text rather than call because by doing so they will escape the responsibility of actually relaying a message other than the words that they write (Racoma 2001:1).

To some, a person who takes time to leave a message is a person who is a serious caller, meaning a caller with an important or interesting message. They take that person seriously because he/she tried to reach them, and in the absence of a response, s/he still tries at least to inform them that they would like to talk. To those who are very busy, it comes as a useful tool because many people will want to reach them. Teenagers enjoy changing the recording every week (Racoma 2001:2). Some people do not have an opinion on answering machines because there is someone who is always at home at any given time. They do not understand an answering machine because they are uncomfortable hearing the caller's own voice. All of the above comments reveal how much people like or dislike answering machines (Racoma 2007:2).

2.4.2 Telephone answering machines as modern technology

According to Luke and Pavlidou (2002:3), "Interest in the telephone as a modern communication device goes back a long way, but the systematic study of telephone calls has only been practiced for a short time relative to the history of the telephone itself". The telephone was invented by Alexander Graham Bell (1847-1922) in 1876 but the idea and, more importantly, the method of studying telephone conversations was invented by Harvey Sacks (1935-1975) almost a century later (David Morton 2001:1).

Morton (2001:1), supporting Luke and Pavlidou's idea, maintains that the original concept of an automatic telephone answering machine originated in the late 19th century. However, relatively few people knew of these devices until the 1980s, after which the answering machine briefly became common in the U.S.A. and, although today it has been joined by new services like "voice mail", it remains a standard household device. The noun "answering machine" has one meaning: an electronic device that answers the telephone and records messages.

According to Morton (2001:1), "the idea of devices to record telephone calls occurred simultaneously to several inventors, among them, Thomas Edison, in the late nineteenth century. Edison's unsuccessful attempts to record a telephone mechanically led to the invention of the phonograph, which achieved commercial success for entertainment purposes". In 1890, Valdenar Poulsen invented a telegraphone, the first magnetic recorder, operating much like a modern tape recorder. The telegraphone was an automatic telephone answering machine, but it had no outgoing messages. Following the advent of electronic tubes in the 1920s, several individuals and firms offered fully automatic answering machine that used magnetic tape and operated along the lines of the later, more familiar machines. They were used widely in Europe but were banned in the United States by the AT&T company, which saw them as a threat (Morton 2001:3).

Morton (2001:3) also maintains that, after World War II, new regulations made it possible to offer answering machines for sale such as one called the "Electronic Secretary." Responding to demands from businesses, Bell Operating Companies began leasing answering machines in 1950. Reductions in cost stimulated demand for these machines by the mid-1970s, and they gained recognition as they were

featured in motion pictures and television shows. With the dissolution of AT&T in 1984, most local operating companies ceased enforcing the remaining restrictions on the use of answering machines. Sales rose dramatically, exceeding one million units per year in the early 1980s and by the mid-1990s a majority of households owned an answering machine.

According to the free encyclopaedia cited in Morton (2001:2) the answering machine, also known as an "answerphone", "ansaphone/ansafone" (especially in United Kingdom and British commonwealth countries) or "telephone answering device", was invented in 1904 for the purpose of answering telephone calls and automatically recording messages left by callers when the party called is unable to answer the phone. Unlike Voicemail, which is a centralized or networked system that performs a similar function, an answering machine is installed in the customer's premises alongside, or incorporated within, the customer's telephone.

According to Kogo (1993), quoted in Miyamoto and Schwarz (2006:541), "answering machines are communication devices that deprive the speaker of backchannel responses from the recipient of the message, thus making it difficult to monitor the relational aspects of the communication".

While early answering machines used magnetic tape technology, most modern equipment uses solid-state memories. Magnetic tape is still used in many low cost devices. However, answering machines that use magnetic tape cannot be found in most stores today. Most modern answering machines have a system for greeting. The owner may record his or her message that will be played back to the caller, or an automatic message is used if the owner does not record a personal one. Answering machines can usually be programmed to take the call at a certain number of rings. This is useful if the owner is screening calls and does not wish to speak with all callers (Morton 2001:3).

As far as the use of recorded telephone conversations in research is concerned, Luke and Pavlidou (2002:5) maintain that "it provides the analyst with exactly the same amount of information as was available to the participants themselves. What you see (or hear) is what you get." They further maintain that "one could of course make video recordings of face-to-face talk, but even with video cameras it is not always possible to obtain a full record, including all the participant's facial

expressions and gestures, as the camera can only view the speech event from one angle at a time". One is more likely to obtain relatively good quality recordings on the telephone, and clear recordings are essential to successful and accurate transcriptions.

Voice messaging

Voice messaging is a computerized method of storing and manipulating spoken recorded messages that is accessible to users from any touch-tone phone twenty-four hours a day. A voice-messaging system can be easily accessed by local, remote, or mobile users via a land-line or cellular phone.

How voice messaging works

Person A calls person B, who is not available to take the call. Person B's voice mailbox or answering machine takes the call, replaying it when person B returns and accesses it. Voice messaging relates to the communication process by increasing productivity, improving internal communication, enhancing customer service, and reducing message-taking costs (www.wikipedia.org). In companies where a voice system is in place, users can easily change their greeting and any other information and invite callers to leave their name, contact number, and any desired information. Using a voice-message system ensures accurate messages, reduces the need for receptionists to take messages, and frees users from time-zone dependence. As voice messaging become prevalent, the issue of privacy becomes critical. Companies need to be as protective of their voice-mail system as they are of their computer system (www.wikipedia.org).

Advantages of voice messages are that they provide twenty-four hour answering capability, they save and generate money for the company, and it reduces the need for administrative, receptionist or secretarial support. The disadvantages are that many people are resistant to technological advancement. People can "hide behind their mailbox" and not return calls. Many people dislike not being able to reach the person they are trying to contact.

In the following chapters relevant aspects of the literature discussed in chapter two will be highlighted. In chapter three the methodology used in this study will be elaborated.

2.5 VIEWS ON ANSWERING MACHINES

There are two or more practices or beliefs as far as an answering machine culture is concerned. Some people are very fascinated about answering machines for different reasons. On the one hand, some like to record messages, but some love to put an extra device called ID to monitor calls before actually answering them; maybe because they believe it's fun or they do not want to talk to some people. Some like answering machines because they could call in from a remote location to check if anyone has left a message. Some are fascinated with how people talk when there's nobody at the other end of the line (Angelo Racoma 2007:1). Some people are of different opinions or views with regard to answering machines. There are people who strongly believe that two-way interaction is the normal one, where you talk and the other person reacts. They say it's even a whole different thing when you are talking in person to when you're just on the phone. After all, much of communication is captured in body language. They say its lot different when you're recording a message and talking to no one on the line.

To them it feels weird. Some even go to the extent of describing it as "like holding a video camera to your face recording a message. You try to imagine someone is at the other end, but no one's there". Some are of the opinion that leaving a message or voicemail seems too confrontational. For example, people like Filipinos are not too confrontational, and probably feel peculiar monologuing. These kinds of people will probably not feel comfortable using answering machines. They call themselves texting culture, since they prefer to text rather than call because by doing that they will escape the responsibility of actually relaying a message other than the words that they speak or write (Racoma 2001:1). To some, a person who takes time to leave a message is a person who is (a serious caller) or rather a caller with an important or interesting message. They take that person seriously because that person tried to reach them, and in the absence of human response, s/he still tries to at least inform them that they would like to talk. To those who have many activities, it came as a pretty useful tool because many people will want to reach them. Teenagers enjoy changing the recording every week (Racoma 2001:2). Some people do not have an opinion on answering machines because there is someone who is always at home at any given time. They do not understand an answering machine because they are uncomfortable hearing the caller's own voice. All of the above comments reveal how much people like or dislike answering.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Following Adams and Schavaneveldt (1991:16) this study will apply scientific procedures toward acquiring answers to the research questions given in chapter 1. According to Fox (1995:291) research into language and communication is usually done by means of qualitative methods. Methods used in data collection as well as methods used for data analysis in this project will be discussed.

3.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative research involves the use of a particular kind of data, such as material collected in interviews, questionnaires and participant observation, to understand and explain social phenomena. The qualitative method is suitable for research using only a small sample of interviews, such as will be done in this study. Another way to define this kind of method is to say that it focuses on "quality", a term referring to the essence or attitude attached to something. According to Sarantakos (1988:295) "qualitative research is more tolerant and more flexible than quantitative research". The nature of qualitative research dictates that the researcher employs means and techniques that are closer to the research situation in order to reflect fully on everyday life situations in the findings. According to Struwig and Stead (2001:4) the term qualitative research does not describe a single research method. This research will make use of qualitative research methods such as ethnography, participant observation and conversation analysis.

According to Keith Richards and Paul Seedhouse (2005:259): "Conversational Analysis is a qualitative methodology in which quantification is generally not of important interest." They further mention that "CA research aims to identify the patterns, practices and devices through which talk-in-interaction is orderly and coherent". The aim of CA is to enquire about the actions or activities that participants conduct in their respective talk turns. CA studies show how social acts are organized in relation to one another.

According to Sarantakos (1988:286) "data collection in qualitative research involves a dynamic process of gathering, thinking, evaluating, and analyzing and it is geared towards natural situations, everyday life worlds, interaction and interpretation". Fromkin (1993:92) maintains that there are two types of scientific data namely naturally occurring (naturalistic) and experimental (elicited) data,. Experimental data is when the researcher is not simply observing the speaker's behaviour; rather, the researcher is presenting the participants with a stimulus and then studying the speaker's response. They are data produced by experimental design. Naturally occurring data are data which the researcher collects without presenting any stimulus to the participants. They are data that just occur naturally without being planned or twisted. In this study experimental data has been used as responses to a devised answering machine message were prompted.

3.2 QUESTIONNAIRES DATA

A questionnaire is a written survey and a productive tool which aids in obtaining constructive feedback from individuals. The role of the questionnaire is to elicit the information that is required to enable the researcher to answer the objectives of the survey. A key objective in writing the questionnaire is to help the respondents to provide such information. According to Von Kardof (2004:147) "the concept is procedural as well as cognitive. It includes the way that questionnaire respondents are invited to employ their natural theorizing categorize, assess, predict, and estimate matters of social fact". The ethnomethodological approach assists in the examination of assumptions which are inherently taken for granted in the interactions between individuals in the 'scene', and the underlying 'shared' knowledge within interactions. Shared knowledge identifies knowledge as a medium for communication (Von Kardof 2004:147).

In the questionnaire of this study, open questions were mostly used. Open questions ask for a reply in the respondent's own words, and no answers are suggested, so that the respondents have to improvise their answers. Respondents were asked to give information that could indicate cultural differences in their use of answering machines, and their own approach towards their use of answering machines. Answers of this kind reveal what is most salient to the respondents and which things are foremost in their minds.

For this study, questioning people is one of the best ways to obtain the necessary information. Twenty-three participants from eight different South African language groups participated by answering a questionnaire consisting of twenty-two questions. Questions pertained to attitudes and practices in the use of telephone answering machines in order to compare the use of answering machines across cultures. To compare the use of answering machines across cultures, respondents were asked questions such as whether they owned an answering machine, how often they hang up, whether they had ever come across an impolite message and whether they avoid leaving a message on telephone answering machines.

Respondents filled in their questionnaires electronically. They were asked to try and answer every question if possible but it was not compulsory. The questionnaire took approximately eight to nine minutes to be completed. The questionnaire is a productive tool which can aid in obtaining constructive feedback from both existing and potential individuals. Respondents were asked to report mostly in an open-response format, since the researcher did not want to channel the respondents' answers. Advantages of open-response are that they ask for a reply in the respondent's own words, no answers are suggested and the respondent has to improvise his/her answers. Respondents answer questions in their own frames of reference entirely uninfluenced by any specific alternatives suggested by the interviewer. The questionnaire for this study may be found at the back of the thesis as Addendum A.

3.3 RECORDED MESSAGE DATA

According to Deborah Tannen (2005:35) "... as soon as conversation is recorded on tape, it becomes a new entity that is different from the conversation as it occurred". For one thing, a recording is fixed in time and available for precise reproduction, whereas the very essence of talk is that it disappears as soon as it is uttered and can be imperfectly reconstructed but not retrieved (Tannen 2005:35). In addition, the talk as uttered in the actual interaction is one channel of integrated complexity which includes nonverbal components such as facial expressions, body movement, gestures and so on. Much of this may be lost in recording and transcribing. This project works primarily with recorded data and data captured in the questionnaires.

According to Ten Have (2004:41) "... many if not most studies that belong to the family of methodology and conversation analysis use recordings of actual, mostly 'natural' interaction as their major, and in Conversation Analysis often only, data source". He further stated that "the tape-recorded materials constituted a good enough record of what happened". Sacks, cited by Ten Have (2004:42), added that "working with tape-recorded conversations had a kind of exemplary value in making the details of actual human action available for close scrutiny and formal analysis". The analytic understanding of the "technology of conversation" that interactants use requires access to a detailed record of what happened or what was done and how. The use of recorded data serves as a control on the limitations and fallibilities of intuition and recollection. It exposes the observer to a wide range of interactional materials and circumstances and also provides some guarantee that analytic conclusions will not arise as artefacts of intuitive idiosyncrasy, selective attention, recollection or experimental design (Ten Have 2004:43).

Ten Have (2004:420) also maintained that "one virtue of using recordings is that one can produce a transcription of what is being said". In principle, a transcription is a 'translation' of the oral language used in the interaction, as heard and understood by the transcriber, into the written version of that language (Ten Have 2004:42). In a typical CA transcription the written rendering of the spoken discourse is modified to a certain extent to simulate the way in which the utterances were actually produced, while a variety of symbols are added to the text as indications of still more production details.

According to Ten Have (2004:42) "... the purpose of the first two processes, i.e. recording and transcription, is to produce a non-perishable, transportable and manageable representation - an immutable mobile as Bruno Latour (1987:228) calls it - to assist in the later process of understanding and analysis". Recordings and transcriptions are used to document original events in order to produce immutable mobiles. Making the recording is in general treated as an unproblematic rendering or reproduction although some technical limitations are recognised. Transcription is considered an artful practice, a representation or even a construction, which is often officially denied the status of data (Ten Have 2004:51).

"Ethnomethodology started in the 1960s, in tape- and video-recordings of social interactions in 'natural' or unmanaged contexts, and in the development of

transcriptions which are conventions that made it possible to fix a conversation in writing without either orthographic, normalization or reduction" (Ten Have 2004:32).

According to Clive Seale (2003:159) "the use of audio and/or video recordings and the transcriptions made after such recordings, is an essential part of the canonical practice of CA. The use of recordings and transcripts has also become prominent in those parts of ethnomethodology". Seale (2003:162) further maintained that "ethnomethodology offers a unique focus on the situated creation and maintenance of social orders". Its research practices mostly have an observational character, with a marked preference for situations in which such orders are in some way problematic for members, which may add to the visibility of order-creating practices. In so doing, ethnomethodological inquiries may be useful to elucidate their interactive and situated character which is often overlooked as well as taken for granted (Seale 2003:162).

According to Ten Have (1989:2) "the use of recorded data, instead, is indefinitely rich in empirical detail ... it serves as a control on the limitations and fallibilities of intuition and recollection". It exposes the observer to a wide range of two or more materials and circumstances and also provides some guarantee that analytic conclusions will not arise as artefacts of intuitive idiosyncrasy. The first part of the recordings consists of messages that were left on answering machines at the South African parliament. Ten people from four different South African language groups (namely Afrikaans, Xhosa, Setswana and Tshivenda) took part. They were asked to leave a message on behalf of the researcher on two answering machines under circumstances that are controlled but that simulate a regular telephone messaging situation. The situations, in which the recordings were made, were experimentally set up. In order to check whether people from different language communities have different ways of responding to an answering machine, a specific content that would be similar for all participants was devised. The first answering machine was structured as belonging to Professor Smith and the other one as belonging to Ms Xaba. Before working on their assignment, participants were told that nobody was available to take their calls and they would have to leave their messages on the answering machine. They were also provided with a written message that they will have to leave and the names and numbers of people they have to call. Then we asked to call on behalf of the researcher who has two appointments, one with her

colleague and the other with her professor, to tell them that the researcher will be unable to come to the appointment due to some difficulties at work. Participants worked individually and every caller's message was recorded. Transcriptions were transcribed using standard transcription conventions from Richards and Seedhouse (2005).

The participants were told that the study was to determine whether there are indications of cultural differences in the use of answering machines. The experiment also investigated whether first language speakers of different South African languages have different approaches to using telephone answering machines and, if so, what are the particular differences and the reasons for these differences. Transcriptions of recordings can be found at the back of the thesis marked as Addendum B.

According to Allen and Guy (1974:46) research on the conversational process depends much on the quality of the record of verbal interaction. Furthermore, they maintain that "the availability of a taped record enables repeated and detailed examination of particular events in interaction and hence greatly enhances the range and precision of the observations that can be made." According to Ten Have (1989:4), recordings are basic data in CA. The transcriptions that were made are to be seen as a convenient form to represent the recorded material in written form, but not as a real substitute (Psathas and Anderson 1990 cited in Ten Have (1989:4). By making a transcription, the researcher is forced to attend to details of the interaction that would escape the ordinary listener. Once made, transcripts provide the researcher with quick access to a wide range of interaction episodes that can be inspected for comparative purposes. Furthermore, as noted, transcripts are provided with their analysis as an essential part of CA's research reports, thus giving the reader a way of checking the analysis presented in a way that is not available with other methods. **Below is a table with the participants' biographical information:**

L1	No. of Participants	Gender		Age	Training	Questionnaire	Phone-in	Combination
Afrikaans	6	3M	3F	25-45	degree	5	4	4
Venda	3	2M	1F	32-38	degree	3	1	1
Sesotho	2	2M		33-41	degree	2	0	0
Setswana	3	1M	2F	35-37	degree	2	1	0
isiXhosa	2	1M	1F	33-38	degree	2	2	2
isiZulu	2		2F	31-47	degree	2	0	0
Xitsonga	5	4M	1F	35-47	degree	5	0	0
Sepedi	2		2F	34-36	degree	2	0	0

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

As indicated in the introduction, the purpose of this study is to determine whether in using answering machines, there are indications of cultural differences between speakers of different South African languages (such as those between collectivist vs. individualist dimensions of various communities cf. Hofstede (1981). I started with a hypothesis that there are cultural differences in communicative practices of speakers from different language communities in using telephone answering machines. One of the objectives of this study is to find out whether language speakers of different South African languages who make use of answering machines distinguish between the informative and the interpersonal/relational function of language.

The next section describes data collected by means of particular instruments described in chapter 3, namely questionnaires and recordings.

4.1 PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

4.1.1 The questionnaires

Twenty-two participants filled in questionnaires which comprised 22 questions (see Appendix A). The questionnaires were distributed electronically, after the recordings had been done. Languages represented by the twenty-three participants were: Afrikaans, isiXhosa, Setswana, Sesotho, Tshivenda, isiZulu, Sepedi and Xitsonga. Participants were asked questions that would assist in ascertaining whether there are cultural differences in the use of answering machines among speakers of different South African languages. The research was also aimed at testing Miyamoto and Schwarz's (2006) assumption that cultural practices that put emphasis on maintaining relationships will make it difficult to use answering machines. The exact aim of checking for cultural differences was not disclosed to the various participants so as not to influence their responses.

Questions were not ordered along the lines of the topics so as not to be too leading and obvious to the respondent. The themes which were questioned were: attitude towards answering machines, views on two kinds of messages, individual characteristics versus cultural features, attitude towards owning answering machines, trust towards answering machines, attitude towards business as opposed to personal calls, and attitude towards messages left on answering machines.

To test the participants' attitudes when they reached an answering machine instead of the person they were calling, the following questions were asked:

Question 3: When encountering a telephone answering machine on an outgoing call, do you generally leave a message, or do you directly hang up?

Question 7: Do you avoid leaving a message on a telephone answering machine? If yes, why?

Question 11: Do you take leaving a message as a demanding task? Please explain your answer.

To test if culture or language influences the way in which participants relate to answering machines, the following questions were asked:

Question 8: Does leaving a message to someone who is of a language or cultural group different from yours influence the way you leave a message? If so, how?

Question 9: Do you believe that people of different languages and cultures have different approaches towards the use of telephone answering machines? Why?

To test participants' views on two kinds of messages, namely, message conveyed when a person (such as secretary or personal assistant) is there to receive the call, and message left on an answering machine, the following question was asked:

Question 10: Do you think a message left on a telephone answering machine can have different impact to that of a message conveyed when the recipient is actually there to receive the call? If yes, why? If not, why not?

To test whether individual characteristics influence the participants' views more than cultural features, the following question was asked:

Question 12: Do you think that people of the same culture that grew up in the same place share similar views about answering machines or is it an individual feeling?

To test participants' attitudes towards owning an answering machine, the following question was asked:

Question 1: Do you make use of a telephone answering machine at work? If yes, for which purpose do you use it?

To test the participants' trust in responding to answering machines, the following questions were asked:

Question 3a: If you leave a message on another person's telephone answering machine, do you just give your name and number for them to call back, or do you give an extensive message stating the full purpose of your call?

Question 4: Have you come across an impolite voice recorded message? If yes, what was the nature of the message?

Question 5: Would you leave an urgent message in a telephone answering machine such as "I was calling to inform you that the bus your mother was travelling in was involved in an accident, some passengers are hospitalized. Three female passengers lost their lives. Explain your answer to this question.

Question 14: Do you regard answering machines as a necessary and virtually indispensable resource in modern life?

Question 17: Where do you think an answering machine is more needed or useful? In the house or in the office? Why?

To test participants' attitudes towards business and personal calls, the following questions were asked:

Question 15: When you are phoning a friend or close family member and find an answering machine what do you do? Hang up or leave a message? Why?

Question 16: When you are phoning a retailer (e.g. for a price list) and find an answering machine, what do you do? Hang up or leave a message? Why?

To test the participants' attitude towards messages left on an answering machine, the following questions were asked:

Question 18: Are the responses you get generally fast/prompt enough, or do you find people take messages on an answering machine as less urgent"?

Question 19: Do you respond promptly to answering machine messages left for you, or do you generally feel that it can wait until the time is convenient for you?

Question 20: Do you often ignore messages left on your answering machine?

Question 21: Do you treat messages on an answering machine differently to messages on your cellphone's voicemail? If yes, what is the difference?

Question 22: If no, do you find the two methods of leaving and taking messages virtually similar?

4.1.2 The recordings

The recordings are of saved messages given by ten participants who were asked to leave messages on an answering machine. The average length of the messages varied between 9 seconds and 35 seconds. The language that participants used in responding to the machine recording was English except for one where the participant used isiXhosa when leaving a message for a Xhosa person. The voices on the answering machines used in this project were English. Participants were asked to call a number to pass on a written message verbally. All of the participants apparently understood the request well. The message to be passed on was the following request:

Evelinah Mathoho has an appointment with Professor Smith and a colleague, which she cannot keep due to difficulties at work. She will be able to come and see them the later day but not on the next day, as had been agreed.

The request was that caller's make two calls to Professor Smith and his/her colleague (or their assistant) to inform them of the fact that Evelinah could not keep an appointment.

Out of the ten participants, one participant of the isiXhosa group gave the exact message as the written note had it. The other nine participants of different languages gave the message in their own words. The recorded messages were saved for

analysis. The main aim of making the recordings was to analyse the way in which people are more or less comfortable in using answering machines, and to ascertain whether people from different language communities show different attitudes in as far as using answering machines is concerned. The aim was also to see how different levels of ease relate to different ways of using the machine for two core functions of communication (conveying information and maintaining a relationship).

4.2 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

For the analysis of the data, I rely on analytic tools and procedures used in Conversational Analysis (see chap. 3) and on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (see chap. 3). The analysis is aimed at testing the data in the same terms as Miyamoto and Schwarz (2006). This study is not a quantitative research study, thus the answers and conclusions are not taken to be widely representative of each language group. However, the information gained is valuable in determining possible trends and in providing a cameo on the communicative practices of a group of professionals who come from different language backgrounds and make use of telephone answering machines in the course of their work.

4.2.1 Detailed analysis of questionnaire

In addition to recordings of actual answering machine messages, the participants' perspectives on the function and use of answering machines as given in response to questionnaires will assist in answering the research questions (see chap. 3, on the nature of the questions and how the questionnaire was administered). In this section I shall give a summary and an interpretation of the kinds of responses participants gave in answering the questionnaire.

Questions 1 and 2 of the questionnaire checks:

- (i) whether people use answering machines at all, and
- (ii) whether people find answering machines so useful that they are willing to purchase and install their own machines.

Question 1 reads as follows:

Do you make use of a telephone answering machine at work? If yes, for which purposes do you use it?

Answers to question 1 were the following:

- Seventeen respondents said "no". (5/5 Afrikaans), (13/17 African language)
- Four respondents said "yes". (African language)
- One respondent gave "no answer". (African language)

Respondents who answered "yes" indicated use of an answering machine at work, for the following purposes:

- (i) Two respondents mentioned that they are able to find out who called while they were out of the office.
- (ii) One respondent said that she uses a telephone answering machine when she does not want to be disturbed.

Interestingly, two Afrikaans speakers who answered "no" also commented:

- (i) One respondent said that there is no such facility.
- (ii) One respondent said that she should in fact get one to save their colleagues having to hire a secretary.

Question 1a) read as follows:

Do you make use of a telephone answering machine at home? If yes, for which purpose do you use it?

Answers to question 1a) were the following:

- Fifteen respondents said "no". (3/5 Afrikaans), (12 African language)
- Five respondents said "yes". (2/5 Afrikaans), (3/17 African language)
- Two respondents gave "no answer". (African language)

Respondents who answered "yes" mentioned the following purpose:

- (i) Two respondents said that they use it if they are not at home to know who called. (Afrikaans and African language)
- (ii) Two respondents said that the service provider gives it as a free addition. (Afrikaans and African language)
- (iii) One respondent uses it for his freelance business. (Afrikaans)

Respondents who answered "no" mentioned the following reason:

- (i) Two respondents said that there is no land line. (Afrikaans and African language)

Question 2 overlaps with question 1a) in that it checks whether people own answering machines. It can be assumed that a person, who owns an answering machine, will also use it. Therefore a correlation of question 1a) and question 2 is necessary.

Question 2 reads as follows:

Do you own an answering machine? If no, would you like to own one?

Answers to question 2 were the following:

- Seven respondents indicated that they do not own an answering machine, but they would like to have one. (1/5 Afrikaans), (6/17 African language)
- Eleven respondents indicated that they do not own answering machine, and they would not like to own one. (3/5 Afrikaans), (7/17 African language)
- Four respondents indicated that they do own an answering machine.(1/5 Afrikaans), (3/17 African language)

There were five "yes" answers to question1a) of those who make use of answering machines. And eleven "no" answers to question 2 of those who would not want to own an answering machine. From question 2, it is clear that the majority of respondents use answering machines only when they are the callers. What respondents do when they reach an answering machine was of valuable knowledge; hence the importance of the following question.

Question 3 enquires whether respondents prefer not to speak into an answering machine when they make calls themselves.

Question 3 reads as follows:

When encountering a telephone answering machine message on an outgoing call, do you generally leave a message, or do you directly hang up?

Answers to question 3 were the following:

- Twelve respondents said they would "leave a message".(3/5 Afrikaans),(10/17 African language)
- Seven respondents said they would "hang up".(2/5 Afrikaans), (5/17 African language)
- Three respondents said "it depends on circumstances and urgency of the call".(1/5 Afrikaans), (2/17 African language)

Respondents who said they would hang up did not motivate their answers.

Respondents who would leave a message gave the following reasons:

- (i) One respondent said that he would leave a message so that the recipient can respond to his call.(African language)
- (ii) One respondent said that they would leave a message if it were not too complicated.(African language)
- (iii) One respondent said that they would leave a message not to be a bother to the recipient.(African language)

Respondents who said it would depend gave the following reasons:

- (i) One respondent said that if she was in a hurry she would hang up, if not she would leave a message. (Afrikaans)
- (ii) One respondent said that it depended on the urgency of the call; if it was important she would leave a message.(Afrikaans)

Question 3a) asked for more information from those who do leave messages on answering machines.

Question 3a) reads as follows:

If you leave a message on another person's telephone answering machine, do you just give your name and number for them to call back, or do you give an extensive message stating the full purpose of your call?.

Answers to question 3a) were the following:

- Five respondents said they would leave their name and number. (African language)
- Ten respondents said they would leave their name, number and extensive messages. (2/5 Afrikaans), (8/17 African language)

- Two respondents said they would leave name, number, extensive message as well as time and date. (Afrikaans)
- Two respondents said they would leave a message only.(African language)
- Three respondents said it would depend on the circumstances. (1/5 Afrikaans)

Question 4 and 4a) enquire about politeness in using answering machines.

Question 4 read as follows:

Have you ever come across an impolite voice recorded message? If yes, what was the nature of the message?

Answers to question 4 were the following:

- Seventeen respondents have not received impolite messages on their answering machines.(3/5 Afrikaans), (14/17 African language)
- Five respondents have received impolite messages. (2/5 Afrikaans),(3/17 African language)

Respondents, who have received impolite messages, said that the messages were of the following nature:

- (i) One respondent said that it was a message from telephone sales representatives selling a product.(Afrikaans)
- (ii) One respondent said that it was an inconsiderate message.(African language)
- (iii) One respondent said that the tone of voice was impolite.(African language)
- (iv) One respondent said that it was of a personal nature. (Afrikaans)

(Curiously, three of the five respondents who confirmed that they had received impolite messages, had previously indicated that they do not own or otherwise regularly use answering machines (see question 1a).)

Question 4a) reads as follows:

Have you ever left an impolite message on someone's telephone answering machine? If yes, what was the nature and purpose of such a message?

Answers to question 4 a) were the following:

- Sixteen respondents have not left impolite messages.(3/5 Afrikaans), (13/17 African language)
- Six respondents have left impolite messages.(2/5 Afrikaans), (3/17 African language)

Respondents, who have left impolite messages, said that the messages were of the following nature:

- (i) One respondent said that he had an appointment that had not been kept; the message conveyed impatience by the caller. (African language)
- (ii) One respondent said that recipients were late with payment of service rendered. (Afrikaans)
- (iii) One respondent was annoyed by a service provider who could not deliver the service agreed upon.(Afrikaans)
- (iv) One respondent said that he had been trying to contact a person who was not picking up.(African language)

Question 5 intended to check whether people who use answering machines would convey any kind of message, even personal or distressing news, by answering machine.

Question 5 read as follows:

Would you leave an urgent message in a telephone answering machine such as" I was calling to inform you that the bus your mother was travelling in was involved in an accident, some passengers are hospitalized. Three female passengers lost their lives". Explain your answer to this question.

Answers to question 5 were the following:

- Twenty respondents said that they would not use a telephone answering machine for this purpose. (5/5 Afrikaans), (15 African language)
- Two respondents said "yes".(African language)

Respondents who would not leave such a message gave the following reasons:

- (i) Two respondents said it is insensitive to leave such a distressing message.(2/5 Afrikaans),

- (ii) Four respondents said it would frighten or shock the recipient and could affect them very badly. (2/5 Afrikaans), (2/17 African language)
- (iii) Nine respondents said that culturally, such news should be conveyed in person. (1/5 Afrikaans), (8/17 African language)
- (iv) Five respondents gave no reasons. (African language)

It is overwhelmingly agreed upon that a telephone answering machine is not an appropriate instrument for interpersonal messages of an intensely emotional kind.

Respondents who would leave such a message gave the following reason:

- (i) Two respondents said that they would leave the distressing message only if there was no alternative. (African language)

Question 5 and 6 are related since question 6 enquires about the kinds of messages that the respondents who answered "no" to question 5 would be willing to leave on an answering machine.

Question 6 reads as follows:

What kind of messages would you leave on a telephone answering machine?

Answers to question 6 were the following:

- Three respondents said that they would leave polite messages. (African language)
- Five respondents said that they would leave the message, details and would ask to be called back. (1/5Afrikaans), (4/17 African language)
- Six respondents would leave short, friendly or informative messages. (1/5 Afrikaans),(5/17 African language)
- Three respondents would leave confirmation of appointment messages or reminding messages. (2/5 Afrikaans), (1/17 African language)
- One respondent said he would send anything. (African language)

The aim of Question 6 was to elicit the content senders would deem as appropriate on a telephone answering machine. The responses mainly explained how messages would be recorded.

Question 7 enquires about whether respondents avoid leaving messages when they reach an answering machine.

Question 7 reads as follows:

Do you avoid leaving a message on telephone answering machines? If yes, why?

Answers to question 7 were the following:

- Twelve respondents said "no".(3/5 Afrikaans),(9/17 African language)
- Nine respondents said "yes". (2/5 Afrikaans),(7/17 African language) Respondents who said "no" gave the following reasons:
 - (i) One respondent indicated that she does not want to annoy the recipient who will not know who called and for what purpose. (Afrikaans)
 - (ii) Five respondents indicated that given the opportunity to leave a message, they do.(African language)
 - (iii) Six respondents did not give reasons. (African language)

Respondents who said "yes" gave the following reasons:

- (i) One respondent said that the message might reach a recipient while it is too late to give a response.(African language)
- (ii) One respondent indicated that he would like to speak to the person rather than leave a message.(Afrikaans)
- (iii) One respondent indicated that he would prefer to call later.(African language)
- (iv) Two respondents indicated that it is an impersonal way of communicating.(1/5 Afrikaans), (1/17 African language)
- (v) One respondent indicated that people do not respond to messages.(African)
- (vi) Two respondents indicated that they would avoid leaving a message if they had complicated matters to discuss.(Afrikaans)
- (vii) One respondent indicated that messages can be received by wrong people and it can be chaotic.(African language)

The respondent who answered "sometimes" gave the following reason:

- (i) He said that if he has tried to contact the person earlier, but with no success, he would leave a message. (Afrikaans)

Question 7 correlates to question 3, because it verifies the answers given in question 3. Therefore it can be assumed that people who do not prefer to leave messages on answering machines when they make a call will also avoid leaving messages when they reach a telephone answering machine. The number of respondents who will leave a message when they reach answering machines equals of those who will not avoid leaving a message on telephone answering machine.

Question 8 enquires about whether leaving a message for someone who does not belong to one's language and cultural group influences the way in which a message is left.

Question 8 reads as follows:

Does leaving a message to someone who is of a different language or cultural group to yours, influence the way you leave a message? If so, how?

Answers to question 8 were the following:

- Nine respondents said "yes".(1/5 Afrikaans), (8/17 African language)
- Eleven respondents said "no".(4/5 Afrikaans), (7/17 African language)
- Two respondents said "it depends on the circumstances". (African language)

Respondents who said "yes" gave the following reasons:

- (i) According to one Venda respondent, in Venda culture, messages should be formal in order to show respect and a telephone answering machine cannot show such respect.(African language)
- (ii) Three respondents indicated that they would have to use English if leaving a message for a person who speaks a different language.(1/5 Afrikaans),(2/17 African language)
- (iii) One respondent indicated that, naturally, one will relate differently to people of different cultures and languages. (African language)
- (iv) One respondent indicated that if she is calling a white person, she will explain why she called and if she is calling an African she will hang up and call later.(African language)
- (v) One respondent indicated that some people can take offence at how they are addressed. (African language)

- (vi) One respondent indicated that she would have to consider the setting (e.g. friend, priest, and lawyer).(African language)
- (vii) One respondent indicated that one would know how to communicate with a person of his or her culture.(African language)

Among respondents who said no, there was one who gave the following reason:

- (i) We all belong to different language or cultural groups and we differ personally and according to circumstances.(Afrikaans)

Among respondents who said "it depends" there was one who gave the following reason:

- (i) It depends on the degree of your friendship or relationship. (African language)

Question 9 enquires whether respondents think that people of different language and cultural groups approach answering machines differently.

Question 9 reads as follows:

Do you believe that people of different languages and cultures have different approaches towards the use of telephone answering machines? Why?

Answers to question 9 were the following:

- Thirteen respondents said "yes".(1/5 Afrikaans), (12/17 African language)
- Nine respondents said "no".(4/5 Afrikaans),(5/17 African language)

Respondents who said "yes" gave the following reasons:

- (i) One respondent indicated that unless people are exposed to the same environment (amongst other things) the way they are brought up is very different. (African language)
- (ii) Two respondents said that speech is governed by cultural background.(African language)
- (iii) One respondent said that some people think an answering machine is a human being; this means that some cultural groups need to get used to telephone answering machines. (African language)
- (iv) One respondent said that the way people communicate is very different, so approaches won't be the same. (African language)

- (v) One respondent indicated that it is better to deliver the message in person in order to get a response.(African language)
- (vi) One respondent indicated that the uniqueness of culture and language counts when leaving a message.(African language)
- (vii) One respondent indicated that most Africans do not listen to their messages or respond promptly. (African language)
- (viii) Two respondents indicated that some people do not have telephone etiquette. (African language)
- (ix) One respondent indicated that it is about language, culture as well as working environment which will influence one's approach towards the use of an answering machine. (Afrikaans)

Respondents who said "no" gave the following reasons:

- (i) Three respondents indicated that people are basically the same; it's not about a person's culture or language, but about one's personality as well.(1/5 Afrikaans), (2/17 African language)
- (ii) One respondent indicated that people are essentially the same, but differ individually. (Afrikaans)
- (iii) One respondent said it depends on the attitudes of individuals.(Afrikaans)
- (iv) One respondent indicated that everything is modernized these days. (African language)

Correlation between question 8 and 9 is not as was expected because one would assume that those who find that they leave different kinds of messages to people from different cultural groups, would also find that people of different cultural groups have different approaches to the use of telephone answering machines. Respondents deny explicitly cultural differences even in general communicative style.

Question 10 enquires whether a message left on a telephone answering machine can have a different impact to that of a message conveyed when the recipient is there to receive a call.

Question 10 reads as follows:

Do you think a message left on a telephone answering machine can have a different impact to that of a message conveyed when the recipient is actually there to receive the call? If yes why, if not why not?

Answers to question 10 were the following:

- Seventeen respondents said "yes".(4/5 Afrikaans), (13/ 17
- Five respondents said "no". (1/5 Afrikaans), (4/17 African language)

Respondents who said "yes" gave the following reasons:

- (i) Five respondents indicated that when the recipient is there, there can be more clarity and less possibilities of misunderstanding. (1/5 Afrikaans),(4/17 African language)
- (ii) One respondent indicated that with a telephone answering machine a person has to be brief; there are time constraints, and no opportunities to explain anything that is unclear.(Afrikaans)
- (iii) One respondent indicated that the message can reach people in a distorted manner if a telephone answering machine is used.(African language)
- (iv) One respondent indicated that with a face to face conversation you can comfort, support or convince the person. (African language)
- (v) One respondent indicated that people have different ways of putting things.(African language)
- (vi) Three respondents indicated that there are no facial expressions and gestures, and it is very impersonal. They also indicated that clearer messages can be conveyed in person. (1/5 Afrikaans), (2/17 African language)
- (vii) One respondent indicated that messages would not get the required attention in comparison to when the recipient is there.(African language)
- (viii) Two respondents indicated that with answering machines you do the talking, but in person it becomes a two way communication.(1/5 Afrikaans), (1/17 African language)
- (ix) One respondent indicated that the environment between the two is different, thus evoking different stimuli and different reaction to these stimuli.(African language)

Question 10 can be tied to question 5 in the sense that respondents who said "no" in question 5 are expected to say "yes" in question 10. This was largely the case in that where 17 said "no" to question 5, 20 said "yes" to question 10

Questions 11 enquires whether respondents think leaving a message is a demanding task.

Question 11 read as follows:

Do you take leaving a message as a demanding task? Please explain your answer.

Answers to question 11 were the following:

- Eight respondents said "yes". (2/5 Afrikaans), (6/17 African language)
- Fourteen respondents said "no". (3/5 Afrikaans), (11/17 African language)

Respondents who said "yes" gave the following reasons:

- (i) One respondent indicated that if there is no answer when she makes a call and she gets a telephone answering machine, she forgets easily what she wants to say, and it is difficult to formulate a new message under pressure. (African language)
- (ii) Another respondent indicated that it becomes a task because one has to be brief and finding words to leave a clear message is difficult. (Afrikaans)
- (iii) A third respondent indicated that messages must be short and straight to the point. This differs from a conversation and so the task becomes more difficult. (African language)
- (iv) Related to (iii) another respondent indicated that often one has to call back despite having left the messages. (African language)
- (v) One respondent indicated that he/she doubts whether the call will be returned. (African language)

Respondents, who said "no" gave the following reasons:

- (i) Two respondents indicated that it helps the receiver to know who called and why. (African language)
- (ii) Another respondent indicated that if you had a conversation you would be saying more than just the message. (African language)

- (vi) Two more respondents indicated that a caller has an easy task in simply leaving a message that is short and simple. (Afrikaans)
- (vii) Yet another indicated that leaving a message in every speech activity is a general thing, and is thus not difficult. (African language)
- (viii) One said although it is an easy task, speaking to someone in person may be preferable. It is then disappointing to reach a machine. (African language)

Question 12 enquires as to whether people of the same culture that grew up in the same place share similar views about telephone answering machines or whether it is an individual feeling.

Question 12 reads as follows:

Do you think that people of the same culture that grew up in the same place share similar views about telephone answering machines or is it an individual feeling?

Answers to question 12 were the following:

- Eighteen respondents said "no". (3/5 Afrikaans), (15/17 African language)
- Two respondents said "yes". (1/5 Afrikaans), (1/17 African language)
- One respondent said "not sure". (African language)
- One respondent said "both". (Afrikaans)

The overwhelming response is that attitudes to telephone answering machine are not linked to culture in a narrow sense.

Question 13 enquires about what the respondents do not like about answering machines.

Question 13 reads as follows:

What do you dislike most about telephone answering machines?

Answers to question 13 were the following:

- (i) Seven respondents indicated that it is an impersonal way of communicating. (4/5 Afrikaans), (3/17 African language)

- (ii) Six respondents indicated that a caller does not get an immediate answer, and there is uncertainty about when the matters they called to discuss will be resolved.(African language)
- (iii) One respondent indicated that confidential or private messages can be retrieved by an unintended person. (African language)
- (iv) One respondent indicated that a caller who expects to talk to a person can be put off by a recorded response.(African language)
- (v) Three respondents indicated that their problem is with music played before an answer which takes time and may cost more. This can be frustrating for the caller.(African language)
- (vi) Three respondents indicated that telephone answering machine is, in fact, sometimes handy. (African language)

Question 14 enquires as to whether respondents take answering machines as a necessary and indispensable resource in modern life.

Question 14 read as follows:

Do you regard telephone answering machines as a necessary and virtually indispensable resource in modern life?

Answers to question 14 were the following:

- Fifteen respondents said "yes".(4/5 Afrikaans),(11/17 African language)
- Seven respondents said "no".(1/5 Afrikaans), (6/17 African language)

Two thirds of the participants find telephone answering machines indispensable and necessary, whereas one third does not find it necessary and indispensable.

Respondents who said "yes" gave the following reasons:

- (i) Two respondents indicated that it is indispensable for business but they could leave work without it. (1/5) Afrikaans(1/17 African language)
- (ii) Another respondent indicated that it is useful in some areas and thus at least partially indispensable.(African language)
- (iii) Four respondents indicated that it is useful.(2/5 Afrikaans)

Generally it aids effective communication and makes life easier.

Respondents who said "no" gave the following reasons:

- (i) It is annoying to call a person and be answered by a machine.(African language)
- (ii) There are other preferable alternatives like voicemail on mobile phones which they believe makes answering machines redundant.(1/5 Afrikaans), (1/17 African language)

Question 15 enquires about what respondents do when they reach an answering machine when they are calling a friend or family member.

Question 15 read as follows:

When you are phoning a friend or close family member and find an answering machine what do you do? Hang up or leave a message? Why?

Answers to question 15 were the following:

- Three respondents said that they would hang up. (African language)
- Twelve respondents said that they would leave a message.(4/5 Afrikaans),(7/17 African language)
- Six respondents said it would depend on the circumstances.(1/5 Afrikaans),(5/17 African language)

Respondents who said they would hang up gave the following reasons:

- (i) One respondent indicated that there is no use leaving a message for someone who will not return her call.(African language)
- (ii) One respondent indicated that he would want to speak to them personally.(African language)
- (iii) One respondent said that she would try again later herself, rather than put the responsibility on the recipient.(African language)

Some of the respondents who said that they would leave a message gave the following reasons:

- (i) Two respondents indicated that the recipient would then be able to return their calls.(African language)

- (ii) Two respondents indicated that the recipient would know that the caller is trying to get in touch. (Afrikaans)
- (iii) One respondent indicated that she would leave a message only if the matter is not too confidential.(African language)

Respondents who said that it depends gave the following reasons:

- (i) Four respondents indicated that it depends on the reason and the importance of the call.(1/5 Afrikaans), (3/17 African language)

This indicates no prejudice against the occasional use of telephone answering machines.

Question 16 enquires about what the respondents would do when they reach an answering machine when they are calling a retailer or when they are making a business call.

Question 16 reads as follows:

When you are phoning a retailer (e.g. for a price list) and find an answering machine, what do you do? Hang up or leave a message? Why?

Answers to question 16 were the following:

- Eight respondents said they would hang up.(3/5 Afrikaans),(5/17 African language)
- Eleven respondents said they would leave a message.(2/5 Afrikaans),(9/17 African language)
- Three respondents said it would depend.(African language)

Respondents who said they would hang up gave the following reasons:

- (i) One respondent indicated that she is too impatient to listen to a recording and record her own message.(Afrikaans)
- (ii) One respondent indicated that recipients seldom call back. (African language)
- (iii) Two respondents indicated that they would find another retailer; it is the loss of those who do not answer directly.(African language)

Respondents who said they would leave a message gave the following reasons:

- (i) Two respondents indicated that it is a test for the reliability of the retailer in that if they call back, one would know that they care about the customer.(1/5 Afrikaans),(1/17 African language)
- (ii) Two respondents indicated that they would leave a message so that their calls will be returned.(1/5 Afrikaans), (1/17 African language)
- (iii) One respondent indicated that business attitudes are different to those of ordinary people; they can be counted on to return a call. (African language)

Question 17 enquires about a place in which respondents think that answering machines should be.

Question 17 reads as follows:

Where do you think an answering machine is more needed or useful? In the house or in the office? Why?

Answers to question 17 were the following:

- Two respondents said "at home".(African language)
- Eight respondents said "at the office".(3/5 Afrikaans),(5/17 African language)
- Twelve respondents said "at both places".(2/5 Afrikaans),(10/17 African language)

One of the respondents who said "at home" gave the following reasons:

- (i) "We spend most of our time at work, so we would be there to answer" by which she implies that at work no machine is required.(African language)

Respondents who said "at the office" gave the following reasons:

- (i) Three respondents indicated that answering machines would help to assure that business contracts and clients would not be lost.(2/5 Afrikaans),(1/17 African language)
- (ii) Three respondents indicated that answering machines would help to uphold the image of the institution and perhaps improve business.(African language)

Respondents who said "at both places" gave the following reasons:

- (i) One respondent indicated that he wants the support in every environment, home and work.(African language)

- (ii) Three respondents indicated that sometimes they would be busy but also need information to which they cannot immediately attend.(African language)
- (iii) Two respondents indicated that people cannot be at both places at once.(African language)

Question 18 enquires about whether the responses they get from messages they have left are fast in their reply or not.

Question 18 reads as follows:

Are the responses you get generally fast/prompt enough, or do you find people take messages on answering machine as less urgent?

Answers to question 18 were the following:

- Five respondents said they get prompt responses.(2/5 Afrikaans),(3/5 African language)
- Two respondents said they never check how prompt or not responses are.(African language)
- Eight respondents said they do not get prompt responses.(2/5 Afrikaans),(6/17 African language)
- Seven respondents said it depends on what the call was about.(3/5 Afrikaans),(4/17 African language)

A comment from one respondent was that the messages he leaves are not taken seriously. He finds it amazing that there is no response because the recorded messages mostly say "leave your name and number and we will get back to you".(African language)

Question 19 enquires about whether respondents respond promptly if they find messages on their answering machines.

Question 19 read as follows:

Do you respond promptly to answering machine messages left for you, or do you generally feel it can wait until the time is convenient for you?

Answers to question 19 were the following:

- Nine respondents said they respond immediately.(1/5 Afrikaans),(8/17 African language)
- Eight respondents said they wait for a convenient time to respond (3/5 Afrikaans
- Four respondents said it depends.(1/5 Afrikaans),(3/17 African language)
- One respondent said he does not respond.(African language)

Question 20 enquires whether respondents often ignore messages left on their answering machines.

Question 20 reads as follows:

Do you often ignore messages left on your answering machine?

Answers to question 20 were the following:

- Five respondents said they ignore messages left on their answering machines.(5/17 African language),
- Seventeen respondents said they do not ignore messages left on their answering machines.(5/5 Afrikaans), (12/17 African language)

Question 21 enquires about whether messages on answering machines are treated differently to messages on cellphones.

Question 21 reads as follows:

Do you treat messages on answering machine differently to messages on your cellphone's voice mail? If yes, what is the difference?

Answers to question 21 were the following:

- Twenty respondents said "no" (5/5 Afrikaans),(15/17 African language)
- Two respondents said "yes" (African language)

Respondents who said "yes" gave the following reason:

- (i) One respondent indicated that with an answering machine one does not get spontaneous reply whereas cellphone is more informal.(African language)

Question 22 asks the respondents who said no to question 21 to indicate if they find these two methods similar.

Question 22 reads as follows:

If no, do you find the two methods of leaving and taking messages virtually similar?

Answers to question 22 were the following:

- Twenty one respondents said yes.(5/5 Afrikaans),(16/17 African language)
- One respondent said no.(African language)

4.2.2 Summary of questionnaire findings

This section will show how answers to the different questions give general clues to the perceptions about and uses of telephone answering machines across the various language groups in this project. Our interest is generally in how people from different language communities use such a piece of office equipment, and whether there are regular differences that can be correlated with a more or less communal approach to conversation that puts high emphasis on building and maintaining relationships.

There is a correlation in the responses to questions 1, 2 and 14. If people use answering machines and are willing to purchase one for use in their homes, then it may be concluded that it is taken as an indispensable resource. The majority of the participants do not use an answering machine at home or at work but most, although it is still not the majority, say they would like to own one. Two thirds of the respondents clearly indicated that the telephone answering machine is an indispensable resource in modern life. The responses to these three questions overall show a positive attitude to telephone answering machines.

Questions 15 and 16 are interested in the way people respond to the use of answering machines in business calls versus personal calls. These questions are linked to question 17 because they all check for a correlation between perceptions and possible use of a telephone answering machine at home and at work. One would expect that those with good attitudes to the use of answering machines for business purposes would like to have one in their offices, whereas those with good attitudes to the use of answering machines for, for example, family calls would like to have one in their homes. In fact, the majority of the respondents indicated that they would have liked to have the facility both at home and at work.

Question 18, 19 and 20 correlate with one another because they relate prompt replies (or lack thereof) to whether people pay proper attention to the messages left on their answering machines. Relating this to questions 15 to 17, it seems that

overall there are those who won't leave a message on a family member's machine because he/she won't reply; similarly they think that people in business return calls better than family members. A few who indicated that they would not leave a message for a businessman said that it was the businessman's duty to be at the phone or directly contactable, and to respond to telephone calls promptly. These respondents preferred to leave a message when calling a family member or friend. The majority indicated that in their experience they had received prompt answers and they gave prompt replies. This section gives no indication of marked differences that can be termed culture or language specific.

Questions 3, 3a, 7 and 11 correlate with one another. The majority (almost two thirds) would leave a message, whereas one third would rather hang up. Of those who would hang up, the majority are speakers of indigenous African languages. Thus it seems that people who are reluctant to leave a message are more likely to be of African language background.

The majority, when they do leave a message, would leave their names, numbers and a message. Question 7 is a valuable question because it helps to emphasize that, overall, respondents do not avoid leaving a message on an answering machine. There is no indication that respondents from a more community-focused cultural or language group would deal differently with an answering machine compared to the more individualist communities. This emphasis is supported by question 11 because it reveals that the attitudes of respondents generally are that leaving a message is not a demanding task. There are clear differences in manners of conveying information among various speakers. First, there are those who will convey their names and numbers in order to be called back, second there are those who do not leave their names and numbers for possibly unknown people's use, and third there are those who wouldn't have any problem with leaving their names, numbers as well as an extensive message. The differences represented by these three kinds of responses do not correlate specifically with any particular language group.

Although it seems that attitudes to answering machines do not differ significantly across language groups, there are some notable differences in the ways in which the participants use answering machines. In some cultural groups, like Venda, any message given in direct communication should be formal as well as personal in order to show respect, and understandably there is concern that an answering

machine cannot show such respect. Some believe that language plays a role because if one is leaving a message to a speaker of a different language, one would use mostly English which means that speakers of other South African languages have to compromise. Others believe that rules of address are difficult to maintain thus meaning that different relationships, different titles, and (to a certain extent) professionalism should play a role, but in leaving a message one is not certain who the addressee exactly is and thus one runs the risk of inadvertently offending the hearer. One African respondent believed (rather prejudicially) that there is no use in leaving a message for an African because your call will not be returned. Some strongly believe that it is natural for one to relate differently to people of different cultures and languages, and the answering machine does not facilitate this.

Questions 5 and 10 correlate with one another in the sense that respondents who would not leave a distressing message on an answering machine also indicated that messages left on an answering machine are done differently to when the recipient would be there to answer a call directly. From their comments it is clear that many, in fact, prefer direct conversation with the person to indirect conversation with a machine. Question 13 can be read alongside these responses because, even when the answering machine is regarded as an indispensable resource, there still are some things which respondents do not like about it. The majority of the respondents are annoyed most of all by the fact that it is not personal enough, and also by the delay of responses.

The correlation between question 8 and 9 is not as was expected. One would have assumed that those who indicated that they leave different kinds of messages for people from different cultural groups, would also find that people of different cultural groups have different approaches to the use of telephone answering machines. This, according to the overall responses, is not the case. Respondents who confirmed that cultural differences influence how they leave a message denied a general belief in cultural difference with regard to communicative style. The overall response to question 12, again, indicates overwhelmingly that attitudes to telephone answering machines are not linked to culture in a narrow sense. Individual feelings appear to determine more than those of cultural community. Almost two-thirds of the respondents believe that people of different languages and cultures have different approaches towards the use of telephone answering machines.

When participants reported what they dislike most about answering machines, each response was coded for the two functions of communication suggested by Miyamoto and Schwarz (2006:544), namely informational and relational communication. Several informational aspects of messages were listed, and yet some functions, such as informing the recipient, were assessed as negative features of answering machines. Three important informational functions are seen as obstacles to communication, namely (i) the caller is kept waiting without getting a direct or prompt response, (ii) the machine often has a long recorded message that is costly to the caller, and (iii) confidential messages can be retrieved by an unintended recipient. However, when asked about the disadvantages, the majority of respondents did not refer to informational functions; the most widely listed disadvantage was on a relational level where respondents stated that the machine is impersonal. Thus it seems that respondents found answering machines to present them with difficulties on the informational as well as relational level of communication. As such, these aspects partly give answers to why some participants do not like answering machines even for short and merely informational functions.

4.2.3 Detailed analysis of recordings

As previously mentioned, Miyamoto and Schwarz (2006:554) state that "there are two key functions of communication, namely to convey information and to maintain relationships". This study was designed to test whether either one or both of these functions are realized in the use of telephone answering machines among speakers of South African languages.

Conveying information

According to Miyamoto and Schwarz (2006:542) people with independent self-construals tend to place more emphasis on outcomes-orientated aspects of the communication, such as clarity and effectiveness. People with interdependent self-construals tend to place more emphasis on other-orientated aspects of the communication, such as the avoidance of hurting the hearer's feelings and minimizing imposition. According to Pridham (2001:5) voiced pauses like "er" or "um" indicate hesitation or thinking time. She indicates that openings and closings in telephone conversation signpost the structures of the conversation. Miyamoto and Schwarz (2006:543) suggest that more "ahs" in a telephone machine message imply

that leaving the message was a more difficult task than when there are less voiced pauses.

All participants of all groups, with Afrikaans leading, followed by Setswana, isiXhosa then Tshivenda made more "ahs" when leaving a message for the professor than when leaving one for the colleague. This happened despite the fact that before participants called the professor and the colleague, they were informed that there was no one in the office and would thus have to leave a message on the answering machine. They still showed a considerable number of voiced pauses when calling the professor. The reason why it was a difficult task for them is not clear. It might have been difficult because they wanted to send a perfect message to a highly ranked person or they were not comfortable talking to a strange and removed hearer on an answering machine. It implied that those groups were concerned about how the message they were leaving would come across. In the terms set by Miyamoto and Schwarz (2006) all speakers leaving a message for the professor were apparently careful to construct the message in appropriate terms. This kind of communication testifies to interdependent self-construals. The use of less voiced pauses when talking to a colleague indicates that the participants were more concerned with leaving the message. This kind of communication testifies to independent self-construals. Generally, the participants conveyed the contents of the message appropriately, even with varying degrees of hesitance.

Maintaining relationships

According to Pridham (2001:4) the close relationship between the speakers is also reflected in the non standard language they use. On the issue of titles, McLaren (1998:10) maintains that using formal titles is more important in certain contexts such as on cards, at meetings, in course outlines, and even using the telephone. Contrary to expectation, the isiXhosa, Tshivenda and Setswana participants were very polite but still used informal greetings and abbreviated forms of address, such as "Prof" for "professor" and "Hi" rather than "Hello". With Ms Xaba, the message was even more informal; respondents were either giving just a blunt message with no opening, or dipped phrases. The caller seemed to befriend himself or herself with the professor even though the message was for a total stranger.

Afrikaans participants used more honorific language, such as "Sir", "Professor" and "good morning" (unlike "hello", "prof", and "hi" as used by other groups) when calling the professor than when calling the colleague. Some Afrikaans speakers did not identify themselves; they were reluctant to give names and did not identify the person they were calling, which can imply that they were not overly concerned about maintaining a relationship. The style of language use of the Afrikaans group implies respect. Afrikaans participants used more words than any other group and spent more time on the messages when calling the professor than when calling the colleague. This increase in number of words legitimated their request. According to Miyamoto and Schwarz (2006:541) speakers may spontaneously add reasons to legitimate their requests when they care about the receiver's feelings. Kim (1993) indicates "speakers intent on avoiding hurting the hearer's feelings and minimizing imposition will elaborate more when they are leaving a message". For example, this is illustrated by one message left by an L1 speaker of Afrikaans to the professor which was as follows:

"Good morning to you sir e: h my name is AG my number is 427 8362 hh I am phoning on behalf of Evelinah Mathoho (.) she have an appointment with professor Smith(.) which she cannot keep due to difficulties at work(.) however she will be able to (..) she will be able to come and see you ne:xt Tuesday but not tomorrow as was agreed(..) I hope you will be able to fit into her Programme? (.) thank you very much (.) have a good day <goodbye>" .

There are specific differences between the ways in which the participants left their respective messages. Differences among Tshivenda, isiXhosa, and Setswana are not significant compared to those between each of these groups and Afrikaans. Tshivenda, isiXhosa and Setswana put more effort into maintaining a convivial, social relationship between themselves and the professor than into maintaining an easy relationship with the colleague. Afrikaans participants, on the other hand, built a greater professional relationship between themselves and the professor than with the colleague. All groups maintained a certain kind of relationship to a certain degree, and, according to Kim (1993) cited in Miyamoto and Schwarz (2006:541), they fall under interdependent construals.

Politeness and relation building

Politeness is the expression of the speaker's intention to mitigate the face threats carried by certain face threatening acts toward another. Negative politeness rests on respecting one another's privacy, while positive politeness rests on letting people know that we feel comfortable around them. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), "positive politeness was defined as phrases or sentences that implied closeness or attempted to bring about closeness (e.g. small talk, jokes and informal greetings). Negative politeness was defined as phrases or sentences that indicate the requester's awareness of the imposition or attempts to minimize the imposition (e.g. asking for forgiveness, indicating reluctance, and giving reasons for the request)". Based on politeness theory, Tshivenda, Setswana and isiXhosa participants showed more positive politeness to the professor than to the colleague. They projected themselves to be closer to the professor than to the colleague. For example:

"Hello Prof my name is Mashudu I am calling on behalf of Evelinah Mathoho... thank you bye bye". And "Hi Professor Smith (.) My name is Sfiso(.) I am phoning on behalf of Evelinah... thank you bye".

The Afrikaans group showed less signs of positive politeness but some signs of negative politeness. They perceived their professor to have marginally more power over them than the colleague. For example:

"Hello Professor Smith this is e: Lucy speaking... thank you bye bye". And "Good afternoon my name is Gladys Simons it is Monday afternoon 12:14 I have a message for Professor Smith from Evelinah Mathoho ... If Professor Smith could just call me back at 021, 404 6362 thank you very much".

Looking at definitions of politeness and also studying transcriptions, it is clear that Afrikaans speakers emphasized some negative politeness and most participants of other groups emphasized positive politeness. From this perspective it can mean that Tshivenda, isiXhosa and Setswana groups were concerned about conveying the messages and maintaining social relationships whereas the Afrikaans group was concerned about conveying the message and maintaining professional relationship.

Opening and closing

For quite a long time, face-to-face conversation was the only way of speech communication but with the invention of telephone, a second form of communication was introduced. Since telephone conversation cannot simply start or finish with a silence while callers are communicating or leaving a message and because speakers cannot see each other, they have to introduce themselves at the start of the conversation and say goodbye at the end of the conversation. Finegan (1989:345) states that "in American telephone conversation, openings sequences serve primarily to identify speakers and to hook the interlocutor's attention. Openings and closures are, therefore, to be more noticeably marked". Most participants in this study open according to the convention of identifying themselves, providing their numbers, they state on whose behalf they are calling, give the reason for the call and sometimes extend (additional reasons). They addressed the recipient directly, gave thanks in the greeting and closing. For example:

1. "Good day Professor Smith ... thank you bye"
2. "Good morning my name is Rooi I am phoning on behalf of Evelinah Mathoho, she won't be able to see Professor Smith tomorrow as planned but she can come in on next Tuesday please convey the message to Professor Smith, thank you"; and "good day you are speaking to Pumla Evelinah Mathoho has an appointment with a colleague which she cannot keep due to difficulties at work, she will be able to come and see the colleague next Tuesday but not tomorrow as was agreed, thank you bye".

In opening some participants used informal greetings like "hi", did not give overt greetings to (e.g). Ms Xaba or did not address the recipient. For example:

"hi I'm just e:h wanting to leave a message that e:h (.) Evelinah Mathoho cannot keep her appointment = but she wi:ll get back to you about it= thank you= bye"

The Tshivenda participants expressed their greetings, used the abbreviation "Prof" instead of "professor", addressed the recipient directly, gave thanks, closed and gave a reason for the call, however they did not address Ms Xaba by name. The

Setswana participants used informal greetings, identified themselves, provided their numbers and conveyed the messages. They did not address Ms Xaba by name and they did not mention the person who sent them. Most of the Afrikaans participants identified themselves and provided their numbers, identified the person they were calling on behalf of, gave the reason for the call, extended their messages and made use of a good closing. Few of them did not address the recipient directly and did not close properly while calling Ms Xaba. The IsiXhosa participants used informal greetings as well as informal titles, e.g. 'Prof' for 'Professor'. They gave their identities but without a number, they mentioned the person on whose behalf they were calling, the reason for the call, addressed the recipient directly, gave thanks and closed. Few of them did not give greetings to Ms Xaba and did not address her by name and also did not mention the person who asked them to phone (cf. Addendum B: transcriptions).

The number of voiced pauses and silent pauses

According to Pridham (2001:5) "sounds such as 'er' or 'eh' are called *voiced pauses*, which indicate hesitation or thinking time". Making a similar point, Miyamoto and Schwarz (2006: 543) say that more 'ahs' in a message on an answering machine imply that leaving a message was a more difficult task. Afrikaans participants in this research had more "ahs" for Professor Smith and less for Ms Xaba. They also had more silent pauses for Professor Smith and less for Ms Xaba. Tshivenda participants had more "ahs" for Professor Smith and less for Ms Xaba, less silent pauses for Professor Smith and more for Ms Xaba. Setswana participants had more "uhs" for Professor Smith and less for Ms Xaba. IsiXhosa participants had more "ahs" for Professor Smith and less for Ms Xaba and less pauses for Professor Smith and more for Ms Xaba. (cf. Addendum B: transcriptions).

For example: Hello professor Smith this is e: Lucy speaking hh I am phoning on behalf of Ms Mathoho (.) e:h she unfortunately cannot meet with you tomorrow as you have arranged pre previously e:h but she can (.) will see you next Tuesday e::h could you please confirm with her during the course of this week ... bye

Good day you are speaking to pumla (.) e:h Evelinah Mathoho has an appointment with a colleague which she cannot keep due to difficulties at work (.) she will be able to come and see the colleague next Tuesday but not tomorrow as was agreed (.) thank you bye.

This means that all participants regardless of the language group had more difficulties when leaving a message for Professor Smith than for Ms Xaba.

Length of message

According to Miyamoto and Schwarz (2006) "speakers may spontaneously add reasons to legitimate their requests when they are concerned about the impression or feelings of the receiver". IsiXhosa participants, especially when using their mother tongue, used more words and spent more time on the message than when they were using English.

Ndingu Sfiso Khumalo (.) I-telephone number yam (.) ngu- 021, 419 2227 (.) ndiyalezwe (.) nguNkosazana Evelinah Mathoho othe mandimcelele uxolo ngokuba (engakwazanga) akozukwazi ukuba aphumelele (.) kwisivumelwano sentlangano ebenimele ukuba nidibane kunye ngoLwesibini. Uthi uza kukwazi ukuphumelela kusuku olulandelayo njengoko benivumelene (.) Ndingavuya kakhulu ukuba lo myalezo ungafikelela ezandleni ezishushu (..) enkosi (.) Uyonwabele imini yakho (.) Bye-bye.

English translation follows:

I am Sfiso Khumalo, my telephone number is 021 404 25 58. I have been asked by Ms Evelinah Mathoho, who said I should apologize on her behalf because she won't be able to attend the meeting to which you invited her that is supposed to take place on Tuesday. She says she will be able to attend the following day as you have agreed. I would be very glad if this message can be given attention. Thank you enjoy your day bye bye

In general, Afrikaans participants used more words when calling the professor than when calling Ms Xaba, which is the opposite finding for the other groups.

For example to prof Smith AG said:

Good morning to you sir e: h my name is AG my number is 427, 83627 hh I am phoning on behalf of evelinah Mathoho (.) she have an appointment with professor smith (.) which she cannot keep due to difficulties at work (.) However she will be able to (...) she will be able to come and see you ne:xt Tuesday but not tomorrow as was agreed(..) I hope you will be able to fit into her programme? (.) Thank you very much (.) have a good day <goodbye> [word count:80]

To Ms Xaba AG said:

Good morning to you mam my name is AG and I am phoning from the number 427, 83627 (.) I am (..) leaving a message on behalf of Evelinah Mathoho she has an appointment with colleague e:h which she cannot keep due to difficulties at work(.) an:d she will only be able to come and see you next week uhm Tu:esday and not tomorrow as was agreed uhm thank you very much enjoy your day (.) <good bye> [word count 73]

4.2.4 Summary of findings from recordings

To all groups, the task of leaving a message was more difficult when leaving a message to the professor compared to leaving it to the colleague. The Afrikaans group of participants encountered more difficulties than the Setswana, isiXhosa and Tshivenda groups. It was not clear why they found it to be more difficult. It is possible that they wanted to convey a good message to the professor (caring about making a good impression in conveying the message), or maybe they were not used to speaking to a machine. This would indicate, in a manner similar to what Miyamoto and Schwarz (2006) found, that they are of a community that cares about maintaining relationships, both in how they articulate their message and in their preference to talk to a person rather than a machine.

The messages recorded of the Tshivenda, isiXhosa and Setswana participants are relatively convivial, while messages of the Afrikaans group are of a more formal kind. The Afrikaans group tried to legitimize their requests, which may imply that they care about the impression they leave on the professor and the colleague. Interestingly, there are no significant differences between the Tshivenda, isiXhosa and Setswana groups in conveying messages on the answering machine. In contrast, there is a significant difference between these three groups and the Afrikaans group. Referring to the distinctions introduced by Kim (1993), in spite of the marked differences, all the participants gave evidence of interdependent self-construal.

The Afrikaans group conveyed negative politeness, as is clear from their formal way of addressing the hearer and their legitimizing the messages. This shows that they did not want to invade the privacy of the professor nor that of the colleague. The Tshivenda, Setswana and isiXhosa groups conveyed positive politeness, with the Tshivenda group leading because they seemed to be more at ease when leaving a message with the professor and less so with the colleague.

Listening to the openings and closings, it can be said that generally messages were conveyed very well. The negative politeness communicated by the Afrikaans participants rests on respecting another's privacy, while the positive politeness of the other participants rests on letting people know that they (the participants) feel comfortable around them (the professor or colleague) (Finegan 1989:349). Relating these findings to the research questions of this thesis, it is notable that there are specific differences in the manner of conveying information and establishing communicative relationships among the participants from various language groups. The Afrikaans group maintains a more formal relationship while the other groups are more convivial in their structuring of the relationship. The Afrikaans participants were the only ones who legitimated their requests which can imply that they were trying to minimize imposition. This group conveyed negative politeness while other groups conveyed positive politeness.

Although there are differences in the way the messages are conveyed by the different groups, it seems that there are no significant differences projected by speakers from all the groups relating to the use of telephone answering machines.

4.3 CORRELATION OF FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES AND RECORDINGS

In this section the findings that came out of the use of two data collection instruments will be correlated by checking how each one answers the research questions of the thesis.

The first question to be addressed is:

- Do first language speakers of different South African languages have different ways of using telephone answering machines? If so, what are the particular differences?

First language speakers of different South African languages are perceived to have different ways of leaving a messages and this leads to an assumption that similar difference will be manifested on a telephone answering machine. The particular assumed differences are that, in some cultures, messages should according to custom be formal and be formal and should be delivered personally in order to show respect. Only one respondent mentioned this in answering the questionnaire. Language plays a role in the ways in which a message is left generally. Leaving a message for someone of a different language to the speaker may indicate that the

caller is uncertain about which language to use. Callers will not use the same forms of address in all cases - different relationships, titles, and aspects of professionalism will be treated differently. As far as returning calls is concerned, Africans are stereotyped as people who cannot return the calls. Of those who said they would rather hang up than speak on the recorder, one third are African. This could lead to the conclusion that people with African language backgrounds are reluctant to leave messages. However, there are no significant differences projected by speakers of different South African languages in terms of using answering machines. The response to question 12 brings a different insight in that the overwhelming response is that attitudes to telephone answering machines are not linked to culture in a narrow sense. Individual feelings prevail over culture.

The second question to be addressed is:

- Are there specific differences in terms of conveying information and establishing a communicative relationship among the various language groups?

From both the recordings and the responses to the questionnaires there are specific differences in terms of how and what kind of information is conveyed among participants from the various language groups. From the findings of the recordings, there are also specific differences in establishing communicative relationships among various language groups. The Afrikaans group maintains a formal relationship while other groups maintain a convivial relationship. Afrikaans was the only group with differences in conveying information; they are the group who legitimize their request which can imply that they were trying to minimize imposition. Respondents explicitly deny cultural differences even in communicative style. The task of leaving a message was difficult when participants were leaving a message for the professor in comparison to leaving a message for the colleague. The Afrikaans group encountered more difficulties than the Setswana, isiXhosa and Tshivenda groups. On the one hand differences between Tshivenda, isiXhosa and Setswana speakers in conveying messages are not significant. For example, all of these would convey more convivial attitudes to the professor than to Ms Xaba, on the answering machine. On the other hand, differences between Afrikaans speakers and those of other South African languages are significant. For example, in speaking to the professor L1 speakers of Afrikaans were equally formal as in speaking to Ms Xaba.

This supports the position of Kim (1993) , that all groups show some degree of interdependent self-construal.

The third question to be addressed is:

- What are the likely reasons for different approaches to the use of telephone answering machines?

Naturally to some extent all people relate differently to others of different cultures and languages.

Reasons presented in this study for different approaches to the use of telephone answering machines include the following: the environment in which the conversation is taking place affects style and content, people's cultural and linguistic backgrounds differ and they do not always know what to anticipate, and the mode of communicating, i.e. direct oral or indirect recorded, affects how one will construct a message.

4.4 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN SOUTH AFRICAN PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES

There is a perception in South Africa which can be said to support Miyamoto and Schwarz's (2006) findings that blacks and whites communicate differently on the telephone. The findings from this research project reveal that people of South Africa leave a message in different ways, but those ways are not basically governed by cultural group in which an individual fall under. Privacy as well as confidentiality is something which is needed among users of telephone answering machines. There was a perception that among Africans, conversations between strangers are not only welcome; it is in fact deemed respectful to enquire how people are (Davids 2005:2). With regard to the issue of maintaining relationships, the Afrikaans group did not show that they were familiar with the concept of 'socializing with strangers; as they tried to maintain as formal a relationship as possible. The other three groups showed that they are used to socializing with strangers, possibly because they are used to it occurring in taxis, buses and trains.

The issue of respect is one of the issues that Africans felt strongly about when leaving a message to an elderly person. It was also projected by some respondents that messages need to be delivered in person in order to show the issue of respect.

From the research it is clear that the way the Afrikaans group and the other three groups show respect is different. In his/her answer to question 5 of the questionnaire one Tshivenda respondent indicated one of the practices pertaining to leaving messages is not allowed; that culturally one is expected to deliver delicate information in person to show respect.

According to the article from the University of Johannesburg, polite behaviour in the eyes of one South African might strike another as disrespectful, depending on their mother-tongue. It further shows that "there are intrinsic differences of politeness between those who speak English/Afrikaans and those conversing in indigenous African languages". In this research the Afrikaans group conveyed negative politeness because of the way they have used formal address and legitimate reasons, which can be said to show that they did not want to invade the privacy of the professor and that of the colleague. The Tshivenda, Setswana and isiXhosa groups conveyed positive politeness, with the Tshivenda group leading because they seem to be most comfortable while leaving a message, more so with the professor and less with the colleague.

Although the findings show that people with African language background are reluctant to leave messages, all participants regardless of language group indicated that they do not prefer to speak to a machine. There are cultural differences and different approaches in terms of using telephone answering machines. All of the respondents do not believe in leaving a distressing message on an answering machine.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study was motivated by Miyamoto and Schwarz's (2006:554) research findings that people from cultural groups emphasising maintenance of relationships find it difficult to use telephone answering machines. The aim in this study has been to check whether this finding is applicable in a South African context. The research question asked whether first language speaker of different South African languages have different ways of using telephone answering machines. The question considers a general assumption that speakers of indigenous South African languages belong to communities that emphasise the maintenance of relationships in a manner similar to what Miyamoto and Schwarz referred to. The study builds on a further assumption that there are cultural differences in attitudes to and uses of messages relayed via answering machines. The study attempted also to ascertain if, for South African users, an answering machine primarily serves more to convey information and less to maintain a relationship.

The hypothesis with which I worked was that there are cultural differences in communicative practices of speakers from different language communities in using telephone answering machines. My sub-hypothesis was that people with African language backgrounds would be more reluctant to leave a message on an answering machine due to the fact that it raises barriers in important communicative practices of maintaining relationships.

The research questions that were asked in order to test the hypothesis were the following:

- Do first language speakers of different South African languages have different ways of using telephone answering machines?
- If so, what are the particular differences?
- Are there specific differences in terms of conveying information and establishing a communicative relationship among the various language groups?

- What are the likely reasons for different approaches to the use of telephone answering machines?

To answer the above questions, I did a literature review to determine what relevant research, besides that of Miyamoto and Schwartz (2006), has been done. This literature provided a framework for collecting data by means of (i) recorded messages on an answering machine, and (ii) information given in the form of answers to a questionnaire by speakers of various South African languages.

5.1 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND TESTING THE HYPOTHESES

To all groups, the task of leaving a message was more difficult when leaving a message for the professor compared to when leaving it for the colleague.

There are groups who concentrated more on building relationships and less on the main purpose of using answering machines 'to convey a message'. All groups maintained a certain kind of relationship (convivial or formal), to a certain degree, with the professor and/or the colleague.

In the South African context, the assumption was that speakers of indigenous South African languages belong to communities that emphasize maintaining relationships in a manner that is similar to that mentioned by Miyamoto and Schwartz (2006). The findings partially confirmed Miyamoto and Schwartz's assumption that individuals will not be comfortable in using an answering machine if they are sensitive about maintaining a relationship.

In the Afrikaans group the task of leaving a message was more difficult, which, according to the above-mentioned assumption, was not expected. The South African indigenous language groups were more comfortable when leaving a message, which was not expected either. Miyamoto and Schwartz's (2006) assumption was only confirmed when the findings showed that the Afrikaans group gave evidence of negative politeness and other indigenous groups gave evidence of positive politeness. It is partially so because the Afrikaans group was expected to concentrate only on conveying a message, but surprisingly they also tried to maintain a formal relationship. They were the only group who tried to legitimize their requests, which can mean that they care about the impression they leave on the

professor and the colleague, and not only on conveying a message as was expected.

It is also partially so because indigenous groups were expected to have some difficulties when using answering machines since they care more about maintaining a relationship than just leaving a message. Surprisingly they seemed to have overcome the fear of answering machines and concentrated more on maintaining relationships when doing the task of conveying a message.

This study's further assumption of cultural differences was also confirmed. There are specific differences between the ways in which participants conveyed their messages on the answering machines, because of the communication function that they were trying to emphasize. It was clearly evident that, although people of the same culture have the same view about answering machines, individual differences have as much influence on a person's machine answering behaviour as culture.

The hypothesis, which I worked with, was found to be true. There are specific differences in conveying information and establishing a communication relationship among various language groups. Some participants tried to maintain a convivial relationship while others tried to maintain a formal relationship. First language speakers of different South African languages have different ways of using telephone answering machines. In this study there was an indication of an opposition between African language speakers on the one hand and speakers of Afrikaans on the other. Across some participants encountered more difficulties when conveying messages while others were comfortable conveying their messages. Participants' responses also corroborated the above argument by indicating that leaving a message for someone who is of a different language or cultural group influences the way people leave a message, and by saying that people of different languages and cultures do not have the same approaches when it comes to the use of answering machines.

In addition, my sub-hypothesis was partially confirmed because the majority of those who indicated that they would hang up if they reached an answering machine were speakers of indigenous African languages. Thus it seems that people who are reluctant to leave a message are more likely to be of African language background.

What this study was also attempting to ascertain was whether South African users believe that the answering machine serves more to convey information and less to

maintain a relationship. Answering machines in South Africa are perceived to serve a greater function in conveying information rather than maintaining relationships. The majority indicated that when they use an answering machine they only want to convey messages and not maintain relationships. They clearly indicated that they prefer to speak to a person rather than to leave a message on a machine.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the hypothesis and sub-hypothesis are proven to be true, the findings are by no means conclusive. Data collection was conducted only on people from the same environment; although they have different cultures and different languages, they possibly belong to the same socioeconomic class. Admittedly, there could be other studies where people from completely different environments and classes could be studied from rural areas or even from outside South Africa. However, as a preliminary study, the present work has been informative. Further studies are required that can complement the findings in this study. For these future studies, I will recommend the following:

A study where the participants will also include people from rural areas, educated and less formally educated and literate and illiterate people in order to ascertain if they will produce the same findings.

A study to elaborate the claim that more "ahs" imply that leaving a message is a difficult task, specifically concentrating on finding out why it is a difficult task. The question remains whether it is because people are not used to answering machines as a modern technology device, or whether people prefer to talk to a person where they can more easily manage the relationship.

I believe that studies such as these listed above will shed further light on the cultural differences or similarities in approaches to telephone answering machines, and on the functions of messages left on such machines.

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ADDENDUM A

QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE USE OF TELEPHONE ANSWERING MACHINES

Please answer all the questions: Note that there is no right or wrong answer.

<p>1. Do you make use of a telephone answering machine at work? If yes, for which purpose do you use it?</p>
<p>1a) Do you make use of a telephone answering machine at home? If yes, for which purposes do you use it?</p>
<p>2. Do you own a telephone answering machine? If no, would you like to own one?</p>
<p>3. When encountering a telephone answering machine message on an outgoing call, do you generally leave a message, or do you directly hang up?</p>
<p>3a) If you leave a message on another person's telephone answering machine, do you just give your name and number for them to call back, or do you give an extensive message stating the full purpose of your call?</p>
<p>4. Have you come across an impolite voice recorded message? If yes, what was the nature of the message?</p>
<p>4a) Have you ever left an impolite message on someone's telephone Answering machine? If yes, what was the nature and purpose of such a message?</p>
<p>5. Would you leave an urgent message in a telephone answering machine such as "I was calling to inform you that the bus your mother was traveling in was involved in an accident, some passengers are hospitalized. Three female passengers' lost their lives". Explain your answer to this question.</p>

6. What kind of messages would you leave on a telephone answering machine?
7. Do you avoid leaving a message on telephone answering machines? If yes, why?
8. Does leaving a message to someone who is of a language or cultural group different from yours influence the way you leave a message? If so, how?
9. Do you believe that people of different languages and cultures have different approaches towards the use of telephone answering machines? Why?
10. Do you think a message left on a telephone answering machine can have different impact to that of a message conveyed when the recipient is actually there to receive the call? If yes, why? If not, why not?
11. Do you take leaving a message as a demanding task? Please explain your answer
12. Do you think that people of the same culture that grew up in the same place share similar views about telephone answering machines or is it an individual feeling?
13. What do you dislike most about telephone answering machines?
14. Do you regard telephone answering machines as a necessary and virtually indispensable resource in modern life?
15. When you are phoning a friend or close family member and find an answering machine what do you do? Hang up or leave a message? Why?
16. When you are phoning a retailer (e.g. for a price list) and find an answering machine what do you do? Hang up or leave a message? Why?

17. Where do you think an answering machine is more needed or useful? In the house or in the office? Why?
18. Are the responses you get generally fast/ prompt enough, or do you find people take message on an answering machine as less urgent?
19. Do you respond promptly to answering machine messages left for you, or do you generally feel it can wait until the time is convenient for you?
20. Do you often ignore messages left on your answering machine?
21. Do you treat messages on an answering machine differently to messages on your cellphone's voicemail? If yes, what is the difference?
22. If no, do you find the two methods of leaving and taking messages virtually similar?

ADDENDUM B

TRANSCRIPTION of RECORDINGS

Afrikaans L1 for professor

Good morning to you sir e: h my name is Archie Groener my number is 403, 2777 hh I am phoning on behalf of Evelinah Mathoho (.) she have an appointment with professor Smith (.) Which she cannot keep due to difficulties at work (.) However she will be able to (..) she will be able to come and see you ne:xt Tuesday but not tomorrow as was agreed(..) I hope you will be able to fit into her programme?(.) thank you very much(.) have a good day <goodbye>

Xhosa L1 for professor

Hh Hi Prof Smith (.) my name is Mteteleli (.)I am phoning on behalf of evelinah Matha Mathoho (.) I would like to relay the message that she will not be able to honour the appointment she had for next week Tuesday (.) but she is going to make some time she didn't make it because of some work commitments(.) so she will be able to attend the appointment next time as it was agreed <I will be better pleased if you can take this message> thank you bye.

Afrikaans L1 fro professor

Hello professor smith this is e: Christian speaking hh I am phoning on behalf of ms Mathoho(.) e:h she unfortunately cannot meet with you tomorrow as you have arranged pre previously e:h but she can (.) will see you next Tuesday e::h could you please confirm with her during the course of this week ? whether or not (there is is) a possibility for you ok thank you <bye bye>

Xhosa L1 for professor

Hello(.) you are speaking to Phumeza Dlukulu e:h Evelinah Mathoho was (have)an appointment with (noise) professor Smith(.) which she cannot keep due to difficulties at work she will be able to come and s:ee professor smith next Tuesday(.) but not tomorrow as was agreed(.) Thank you bye.

Tswana L1 professor

Hi e: h my name is Godfrey Ntshane (.) e: hh I am phoning on behalf of hh (.) Mrs Evelinah Mathoho (.) e: h she had an appointment with professor smith which (.) e: h she was supposed (noise) to have honoured e:h <today> unfortunately (.) e:h she won't be available <today > (.) so she will be available e: next e:h Tuesday e:h thank you (.) my number is 072, 541, 13,08 thank you bye.

Tswana L1 for professor

Hi this is e:h Godfrey Ntshane I am phoning on behalf of Mrs Mathoho (.) o: on the answering machine e:h she requested me(..) to live(.) this message(.) on her(.) behalf thank you

Afrikaans L1 for professor

E:h Good morning my name is Richard (.) I am phoning on behalf of Evelinah Mathoho(.) uhm she won't be able to see professor Smith <tomorrow> as planned but she can come in(.) on next Tuesday please convey the message to professor Smith .<thank you>

Tshivenda L1 professor

Hello Prof uhm my name is Tshililo I am calling on behalf of Evelinah Mathoho in connection with an appointment she had with you unfortunately due to unforeseen circumstances she cannot keep it fo::r tomorrow she will be able to do that ne::xt week Tuesday (.) thank you <bye bye>

Afrikaans L1 professor

Good afternoon my name is Petronella Foster it is Monday afternoon 12: 14 hhh I have a message for professor Smith from Evelinah Mathoho (.)she ha::s (.) an appointment with professor Smith(.) tomorrow but unfortunately due to difficulties at work (.) .hhh she won't be able to keep that appointment(.) she has proposed next Tue::sday e:h for possible meeting time(.) if professor Smith could just call me back(.) at 021, 403 2416 <thank you very much>

Afrikaans L1 professor

E:hh Good afternoon(.) my name is Abubaker Peterson I am calling (be) on behalf of Evelinah Mathoho (.) e;hh she has asked me to live a message for professor smith that she will not be able to make next Tuesday's meeting but that or rather that she will not be able to see him tomorr:ow but that she will rather see him next Tuesday as was agreed e:hh thank you very much <bye bye>.

Afrikaans L1 no1 professor

Good day uhm professor Smith this is just e:hh a message from Evelinah Mathoho that she cannot keep an appointment with you(.) and will get in touch with you about next Tuesday <thank you> (.) bye.

Afrikaans L1 no 1 English 2 colleague

Good morning to you mam my name is Archie Groener and I am phoning from the number 403, 2,777(.) I am (..) leaving a message on behalf of Evelinah Mathoho she has an appointment with colleague e:h which she cannot keep due to difficulties at work (.) an:d she will only be able to come and see you

next week uhm Tu:esday and not tomorrow as was agreed uhm thank you very much you enjoy your day (.) <good bye>

Xhosa L1 English L2 for colleague

Ndingu Mteteleli Mangcunyana (.) i-telephone number yam (.) ngu- 021, 403, 2,558 (.) ndiyalezwe (.) nguNkosazana Evelinah Mathoho othe mandimcelele uxolo ngokuba (engakwazanga) akazi ukwazi ukuba aphumelele (.) kwisivumelwano sentlangano ebenimele ukuba nidibane kunye ngoLwesibini. Uthi uza kukwazi ukuphumelela kusuku olulandelayo njengoko benivumelene(.) Ndingavuya kakhulu ukuba lo myalezo ungafikelela ezandleni ezishushu (.) enkosi (.) Uyonwabele imini yakho (.) Bye-bye.

Afrikaans L1 no 2 English L2 for colleague

Hello this is Christine speaking (.)I am phoning on behalf of Evelinah Mathoho (.) she unfortunately won't be able to meet with you tomorrow as you previously arranged (.) but she would like to reschedule for next Tuesday (.) e:h could you please confirm with her during the course of the week whether or not there is a possibility for you(.) ok thank you bye bye

Xhosa L1 English L2 for colleague

Good day you are speaking to Phumeza (.) e:h Evelinah Mathoho has an appointment with a colleague which she cannot keep due to difficulties at work (.) she will be able to come and see the colleague next Tuesday but not tomorrow as was agreed (.) thank you bye.

Tswana L2 English L2 for colleague

Hi this is Godfrey Ntshane e:h I am phoning on behalf of Mrs Evelinah Mathoho (.) e:hh >she has< an appointment with a colleague which was ((background noise)) supposed to be honoured today =but due to the difficulties sh:e (.) experiencing at work (.) she will be able to come and see the colleague next Tuesday (.) e:hh i e:hh but not tomorrow e:hh as it was agreed between the two (.) e:hh I thank you(.) my name is Godfrey Ntshane (zer) my telephone number is o72 341, 1308 thank you (.) <bye>

Afrikaans L1 no 3 English L2 for colleague

Ah Good morning my name is Richard (.)I am phoning (on bel) on behalf of Evelinah Mathoho (.)and she won't be able to come (.)tomorrow (?) but she can come next Tuesday =she asked me to convey this message <thank you very much>

Tshivenda L1 English L2

Hello my name is Tshililo Nyathela (.) I am calling on behalf of Mrs Mathoho amh unfortunately due to unforeseen circumstances she cannot keep the appointment (.) she had with you (.) amh therefore sh:e (.) will be available next week Tuesday. >Thank you so much < (for) for your attention <bye-bye>

Afrikaans L1 no 5 English L2 for colleague

Good afternoon (.) my name is Petronella Foster it is now 12: 16 on Monday afternoon (.) hh I am phoning on behalf of evelinah Mathoho >she has <an (appointment) (ms with) ms xaba tomorrow afternoon but due to difficulties at work she won't be able to keep that (.)if(.) it would be possible for her to shift that to Tuesday she has proposed that as an alternative date(.) if(.) this message (could be) could be returned e:h my phone number is 021, 403, 24,16 =<thank you>

Afrikaans L 1 no 4 for colleague

Good afternoon my name is abubaker Peterson I am calling on behalf of Evelinah Mathoho (.) e:h >she had< an appointment with a colleague which unfortunately she cannot keep due to some (difficulties)she is experiencing at work(.) and she has informed that she will be able to come and see the colleague next Tuesday but not tomorrow as was previously agreed e:h thank you very much (.)< bye-bye>

Afrikaans L1 no5 for colleague

Hi I'm just e:h wanting to leave a message that e:h (.)Evelinah Mathoho cannot keep her appointment= but she wi:ll get back to you about it=thank you = bye.