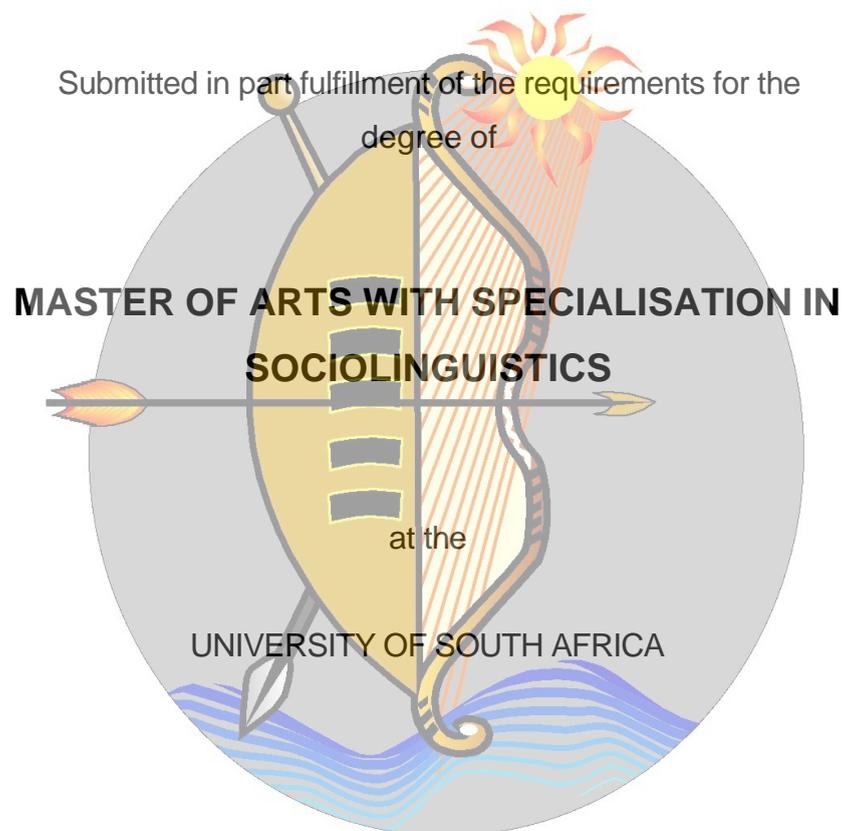


**AN INVESTIGATION INTO CULTURAL BARRIERS IN
INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN BLACKS
AND INIDANS AT DURBAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

by

THABISILE DLOMO



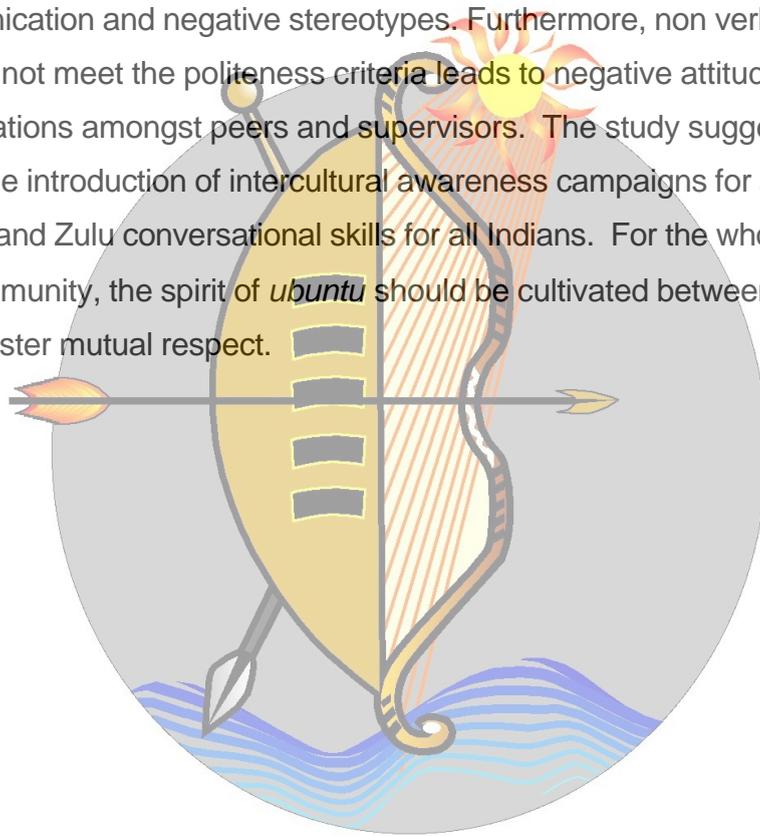
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NOVEMBER 2003

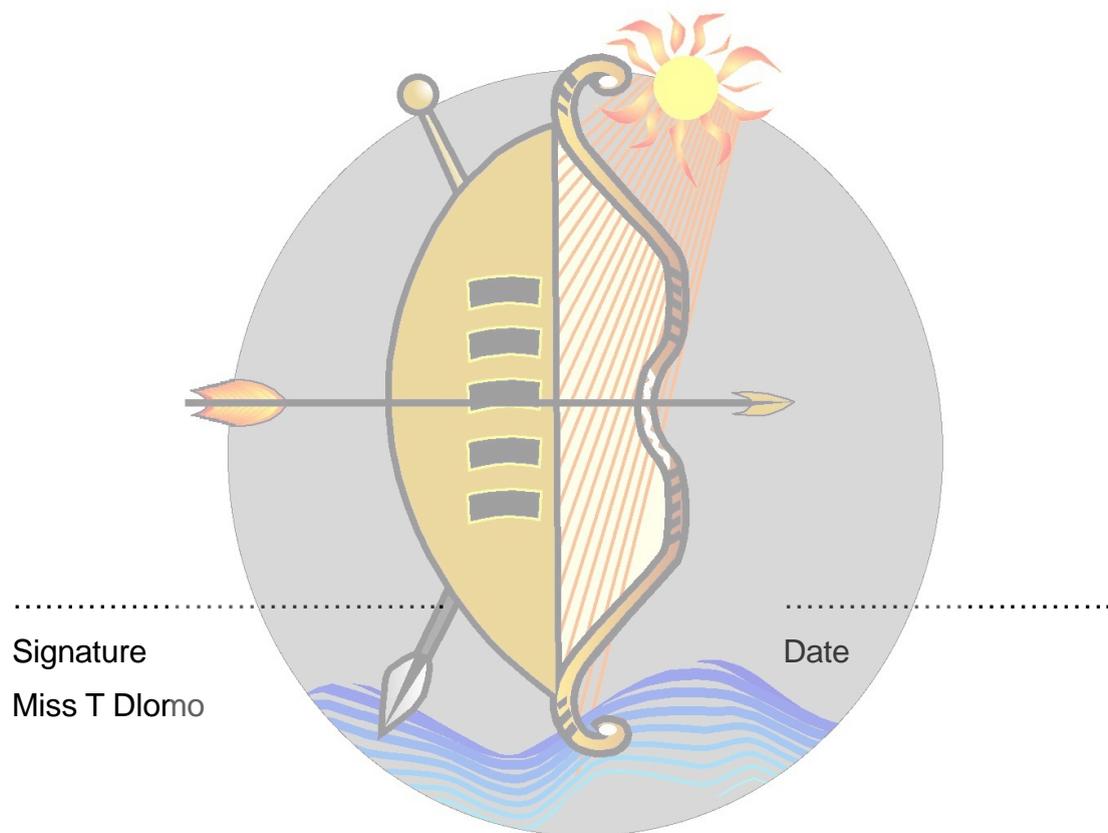
SUMMARY

This study investigates language varieties, non-verbal behaviour and language attitudes as cultural barriers which inhibit successful communication between Blacks and Indians at Durban Institute of Technology. The investigation reveals that Indians and Blacks often misunderstand each other. Sometimes these groups feel misunderstood because they use different varieties of English. To compensate for these differences, participants use non-verbal strategies. However, non-verbal behaviour is culturally determined and people tend to transfer it to intercultural situations. One finds that this transfer leads to miscommunication and negative stereotypes. Furthermore, non verbal behaviour which does not meet the politeness criteria leads to negative attitudes and strained relations amongst peers and supervisors. The study suggests these solutions: the introduction of intercultural awareness campaigns for all employees and Zulu conversational skills for all Indians. For the whole South African community, the spirit of *ubuntu* should be cultivated between all racial groups to foster mutual respect.



DECLARATION

I declare that **An investigation into Cultural Barriers in intercultural communication between Blacks and Indians at Durban Institute of Technology** is my own work and that all sources that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



ACKNOWLEDEMENTS

I would like to thank Lord Jesus Christ for giving me strength to complete this project. Without His guidance and the blessing of life I would not have been able to complete my studies.

My family (my mother Sibongile, my father Pheza, my siblings, Phumelela, Sihle, Siyabonga, Andile and Samkelisiwe) has been the source of inspiration and unconditional love and I thank them for their support. I would not have asked for a better family.

My thanks also go out to my supervisor and co-supervisor, Dr Mulaudzi and Mrs Jordaan for their guidance and support throughout the process of writing this dissertation.

The following people have also been instrumental in the completion of this dissertation and my thanks also go out to them. They are:

Shirley Moon - editor and proofreader

Nozipho Majola - the subject librarian for the Faculty of Arts at DIT

My friends who have been with me through thick and thin

Hlengiwe Sibisi (for your support and prayers when I felt like giving up),

Lungelwa Mfazwe (for your encouraging words and always providing a shoulder to cry on when I felt frustrated);

Nkosana Kgasi (for providing an objective opinion and coming up with constructive suggestions);

Sibusiso Sithole (for believing that I can accomplish whatever I set my mind on);

Landela Mahlati, Doe Ncube, Lolo Dhlomo, Muhle Sibisi, Dr Sylvia Zulu and my colleagues at the A.I.M.S. office for your encouragement and support.

KEY WORDS

1. Barrier

2. Communication
3. Culture
4. Ethnocentrism
5. Hindu culture
6. Intercultural communication
7. Language attitude
8. Language variety
9. Miscommunication
10. Misinterpretation
11. Muslim culture
12. Non-verbal behaviour
13. Stereotypes
14. Zulu Culture
15. Xhosa culture

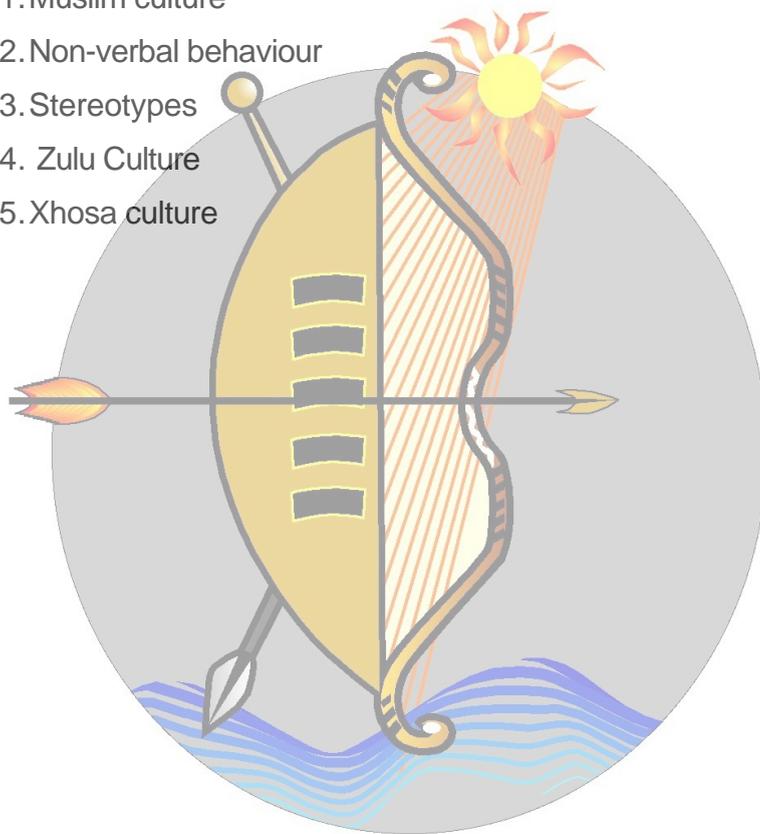


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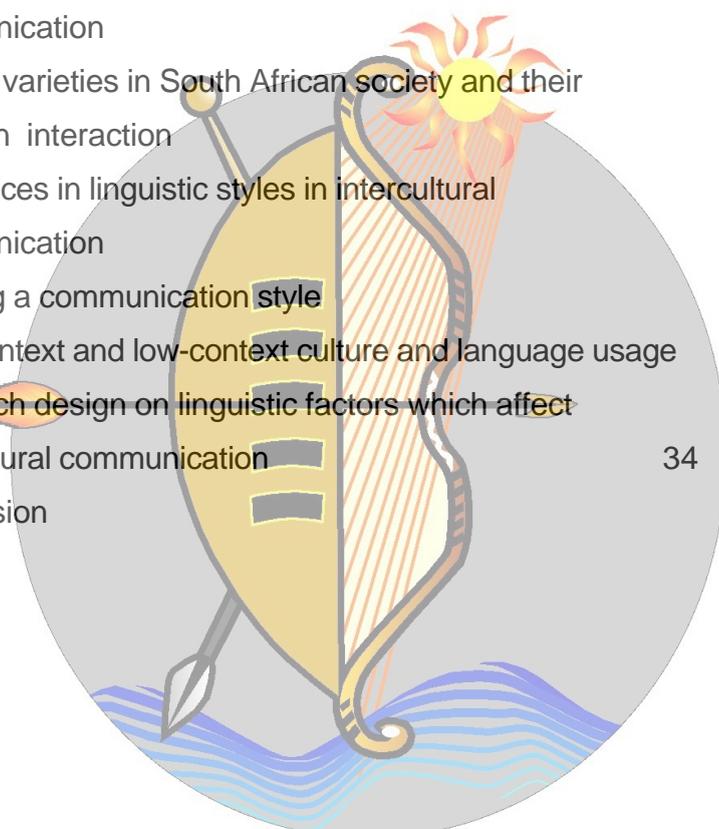


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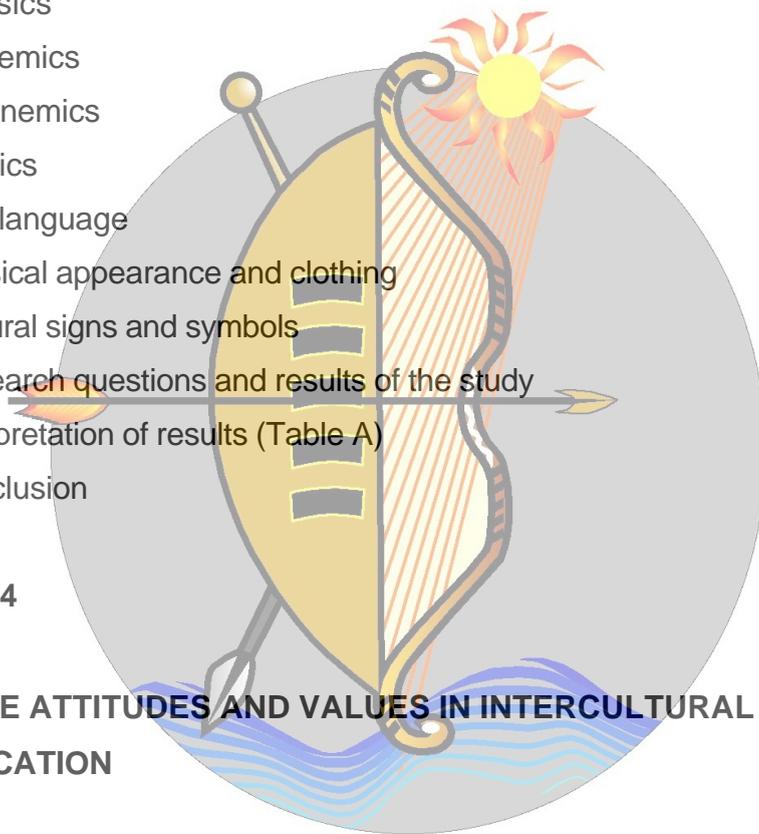
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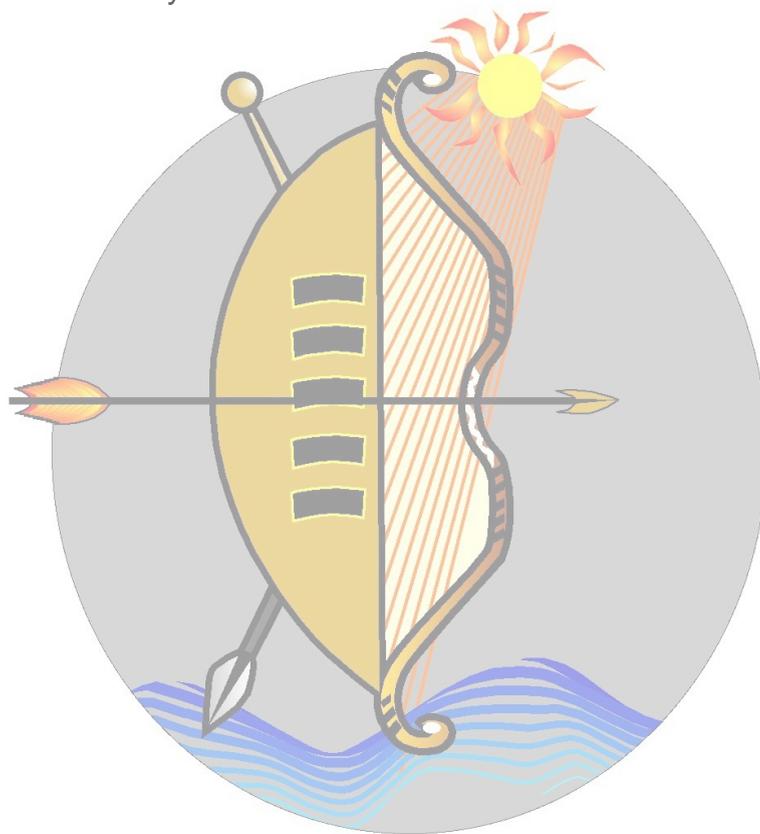
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREAMBLE

Intercultural communication studies in South Africa have been rapidly gaining popularity since 1994. Scholars like K. Chick (1985), E. de Kadt (1992), W.L. Kruger (1990) and L. Parry (1993 and 2000) have investigated a number of intercultural scenarios involving Blacks and Whites of different social and economic positions. Such an increase can be attributed to the need for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence of different racial and cultural groups, and an increasing recognition of the importance of multiculturalism and multilingualism in South Africa. The new era in South Africa calls for all racial groups to live in harmony and work together to build a country that is economically, politically, socially and technologically viable and sustainable.

Studies like these are especially important in the work environment where people from various cultural backgrounds interact on a daily basis. It is of crucial importance that people from different cultural environments appreciate and tolerate differences pertaining to language varieties, non-verbal behaviour, attitudes, values, customs and worldviews. If such tolerance is not achieved, there is likely to be intercultural communication failure and asynchrony of interaction. Cultural synergy and harmonious coexistence between various cultural groups makes working together possible and it is vital in order to create a more prosperous country for all. The government is also trying its level best to make sure that all racial and cultural groups are respected and protected from all kinds of abuse. It is for these reasons that a

study of this nature, which aims at ironing out differences that may have been a cause of problems in the past is necessary.

1.2 PURPOSE AND EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THE STUDY

As mentioned in the preamble, a large proportion of the research conducted on intercultural communication done by South African scholars involves Black and White communication problems. There seems to be a knowledge gap in terms of communication problems between Blacks and Indians. This is despite the fact that there is frequent interaction between Blacks and Indians, especially in KwaZulu-Natal in the social, economic, educational and political contexts. For this reason, it is proper to investigate intercultural communication problems between Indians and Blacks in order to bridge the gap in the existing knowledge on the subject of intercultural communication.

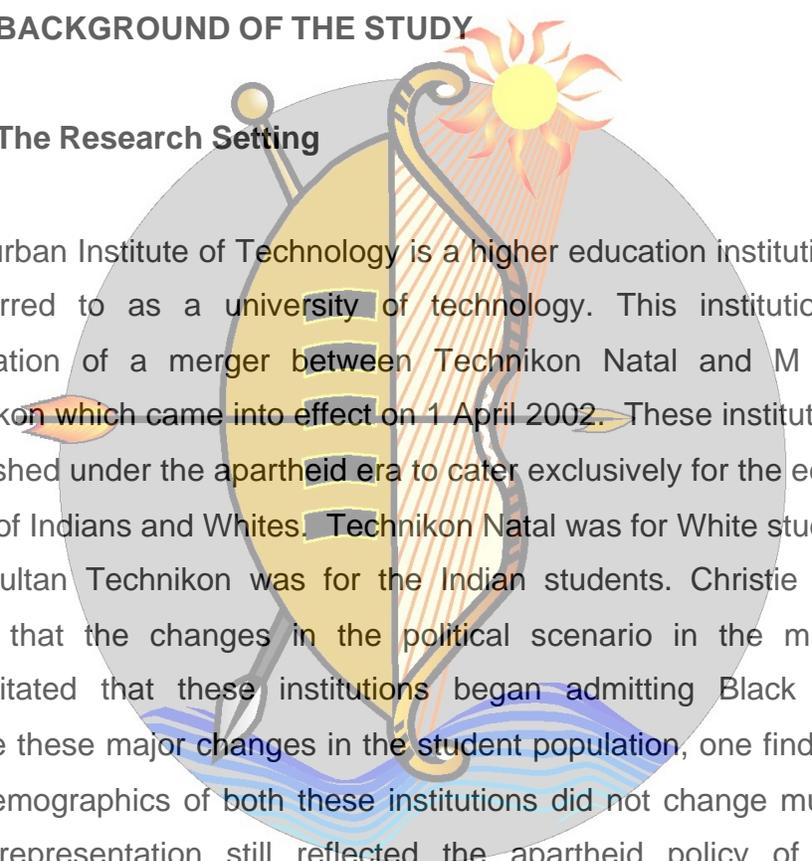
Accordingly, the aim of this study is to investigate the differences in language varieties, non-verbal behaviour and language attitudes, which make these groups stereotype and negatively judge people who have a different culture from theirs. In this study it is assumed that, firstly, it is important for a listener to know the speaker's culture so that communication can go on smoothly. Secondly, racial and cultural conflicts have often arisen because people are not aware that differences in culture can lead them to negatively judge the way others use language.

The aim of this study is to get a better understanding and insight into intercultural communication problems between Blacks and Indians, some causes and possible solutions. It is also hoped that results will be used to sensitise Blacks and Indians to cultural barriers in intercultural communication and to the dangers of stereotyping and ethnocentrism

towards other cultures. Furthermore, the researcher hopes that knowledge gained in this study will be used to create awareness programmes about the problems that have characterised a number of companies and organisations in KwaZulu-Natal. These programmes can help ease the tension that has been created by past and current racial and cultural scenarios at the Durban Institute of Technology and in South Africa as a whole.

1.3 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 The Research Setting



The Durban Institute of Technology is a higher education institution, which is referred to as a university of technology. This institution is the culmination of a merger between Technikon Natal and M L Sultan Technikon which came into effect on 1 April 2002. These institutions were established under the apartheid era to cater exclusively for the educational needs of Indians and Whites. Technikon Natal was for White students and M L Sultan Technikon was for the Indian students. Christie (1991:55) claims that the changes in the political scenario in the mid 1980's necessitated that these institutions began admitting Black students. Despite these major changes in the student population, one finds that the staff demographics of both these institutions did not change much. The racial representation still reflected the apartheid policy of separate development. In essence, both the academic and administrative staff at these Technikons still favoured the racial groups for whom these institutions were established. Even at the merged institution, the situation has not changed much, there is still a shortage of Black academics, Whites and Indians still dominate in a number of academic departments. In other words, the racial composition of the staff still does not take

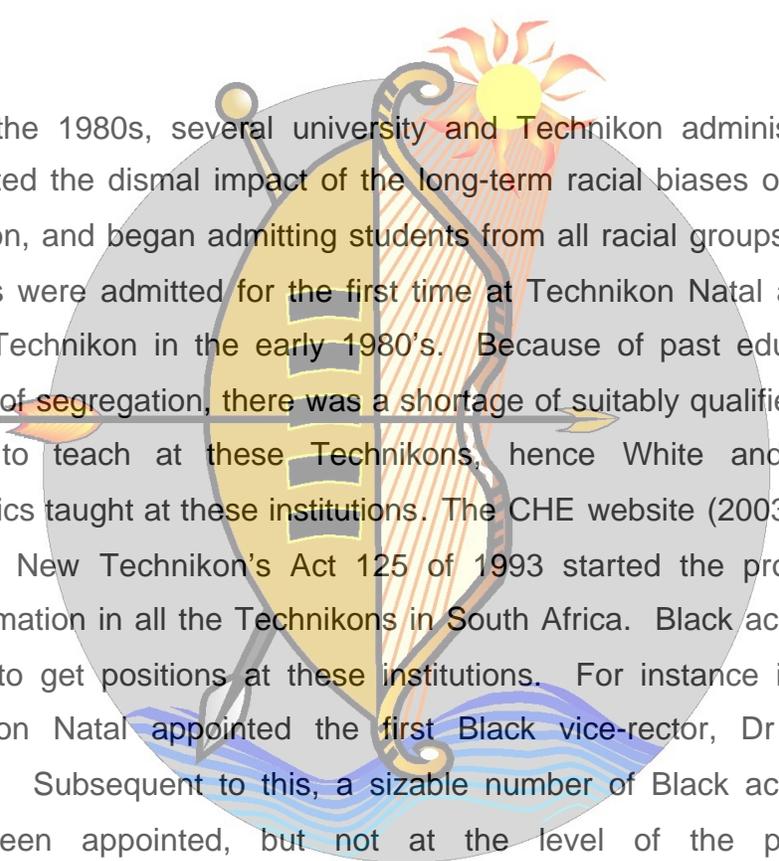
cognisance of the multicultural and multilingual nature of the KwaZulu-Natal community.

The two groups to be studied are Indians and Blacks. These two groups are further sub-divided into various ethnic groups. For example, among the Blacks, the Zulus and the Xhosas are the two dominant groups in the KwaZulu-Natal region. The Indian group is composed of the two major sub-groups, Muslims and Hindus. The Hindus are further subdivided into four groups, namely Tamils, Telegus, Hindustanis and Gujaratis (Pratap Kumar 2000:11). Blacks and Indians have been chosen because over the years there have been cultural and racial conflicts resulting in the loss of many lives. It started with the 1949 Indian War in Durban, the burning down of Indian shops and businesses in various parts of KwaZulu-Natal in the mid 1980's, and most recently, the saga of the playwright and musician Mbongeni Ngema and a song he composed labelling Indians as oppressors. Furthermore, it has been observed that racial and cultural conflict between these two groups has not abated even during post apartheid, and this is hampering interaction between these groups.

1.3.2 Historical background to current staff composition

Durban Institute of Technology consists of a total of 1400 permanent staff members. Of this total, 399 are Blacks, 573 Indians, 397 Whites and 31 Coloureds. The total number of males in the institution is 770 as opposed to 630 female staff members. These numbers indicate that the institution recruits more males than females. The reason behind such staff composition has been mainly influenced by the public and education policies which have been enacted by the governments in the apartheid era. Ever since the National Party came into power in 1948, the control and the provision of education of all racial groups has been in the hands of government. Christie (1991:56) claims that the National

Party government introduced the Extension of University Education Act, Act 45 of 1959, which brought about separate tertiary institutions for White, Coloured, Black and Asian students. Hence, several *Technikons* (advanced-level technical schools) gave preference to students of one particular ethnic group (CHE website 2003). On top of this, these institutions attracted academics from the specific ethnic groups. Academics from other racial and ethnic groups were barred from teaching at these institutions.

The watermark logo of the University of Limpopo is a circular emblem. It features a central shield with a yellow and orange sunburst at the top, a blue and white wave pattern at the bottom, and a stylized figure in the center. The shield is flanked by two golden spheres on poles. The entire emblem is set against a light blue background with a subtle grid pattern.

During the 1980s, several university and Technikon administrations anticipated the dismal impact of the long-term racial biases on higher education, and began admitting students from all racial groups. Black students were admitted for the first time at Technikon Natal and M L Sultan Technikon in the early 1980's. Because of past educational policies of segregation, there was a shortage of suitably qualified Black people to teach at these Technikons, hence White and Indian academics taught at these institutions. The CHE website (2003) states that the New Technikon's Act 125 of 1993 started the process of transformation in all the Technikons in South Africa. Black academics started to get positions at these institutions. For instance in 1994, Technikon Natal appointed the first Black vice-rector, Dr Bennie Khoapa. Subsequent to this, a sizable number of Black academics have been appointed, but not at the level of the provincial demographics. Transformation of Technikon education was also boosted with the introduction of the New Higher Education Act of 1997. The 2003 merger of the two Technikons has also been guided by the Higher Education Act.

1.3.3 Background to the research problem

The study analyses barriers which have a cultural origin, that is, they are a result of socialisation that takes place within a culture. Hall (1992:2) points out that there are implicit and explicit cultural cues which are damaging to communication. When these cultural cues are further applied to intercultural communication, they lead to miscommunication.

Cultural cues and factors which may lead to miscommunication when Blacks and Indians interact are language, non-verbal behaviour, attitudes, values, beliefs and worldviews. The main reason these cultural cues lead to miscommunication is that each cultural group uses or expresses them differently. On the other hand, lack of knowledge by one group about how the other cultural group uses these cultural cues when communicating contributes to the failure of communication. This lack of knowledge leads people to form incorrect opinions and judgements about people who belong to the other cultural group. Once these are formed, they lead to stereotypical behaviour and negative labelling, and most importantly, these opinions are very difficult to change.

One of the factors which contribute to miscommunication or communication failure is pragmatics of intercultural communication. Kaschula & Anthonissen (1995:70) state that speakers from different cultures have varying degrees of linguistic and communicative competence in English. These levels of communicative and linguistic competence have a major impact on the fluency of the speakers in the language spoken. Most Black people speak English as a second or third language and in some instances as a foreign language. South African Indians, on the other hand, speak English as a first or home

language but they speak a variety called Indian English. According to de Kadt (1992:144) fluency in a language may reflect badly upon the speaker as a person thus leading to communication failure. For example, some Indians have a tendency to say “bring it and come” which is supposed to mean “bring it to me”. Generally, Black people do not understand Indian English and they may misunderstand Indians when they use this phrase because it might mean something different to them.

The other problem with differences in language usage pertains to the accent that speakers speak English with. There are major differences between a Black accent and an Indian accent. Blacks tend to emphasize certain syllables when they speak, whereas Indians speak faster with unfamiliar pronunciation. A person who is not familiar with these different accents may have difficulty in understanding some words. Accent differences arise because of the influence of the speaker’s first or mother tongue language. Nguni languages like Zulu and Xhosa have certain sounds which are not available in English, for example clicks like “c”, “q”, “gq” and “xh”. These sounds can make the speaker to speak English with a different accent. Mersham (1987:28) suggests that it is possible that speakers of Black English would say “...I bought shares, tebels, peelous and cheats for the bed in the flea market”, instead of saying “I bought chairs, tables, pillows and sheets for the bed in the flea market.” Clearly, this example indicates that some Black people have difficulties pronouncing some English words. Difficulty in pronouncing words may hinder successful communication because the listener may misunderstand what the speaker is trying to say.

Non-verbal behaviour is another factor which can have a negative impact on intercultural communication. Anecdotal evidence suggests that each culture has a different way of interpreting facial expressions, body movements, personal space, eye movements, time usage, prosodic and paralinguistic features and touch. This difference emanates from the fact that non-verbal behaviour is acquired culturally and sometimes speakers transfer these behaviours to intercultural communication. Because of differences in sociocultural backgrounds and communicative conventions, participants find it difficult to establish and maintain conversational cooperation (Chick 1985:88). Furthermore, Martin & Nakayama (2000:188) state that prejudice and ethnocentrism are often based on non-verbal aspects of behaviour. For instance, some Black people do not maintain eye contact with superiors and elders because they believe that it is a sign of respect and politeness. On the other hand, within the Indian community lack of eye-contact can be viewed as a sign of insincerity, dishonesty and arrogance. Differences in interpretation of the same non-verbal behaviour are likely to cause friction between people because they might not be aware that their non-verbal behaviour is not universal but culture-specific.

In addition to verbal and non-verbal intercultural barriers, one finds that speakers may have negative attitudes towards people who speak different language varieties. People may look down upon or glorify some English varieties. According to Saville-Troike (1989:182), language attitudes are not easy to change because they are part of enculturation in a particular speech community. Parry (2000:68) concurs with Saville-Troike (1989) by saying language can be used to display attitudes that people have towards a person or group. Some attitudes may lead to discrimination, controlling behaviour and categorisation of people. Related to attitudes are values. Values are

normative and they inform the individual about what is right, wrong, true or false. This information on what is right or wrong is also influenced by other factors, like politics and societal factors. Both these factors influence intercultural communication.

The discussions in chapter 2, 3 and 4 will give further details on the factors mentioned above. Examples will be given from the Zulu, Xhosa, Hindu and Muslim cultures concerning cultural barriers, and these will be linked to the results of the study.

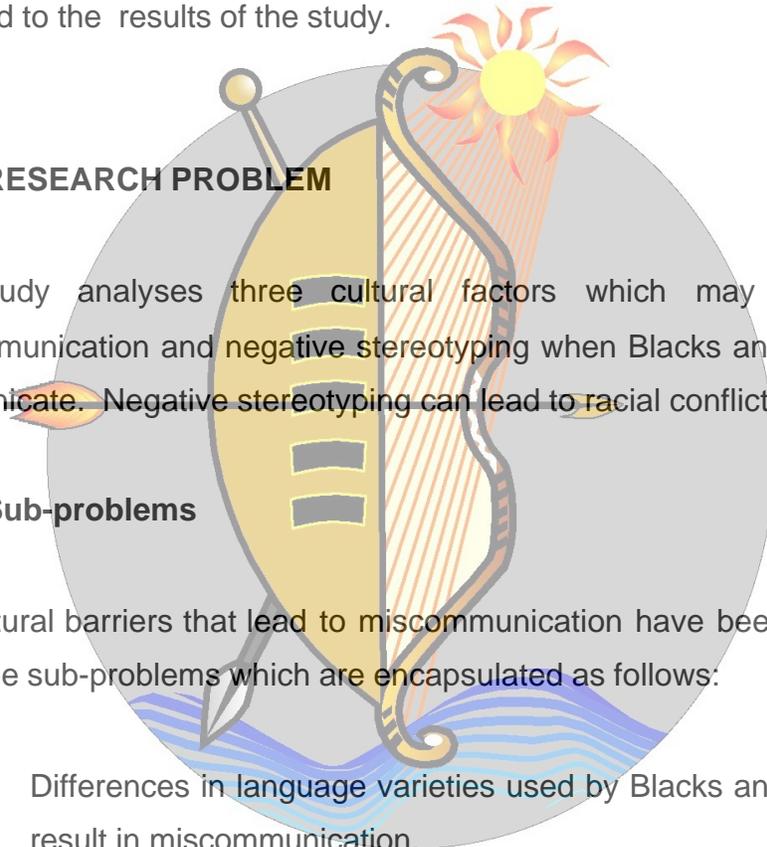
1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM

This study analyses three cultural factors which may lead to miscommunication and negative stereotyping when Blacks and Indians communicate. Negative stereotyping can lead to racial conflict.

1.4.1 Sub-problems

The cultural barriers that lead to miscommunication have been divided into three sub-problems which are encapsulated as follows:

- 1.4.1.1 Differences in language varieties used by Blacks and Indians result in miscommunication.
- 1.4.1.2 Non-verbal behaviour of Indian and Black groups impedes successful communication.
- 1.4.1.2 Language attitudes and cultural values lead someone to stereotype a person of a different culture.



1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aims to answer the following three research questions pertaining to the research problems:

- 1.5.1 How do language varieties used by Indians and Blacks contribute to the failure of intercultural communication?
- 1.5.2 Can the use of different non-verbal behaviour lead to miscommunication? For example, can the way one uses eye-contact lead another person to misinterpret one's behaviour and intentions?
- 1.5.3 Does one's language attitude and cultural values affect the way s/he communicates with people who have a different culture?

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to answer the above research questions, data was collected from the participants. The type of data used to answer the research questions required verbal responses of the participants to questions about communication problems as a result of differences in language varieties, non-verbal behaviour and language attitudes. The responses were then analysed and it was established that cultural factors do lead to miscommunication and stereotypes between various racial groups at the Durban Institute of Technology.

1.6.1 The Sample

The sample in this study was drawn from the administrative and support services departments at the Durban Institute of Technology. Participants were drawn from the Human Resources, Student Admissions, Management Information Systems and Finance departments. The administrative and academic support services staff were chosen because it was assumed that interaction between Blacks and Indians takes place more often than in the academic sector. Also, these were the few departments within the institute which had a sizable number of Blacks.

All participants needed to have at least a matric qualification in English and an acceptable level of conversational English because the questions asked in the research instrument were in English. Thirty staff members were chosen to participate in the study by answering questions in an interview and in questionnaires. This sample consisted of both Blacks and Indians who have various ethnic and religious origins.

1.6.2 Research Techniques

Two research techniques were used to collect data from the participants. These techniques are interviews and questionnaires.

1.6.2.1 Personal Interviews

The type of interview that was used is a semi-structured open-ended interview. Questions were prepared before the interview and each participant was asked these questions. In asking these questions, the

uniqueness and the willingness of each participant was taken into consideration as proposed by Denzin (1989: 106).

Open-ended questions were used because of their comprehensive nature and their ability to allow the subject to express him/herself fully on the questions asked. Follow-up questions were used in cases where it was felt the subjects needed to elaborate on their answers. These interviews lasted for ten to fifteen minutes per participant. A tape recorder was used to help the interviewer remember the participant's responses to the questions.

1.6.2.2 Questionnaires

This is another research technique which was used. The questionnaire was selected for two reasons, one being that participants had a chance to give frank and honest answers, as an assurance by the researcher was given to secure their confidentiality. The questionnaire also helped the participants to take their time to think about their answers so that they were as close as possible to the required level.

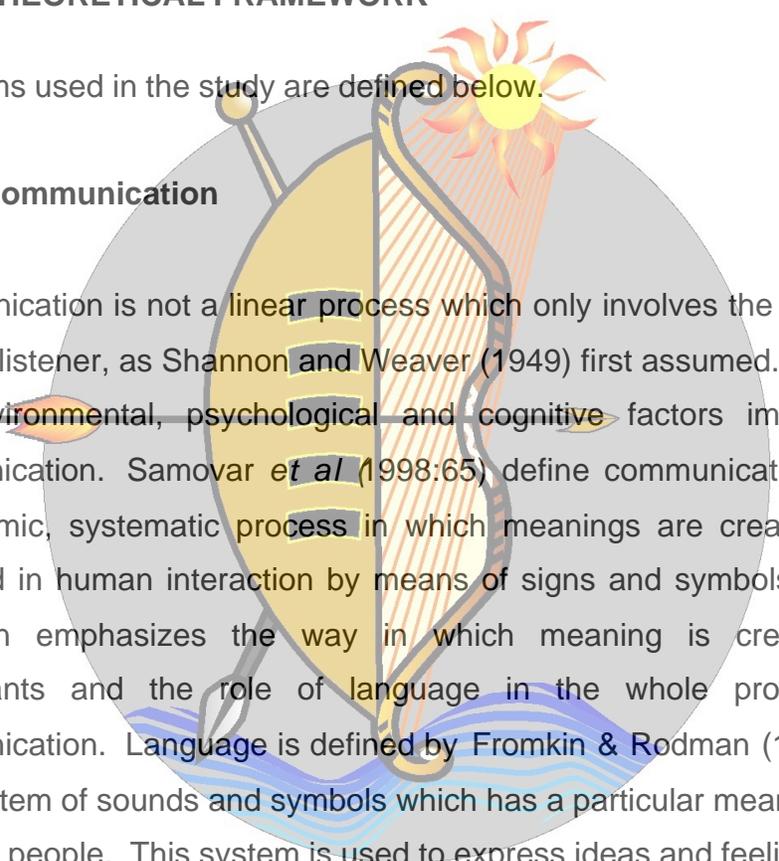
The questionnaire was structured in such a way that it had two sections. The first section dealt with biographical details of the participants and the second with questions related to the research problems (Refer to Appendix A on page 111 for a sample of the questionnaire). The questionnaire contained twenty questions and each question referred to one of the cultural barriers that a person might encounter in intercultural communication. Most questions used in this questionnaire were closed-ended because it was easier for the respondents to select answers from the pool that has been given to them.

Fifty questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and thirty were received back from the participants. They were analysed by dividing them into two groups, the Indian and Black group. Percentages were allocated to each question according to the number of people who gave the same answer. The full details of the results will be discussed in depth in subsequent chapters.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The terms used in the study are defined below.

1.7.1 Communication



Communication is not a linear process which only involves the speaker and the listener, as Shannon and Weaver (1949) first assumed. Factors like environmental, psychological and cognitive factors impact on communication. Samovar *et al* (1998:65) define communication as a “...dynamic, systematic process in which meanings are created and reflected in human interaction by means of signs and symbols.” This definition emphasizes the way in which meaning is created by participants and the role of language in the whole process of communication. Language is defined by Fromkin & Rodman (1995:06) as a system of sounds and symbols which has a particular meaning to a group of people. This system is used to express ideas and feelings and to share information with others, which is a process of communication.

According to Martin & Nakayama (2000:61), the way in which meaning is created by individuals, is influenced by culture. In other words, the process of perception and interpretation of reality is subject to one’s culture. That is why it is important to view communication and culture as related processes.

1.7.2 Miscommunication

When speakers who are involved in communication are unable to understand each other's intentions, miscommunication results. Ribbens (1994:21) states that when the listener in a conversation reacts in an unexpected manner to the speaker's verbal or non-verbal cues, misinterpretation may have occurred in the listener. This is the opposite of the communication process described above.

Van Jaarsveld (1988:5) came up with a model to explain miscommunication that may occur when two or more people communicate. He states that language-specific and culture-specific features contribute to miscommunication. Both these features are going to be analysed in the study because they are part of the communication process.

1.7.3 Cultural stereotypes

According to Fielding (1995:444) this term refers to the classification of every member of a cultural or ethnic group in the same way. In another context, Marais *et al* (1994:46) define a stereotype as a "...standardized image or conception of a type of person, or a tendency to think in a rigid, repetitive and meaningless pattern." This type of behaviour causes a person to label every individual from that particular culture or ethnic group in the same way. Those who label people use incorrect and unfounded information about a person or group.

1.7.4 Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is defined by Steyn (1994:15) as an "...unconscious belief in the inherent superiority of one's own cultural framework." This

belief is based on misconceptions and inaccurate attribution of one's cultural frame of reference.

1.7.5 Culture

The relationship between communication and culture is also explored by Potlane (1991:18). He says both these concepts are social phenomena, meaning that they are found within a social environment. He further states that communication is a process through which a group's culture is transmitted from one generation to the next or from one group to the other. Culture, on the other hand, shapes the way people express themselves, verbally or non-verbally. The study conducted by de Kadt (1992:146) suggests that the Zulu culture dictates that a new bride uses "*hlonipha*" language (meaning the avoidance custom reflecting respect and deference). This language is always accompanied by non-verbal behaviour like looking down when the new bride communicates with her in-laws and not raising her voice when speaking to her father-in-law. This clearly shows that culture is also expressed in the way one uses the language because "*hlonipha*" language has a different vocabulary from everyday language.

A comprehensive definition of culture which encompasses both communicative and social aspects of culture is given by Tomaselli cited in Beesley (1995:4):

"...culture is the ensemble or 'bundle' of meaningful practices through which self-defined groups within or across classes express themselves in a unique way or locate themselves within an identifiable web of signification. It is the process which informs the way meanings and definitions are socially constructed and historically transformed by people

themselves. Cultures are distinguished in terms of differing responses to the same social, economic and environmental conditions. Culture is subject to change, fragmentation and reformulation. It is both **adaptive** i.e. offering ways of coping and making sense and **strategic**, capable of being mobilised for political, economic and social ends.”

Gerristen (1988:29) further states that culture distinguishes its members from other people. The differences between members who belong to different cultural groups become obvious when these people communicate. These differences will be displayed by the way people communicate and react to environmental circumstances.

There are two types of cultures which are identified in the study. These are Black and Indian cultures. Black culture is the culture that is practised by Black South Africans. In the study, the Zulu and Xhosa groups have been identified and studied. The South African Indians also have a number of groupings. These groupings are mainly divided according to religious beliefs. The two main religious groups are Hindus and Muslims. Even though these religious groups have distinct practice, one finds that they still share common practices.

1.7.6 Intercultural communication

Intercultural communication is a process which is a result of communication in the context of culture. This means that this term is related to the previously defined terminologies because it incorporates both communication and culture within one context. According to Kim & Gudykunst (1988:205) intercultural communication is the process which takes place in a circumstance in which the communicator's patterns of verbal and non-verbal encoding and decoding are significantly different

because of cultural variation. In this case intercultural communication focuses on the differences that are attributed to knowledge and perception strategies prevalent to a sociocultural group which shares the same geographical area. This knowledge will determine the way the person will interact with another person from a different cultural group. Not only do the languages differ, but also the group's understanding of the world (Van der Linde 1997:5). In a multicultural organization, intercultural communication may result in miscommunication because of differences in the way cultural groups do and perceive things. The study is going to explore strategies which can be used to eliminate conflict and misunderstanding among Blacks and Indians so as to have successful intercultural communication.

1.8 SCOPE OF RESEARCH AND STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

As this study deals with cultural barriers to intercultural communication, these barriers are discussed in detail in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Chapter 2 discusses language varieties as cultural barriers in intercultural communication. The discussion focuses on English language varieties that are found in South Africa and how they contribute to miscommunication. These differences are linked to different theories that different scholars came up with.

Chapter 3 investigates non-verbal behaviour as a barrier to communication. Differences in non-verbal cues like proxemics, kinesics, chronemics, touch, paralinguistic features, physical appearance, and cultural signs and symbols for these two cultural groups are discussed. The analysis of these categories of non-verbal behaviour is then linked to the results obtained in the study.

In Chapter 4 the focus is on language attitudes that speakers of different languages and cultures have towards other cultures. The discussion is on how attitudes may lead speakers to stereotype others on the basis of how they speak English, their fluency and the use of non-verbal behaviour. The overall relationship between the two groups will also be examined.

Chapter 5 summarizes the results and inferences are made concerning the extent to which research questions and problems have been confirmed. Recommendations for resolving intercultural communication problems at Durban Institute of Technology and in South Africa, as a whole will be highlighted.

1.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the study has been introduced and the methodology that has been used to collect data has been discussed. This chapter has also highlighted how cultural barriers like language variation, non-verbal behaviour and language attitude leads to miscommunication when Blacks and Indians interact at Durban Institute of Technology. The sample for this study consists of Indians and Blacks who work in the administrative sector of the Durban Institute of Technology. Furthermore, this chapter introduced and defined terminology that is used throughout the study. Lastly, this chapter has outlined the scope and structure of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2

LANGUAGE VARIETIES IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this chapter is to investigate the effects of language varieties on intercultural interaction between Blacks and Indians. It is believed that English varieties that are used by different groups at the Durban institute of Technology are influenced by their mother tongue and culture. The cultural content in the varieties of English leads to miscommunication when Blacks and Indians communicate. Another factor which has a negative influence on intercultural communication, is the communication style that a person from each of the cultural groups studied uses. Communication styles are also linked to the use of politeness strategies by each group. Differences in communication styles increase the likelihood of communication failure. In the concluding section of this chapter, the results of the study are discussed and linked to the theoretical aspects.

2.2 A BRIEF OVERVIEW ON THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Language is an important component of any form of communication. People express their feelings, ideas and thoughts through the use of language. Not only do people use language to express feelings and ideas, but they also establish and maintain relationships with other people in the society. This makes language a very important survival tool for everyday existence and for human beings to become acceptable members of the society. Kaschula & Anthonissen (1995:4)

contend that language also helps people to form judgements and to classify the environment and the people found in it. This helps people to understand the environment and people better, and to be able to make sense of what is seen. However, language is not as simple and straightforward as stated in the above explanation. One finds that a single person can use a number of language varieties on different occasions. Sometimes these language varieties differ significantly from each other, and in other cases the differences can be minimal. Even if one is monolingual, s/he can speak a number of language varieties depending on the communicative event and setting.

With this brief overview, it becomes apparent that language varieties can cause communication problems when people who use these varieties have to interact. These problems can be further complicated by the fact that these varieties are linked to culture. One may find that people from different cultures may speak the language on different levels of fluency. These varieties also influence the person's perception of the messages s/he receives from others.

2.3 DEFINING LANGUAGE VARIETIES

Trudgill (1995:26) makes a very interesting observation about language that is used by people who live in a society. He says:

“All language is subject to stylistic and social differentiation, because all human communities are functionally differentiated and heterogenous to varying degrees.”

This quotation shows that no one uses the same language or variety every time s/he speaks. These words also imply that people in a society always have considerably varying degrees of language usage, and

sometimes they are judged according to the varieties of language they use. This highlights the fact that there is a need to recognise variations in terms of speech, stylistics and register that people display when they speak. This variation depends on the contextual and situational factors of the speech. Linguistic differentiation reflects a social structure and people who live within it. It is therefore important to trace the source of such linguistic differentiation and to place it into proper context.

Hudson cited in Wardhaugh (1992:22), gives a definition of the term 'language variety.' He defines a language variety as a "...set of linguistic items with similar distribution." A variety is language that people use under certain social circumstances. Holmes (1992:9) takes this definition further by saying that language varieties include different accents, different linguistic styles, different pronunciations, register, lexicon and even different grammatical rules, which may contrast each other for social reasons. Under certain circumstances, one may find that in order to achieve maximum communication, s/he may have to flout some grammatical rules. These rules which are flouted may be a regular occurrence in other language varieties.

To illustrate this point, the study revealed that Indians speak different varieties when communicating with different types of people. In an informal situation, they use Indian English and when they communicate with colleagues and managers they use standard South African English. In question 6 section 4.6.1, 80 percent of the Indian participants revealed that they change their language when they communicate with family members and friends. This was not the case with the other 20 percent. It was also revealed that all the Indian participants change their language when they communicate with colleagues and supervisors. They move from one variety to the other because topics which are discussed in the work environment require a

formal and a technical language. Whereas when one communicates with family and friends an informal and colloquial variety of English helps one to establish solidarity with others.

Another example of a language variety is displayed by differentiation in age or the age grading phenomena. One finds that young people use language differently from adults. In other words, the youth form their own speech community with their own language variety which has its own vocabulary and style of speaking. The Sunday Times newspaper dated June 1, 2003 states that there is a variety of language which is developing among the youth of all races in South Africa, which is largely influenced by the American hip-hop culture. Elizabeth de Kadt from the University of Natal is also quoted on page 3 when she explains:

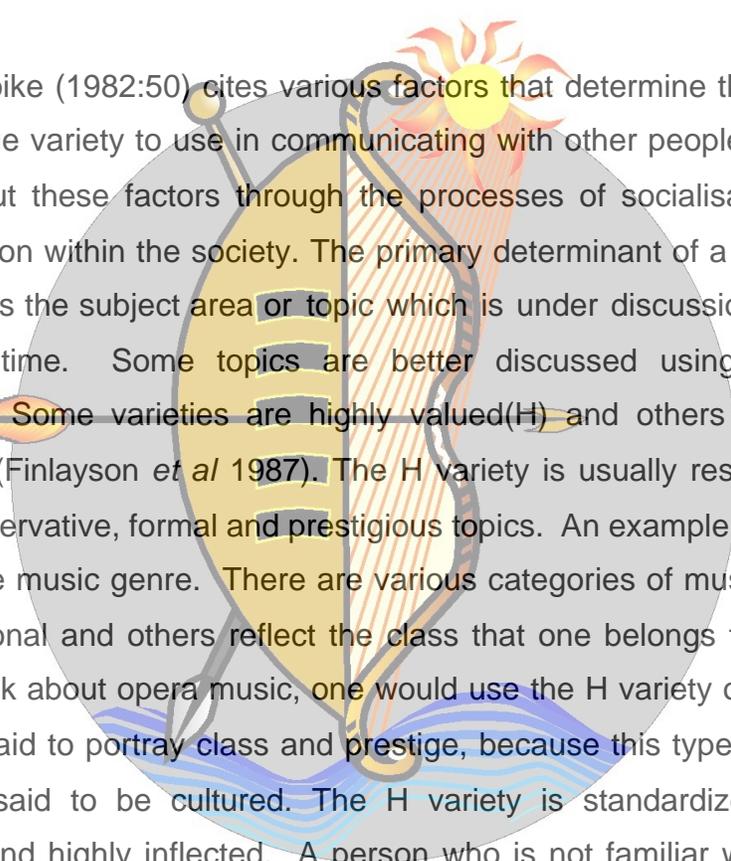
“...this language is a way the youth distances itself from the older generation, by creating a secret language which gives the youth power.”

This language uses terms like “cool”, “phat”, “chill”, “with-it”, “you are all-that”, “dope”, “wack” and so on. This language further widens the gap that exists between parents and their children. These groups are unable to communicate effectively because they speak different varieties. Parents do not understand the hip-hop lingo, and thus miscommunication occurs every time they try talking to their children. As a result, one finds that there is constant friction between parents and their children, with parents trying to correct the youth’s behaviour and the youth rebelling against such correction.

It is also important to note that when speakers of a group communicate, they need to choose a variety of language that is appropriate for that particular context. Speakers have a repertoire consisting of a range of

language varieties found within the community to choose from. Sometimes, speakers may even use two languages interchangeably. All of this is determined mainly by the context and other factors. The following discussion is going to focus on other factors which determine the choice of language variety.

2.4 FACTORS DETERMINING THE CHOICE OF LANGUAGE VARIETY



Saville-Troike (1982:50) cites various factors that determine the choice of language variety to use in communicating with other people. People learn about these factors through the processes of socialisation and enculturation within the society. The primary determinant of a choice of language is the subject area or topic which is under discussion at that particular time. Some topics are better discussed using specific varieties. Some varieties are highly valued(H) and others are less valued(L) (Finlayson *et al* 1987). The H variety is usually reserved for more conservative, formal and prestigious topics. An example would be a topic like music genre. There are various categories of music, some are traditional and others reflect the class that one belongs to. If one were to talk about opera music, one would use the H variety of English which is said to portray class and prestige, because this type of music genre is said to be cultured. The H variety is standardized, more complex and highly inflected. A person who is not familiar with the H variety of English and the topic at hand is automatically excluded from the conversation. Those who use this variety 'talk over him/her' and s/he will not understand the conversation.

The second determiner in the choice of language is the role-relationship between the participants. Sociolinguists like Hymes (1974:75) refer to this as the 'role distance' between participants. Holmes (1992:348)

states that the role-relationship or role-distance analyses the role which individual speakers assume in the society and the status they are accorded when they are in that particular relationship. This status is usually displayed by the way they are addressed by others when they 'put on the hat' of that particular role. For example, when a person is both the lecturer and the student, the type of language that s/he will use in each role will be different. In the lecturer role, s/he will be in a position of authority and s/he commands respect by virtue of his/her position. But when s/he takes on the role of the student, his/her language will change to being that of a person in an inferior position, or the one who gives respect to people who are in a higher position than his/hers. Saville-Troike (1982:41) claims that in some speech communities role-relationships require that clearly distinct varieties of language be used. These speech communities expect their members to use avoidance when referring to people who are in positions of authority.

In addition to the two determinants mentioned above, the choice of language variety also depends upon the setting of the communicative event. Holmes (1992:350) defines the setting as the locale and the time of day in which the interaction takes place. One finds that some settings may require the participants to use specific varieties of language in order to serve a specific purpose. For example, when one is in court, one uses a variety of English called Legalese, which is a conventional language used in the legal environment. The setting also determines the form of language variety that is used by participants. If the participants are in an environment which calls for them to speak softly or not to speak at all, non-verbal behaviour may be used. Elion and Strieman (2001:47) state that, for example, at a Zulu funeral, people are expected to speak with soft tones and not to raise their voices. The setting restricts people to these paralinguistic features.

The factors mentioned above are not the only determinants of language or variety choice. There are also individual or personal factors. Dodd (1991:121) says that people choose the language or variety because of the mood they are in and also out of the need to be accepted by the in-group. It is also important to note that the choice of language variety that the person makes is not rigid, but ever-changing. This is especially important for the bilinguals or multilinguals. One may start a conversation in one variety or language and later switch to another in the middle of the same conversation. Holmes (1992:351) states that variety or language switch is a very important conversational strategy that bilinguals use to reach out to others. This topic is beyond the scope of this study, but is worth mentioning in this chapter. The choice of variety has a great impact on communication because some varieties activate negative feelings in those people who are listening to the speech. The following section deals with the effect of linguistic variation on intercultural communication.

2.5 THE EFFECT OF LANGUAGE VARIATION IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

A large number of studies have been conducted on the effects of variation in terms of speech and pronunciation when people communicate. Almost all the studies yield the same results, that is, some types of speech have more prestige than others, (Giles, Bourhis, Trudgill and Lewis, cited in Dodd 1991:137). The speech varieties which are regarded as prestigious are those which are as close as possible to the standard language. As mentioned earlier, these varieties are referred to as H varieties. The people in the speech community aspire to speaking this variety because they want to be associated with the position of prestige and power. For example in South Africa, racial

groups like, Blacks, Indians and Coloureds aspire to speak English with an authentic English accent. Mersham (1987:26) states that almost 80 percent of urban Black parents send their children to White schools so that they can speak the English like first language speakers. This phenomenon is also displayed by the SABC, where people who are role models in the community are seen to be using the H variety of English.

Language variation also activates stereotypes in people. These stereotypes can further reduce the effectiveness of intercultural communication because, even when cultural and linguistic differences do not cause problems, people selectively perceive whatever reinforces the stereotypes and ignore those things which do not (Chick 1985:316-317). For example, speakers of a prestigious H variety are expected to be intelligent, confident and eager, whilst speakers of the L variety are thought to be stupid and incompetent. People who hold such views seldom test the validity of these views. The people who speak low and non-standardized varieties are expected to be less confident, reserved and ethnic (Dodd 1991:144). As a result of prestige associated with the H variety of English, one finds that most Black newsreaders and SABC television presenters (who are supposedly role-models for Black children) are expected to speak English with an authentic English accent. One would assume that in an interview situation, when two Black people compete for the same job, the one who has an H variety accent, has more chances of being employed than the one who has a Zulu or Xhosa accent, which are regarded as L variety accents. This point on language and stereotypes will be further explored in Chapter 4, where language attitudes and their effect on communication are discussed.

Another effect of language variation on intercultural communication is that it is likely to lead to avoidance, indifference and a negative

judgemental attitude. Silva (2003:10) states that children who attend private schools are sometimes embarrassed by being seen to speak standard SAE, and thus adopt a more typical African pronunciation in the townships. People speaking standard SAE, or even what is perceived as 'too much' English, are given nicknames like *situation* or *excuse me*. Sometimes Black television announcers with standard SAE accents are branded as too 'white' by some black viewers. This labelling behaviour leads to avoidance and indifference towards those who speak a standard SAE. On the other hand, one may find that parents have a negative attitude towards schools and teachers who speak a variety of language which they regard as inferior. These parents may decide to take their children out of that school. Holmes (1992:344) cites an example where parents are complaining about mispronunciation of words in television and radio nowadays. Words like *law, saw, bore* are pronounced as *lore, sore and boor*. These parents go on to say that teachers are to blame for the dropping of standards in the media. This shows that speech style and language use have more influence on communication than the language itself.

2.6 ENGLISH VARIETIES IN SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY AND THEIR USAGE IN INTERACTION

Intercultural communication requires one to be at least bilingual. The participants in intercultural communication have to agree on the *lingua franca* they will use for their interaction. Kaschula & Anthonissen (1995:19) define a *lingua franca* as a language that is used for communication purposes by different groups of people, each speaking a different language. This means that these groups have to find a common language among them and use that for reaching out to each other. In South Africa the *lingua franca* is English. Different racial and cultural groups speak English when they want to communicate with

each other. Even though these groups may speak English, one finds that they often speak varieties which are different from the standard South African English (SAE). These varieties have many loanwords mostly from Afrikaans but increasingly also from Zulu and other African languages. According to Mersham (1987:68), the varieties of English spoken by different groups reflect both similarities and differences in terms of age, colour, region and culture.

In South Africa there are a number of different varieties of English spoken by different racial and cultural groups. For example, Indians and Blacks speak different varieties of English when they communicate. Blacks speak an English variety called South African Black English (SABE) and Indians speak a variety called South African Indian English (SAIE). These varieties differ in terms of pronunciation and language stylistics, but they are still mutually intelligible (Kaschula & Anthonissen 1995:3). These writers further stipulate that even though these varieties differ in terms of form from one another, they still share similar grammatical forms. The grammar of both varieties is taken from the Standard English, which is assumed to be the correct version. Chick (1985:309) further states that speakers of SABE, on average, speak more slowly than speakers of SAE and SAIE.

There are various examples which one can use to demonstrate how the two varieties of English differ. In Indian English, it is acceptable to say "Bring it come" or "What you say?" meaning "Bring it to me" and "What are you saying?" respectively. Black English, on the other hand, is a result of the fusion with a number of indigenous South African Black languages and when Blacks speak they draw from any of these languages to express their ideas (Mersham 1987:70). An example that Mersham (1987) gives to substantiate this point is that someone who speaks Black English is likely to say "I am suffering from a chest" or "I

hear pain in my hand” instead of saying “I have asthma” or “I feel pain in my hand” respectively. Wade (1998:4) also cites a number of examples used by Black English speakers. He says Black English speakers tend to say “I was laughing that time when she was saying it”; meaning: ‘I laughed when she said it’ in standard English. The other example is “The team I am having now Thandi I must tell you I have a strong team”, instead of saying “I must tell you Thandi, the team I have now is very strong.” Wade explains that syntactically, in Standard English, stative verbs like “have”, “know” do not usually occur in the progressive .

These language varieties can lead to communication failure, especially when the speakers attach different meanings to a single lexical term and react differently to the same words. Hindus and Muslims, for example, react differently to animals and the natural environment. Both these groups may attach different symbolic meaning to the words “cow” and “pig.” Elion and Strieman (2001:71) state that Hindus do not kill or harm cows in any way, in fact a cow is seen as “the sacred mother” and a sustainer of life. Hence traditional Hindus do not eat beef and they do not wear any leather clothing. Muslims, on the other hand, sacrifice bulls and cows to mark the end of the *haji*, which is the pilgrimage to Mecca. However, these sacrificial animals should be slaughtered in the name of *Allah*, which is called *halaal*. Muslims regard pigs as dirty and they do not eat pork.

In terms of the study conducted, the question on the languages that the respondents used when communicating with colleagues, yielded a number of interesting responses about language issues in intercultural communication. For instance, when the respondents were asked about the languages they use to communicate with other groups, it was found that all the Black participants selected English as the language that they

use most of the time to communicate with their colleagues. The second most used language is Zulu, with 83 percent respondents using it. Only 17 percent of the Black participants use Xhosa to communicate with their colleagues. In terms of the Indian group, all of them use English all the time. One can conclude that, when Blacks and Indians communicate with each other, they use English, and when Indians communicate with each other they also use English. Whereas when Blacks communicate with each other, they use mainly Zulu or Xhosa. This is not surprising because Zulus, Xhosas and English speaking Indians are in the majority in KwaZulu-Natal province.

The respondents gave varied responses to the question on how the respondent's first language affects the way they speak English. This question was not applicable to Indian respondents since all of them speak English as a first and home language. However, in terms of the Blacks, the responses were split. 50 percent of the respondents view their first language as influencing the way they speak English. The other 50 percent are not influenced by their home language. Therefore, the point on how Blacks speak Black English and Indians speak Indian English cannot be fully substantiated by the study. But in the interviews the researcher observed that most of the participants spoke English with either a Xhosa or Zulu accent. There were a few of them who spoke with a standard South African English accent and those were mainly the younger employees who have had a chance to study in model C schools.

The issue of language variation is complicated, but at the same time reflective of the variation within South African cultures and languages. In most cases, different language groups end up stereotyping other groups because of the way they speak the *lingua franca*, which is English. One of the suggestions raised by (Mersham 1987:26) is to

promote South African English which encompasses all the varieties spoken by different groups. He continues to say that there is no need of enforcing the linguistic purist view because a spoken language should be reflective of people's way of life. In most cases, it is the mother tongue speakers who promote a purist view of language and want to preserve an uncontaminated version of English. In South Africa, it is very difficult to maintain pure English because there are a number of languages spoken by people which influence the way English is spoken. Mersham further suggests that if the way of life dictates a specific way of using language, then all people should adhere to it so that they are able to communicate well with others. This is one way of ensuring successful intercultural and cross-cultural communication.

2.7 DIFFERENCES IN LINGUISTIC STYLES IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

In addition to language variation, people also have various communication styles that they use when they communicate with others. There is evidence to suggest that some of these communication styles are influenced by culture. Martin & Nakayama (2000:155) suggest that a person's communication style is mainly as a result of both language usage and non-verbal behaviour which are associated with communication. As already mentioned, language and non-verbal behaviour are both cultural concepts. The following discussion will illustrate the influence of the communication styles in the way the language is used.

2.7.1 DEFINING A COMMUNICATION STYLE

A communication style is defined by Samovar *et al* (1998:254) as “the manner in which a person presents him/herself to others.” The style which one uses to communicate with others depends on the channels one uses to convey information, which can be verbal, vocal and/or physical; in other words, the way a person uses language and non-verbal cues to get his/her message across to others. Martin & Nakayama (2000:155) further define a communication style as the tonal colouring and the metamessage that contextualize how listeners accept and interpret verbal messages. Culture plays a major role in influencing the person’s communication style. Edward Hall (quoted in Talbet-Johnson & Beron 1999:3) came up with a classification of cultures using a continuum. This continuum ranges from high-context to low-context. Each end pole represents a different way of communicating and a specific type of language that is used when communicating.

2.7.2 HIGH-CONTEXT AND LOW-CONTEXT CULTURE AND LANGUAGE USAGE

Cultures differ in communication styles in terms of their preference for high-context or low-context communication (Martin & Nakayama 2000:155). A high-context communication style is one which depends on a physical context where the messages are understood without direct verbal communication. The meaning is presumed to be part of the individual’s internalised beliefs, values and norms (Talbet-Johnson & Beron 1999:4). People who use this style of communication may share similar cultural backgrounds and therefore understand messages without explanations. People who are from different cultures but who share common characteristics, like people who work within the same field or environment, may also use a high-context communication style.

These people use register and terminology without explaining them, because their colleagues will understand the meaning.

This situation is defined by Dodd (1995:121) as an in-group situation. The type of language that they use is called a 'restricted code' because it doesn't need lengthy explanations. People from different cultures but who share similar working conditions find it easy to communicate with each other about issues pertaining to work. However, problems may arise when these people have to communicate about social, personal and political issues. In this case, individual culture influences the way they view the world and react to situations. If one uses information from one's own culture to deal with people who are from different cultural backgrounds, one finds that there might be major clashes. Sensitivity and caution have to be applied in these situations because hostilities and conflicts can result.

According to Martin & Nakayama 2000:156 low-context communication styles, on the other hand, are those where the majority of meaning and information is in the verbal code. People who use this style of communication prefer to use explicit verbal messages, with a lot of elaborations and explanations in order to get their message across. For instance, Western culture prefers direct and explicit messages when people communicate, whereas Black and Eastern cultures use a more indirect and implicit style of communication. In Western culture, words play a major role in the communication process, unlike Black and Eastern cultures, where non-verbal behaviour takes precedence over the verbal code. Chick (1985:308) says that in Black and Eastern cultures, for instance, indirectness is used because it indicates respect and politeness. This is in direct contrast to the Western culture, where directness of the verbal message is the appropriate behaviour if one wants to be credible. Thus, if a person from a Black culture

communicates with someone from the Western culture, there is likely to be miscommunication because of the different communication styles that are used.

The other dimensions of communication styles which Martin & Nakayama (2000:157) discuss are elaborate/exact/succinct, personal/contextual and instrumental/affective. All of these styles have to do with the behaviour of the speaker when s/he communicates with other people. Some of these behaviours are regulated and influenced by culture. Because of differences in the way people are socialised in their cultures, one finds problems in intercultural communication. That is why it is necessary for the participants to engage in accommodative behaviour so that communication can be successful. There are various ways of accommodation, but this topic is beyond the scope of this discussion.

In the following discussion, the hypothesis that language varieties used by both Indians and Blacks lead to miscommunication will be tested. The participants were asked the following questions to determine the varieties that they use when communicating with each other or with people of other cultures.

2.8 RESEARCH DESIGN ON LINGUISTIC FACTORS WHICH AFFECT INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

As mentioned in Chapter 1, two research instruments, i.e. a questionnaire and personal interviews, have been used in order to collect the information from Black and Indian participants.

The following questions were posed to the participants with regard to linguistic factors affecting intercultural communication:

1. Specify language problems you encounter when you communicate with people who do not speak your home language.
2. When communicating with a person from another culture do you use language which is direct or indirect and polite?
3. How do you make sure that you get your ideas across to others; by using more explanations, gestures or simple language?
4. If you encounter someone who speaks English imperfectly, do you:
 - assume that s/he is stupid and stop talking to him;
 - try to accommodate him/her;
 - give him/her assistance by finishing his/her sentences;
 - understand that the language s/he is speaking is not his/her mother tongue?
5. Give suggestions on how language problems can be resolved at the Technikon.

The responses to the above questions are discussed in this discussion and links are made with research that has been done before on language factors in intercultural communication.

One of the language problems that Blacks at the Technikon experience when communicating with Indians is that they sometimes feel misunderstood by their colleagues. In terms of responses to the questionnaires, 50 percent of them feel misunderstood all the time and the other 50 percent sometimes feel misunderstood by their colleagues. Blacks also feel that their lack of vocabulary limits them when they communicate with Indians. 80 percent of the Blacks responded by

saying that they sometimes do not have enough words to express themselves. Furthermore, they claim that occasionally they have to repeat themselves several times before being understood by their Indian colleagues. The other 20 percent rarely experience shortage of words when they communicate, hence, they do not experience communication problems. These results clearly show that there is indeed a language barrier for the Blacks which can lead to communication failure.



On the Indian side, 83 percent sometimes feel misunderstood by Blacks. The other 17 percent rarely feel misunderstood by their colleagues and counterparts. One of the reasons why Indians feel misunderstood could be the language they use when they communicate. In terms of the vocabulary that is used in communication, 60 percent of the Indian group feel they have sufficient vocabulary to express themselves. The other 40 percent feel that sometimes they do not have enough words to express themselves when they communicate with Blacks. None of the participants feel that they always have sufficient vocabulary to express themselves. Because of the shortage of words, Indians sometimes resort to using gestures to get their ideas across and to achieve maximum communication (refer to 13 in Appendix A).

In terms of using communication strategies, none of the Indians repeat themselves several times before they are understood. However, 80 percent of this group sometimes repeat themselves so that the listener can understand them. These findings correlate with the results mentioned in the previous paragraph, in that Indians try to make their spoken language easily understandable to the Blacks, but it contradicts the fact they feel misunderstood by their counterparts. The researcher has observed that most Indians speak faster than Blacks and

pronounce some English words differently. One may find that Blacks may constantly ask Indians to repeat themselves, and this may cause Indians to develop a negative attitude towards Blacks.

Both groups prefer to use language which is direct and explicit. This point contradicts the point which was discussed in section 2.7.2 about high and low-context communication styles. The fact that Blacks come from a high-context culture has little influence on the way they use English. They prefer to use a direct communication style which is a typical characteristic of low-context culture. However, in terms of the Indian group, which is supposedly a low-context culture, their responses to the type of language they use when they communicate with Blacks confirm the high and low-context communication theory. This means that the results correlate with the theoretical aspect of this section. One can therefore conclude that Blacks have been successfully acculturated to the Western environment, which uses low-context communication. Most Black participants prefer brevity and directness when they communicate with colleagues.

When it comes to strategies that people use to get their ideas across, Blacks use gestures minimally. 67 percent of the Blacks never use gestures to get their messages across. They rather use simple language and more explanations. The other 33 percent use only gestures to get the message across. 67 percent of Blacks would rather use strategies like more explanations and the other 33 percent uses simple language. Among the Indian group, on the contrary gestures and simple language are more popular as strategies to get ideas across. 67 percent of the Indians use gestures in order to compensate for their lack of words, and 33 percent use simple language to communicate with Blacks.

The question on the feelings of the participants about the speakers who do not speak perfect English yielded varied responses. 60 percent of the Indian group responded by saying that they use communication accommodation strategies for those people who do not speak perfect English. 40 percent of the Indians even took steps to assist the person who cannot speak perfect English by finishing their sentences. The Black participants gave different responses from the Indian participants. Only 20 percent of the Blacks gave assistance to those people who spoke imperfect English. The other 80 percent said that they understood that English was not the mother tongue of the speaker. These responses show that Indians and Blacks feel differently towards people who speak English imperfectly. Among the Indian group, there is an element of wanting to perfect the language skills of those who speak English incorrectly. Whereas among the Blacks there is an understanding that English is not the mother tongue of many Black South Africans. This comes from the fact that Black participants may have been in the same situation, so they sympathise with those who are in that situation.

The last question on language problems brought about a number of suggestions on resolving the language problems in intercultural communication. One of the suggestions from the Black group is that the Indians must learn either Zulu or Xhosa so that Blacks can understand Indians better when they communicate. Blacks also feel that they are always disadvantaged when they speak English because their ability to perform jobs is judged by their ability to speak English perfectly, which, unfortunately, is not their first language. According to Chick (1985:96), judgements like these lead to stereotypes and discrimination. Stereotypes and discrimination further reduce the effectiveness of intercultural communication. Other Black respondents said that Indians should be more tolerant of their limited fluency in

English because it not their first language. The Indian group, on the other hand, viewed learning Black languages as one solution to miscommunication, but cultural awareness and tolerance towards cultural differences should be practiced so that both groups can live in harmony.

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has investigated language as one of the major barriers in communication when Blacks and Indians interact. It was highlighted that English is a *lingua franca* for both these groups, but one finds that there are variations in the way it is spoken by each cultural group. Indians speak Indian English and Blacks speak Black English, and each of these varieties is influenced by a number of other languages. These varieties have different accents and registers, thus making it difficult for the speakers of these varieties to understand each other. The results of the investigation reveal that both groups misunderstand each other when they communicate, thus they use communication accommodation strategies in order to bridge the gap. Participants suggest that Indians should learn Zulu and Xhosa languages in order to make it easy for Blacks to communicate with them. Another suggestion which came up in the study is the cultivation of tolerance and awareness among these groups so that they can work well with one another.

CHAPTER 3

NON-VERBAL BEHAVIOUR IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter investigates how non-verbal behaviour causes communication breakdown between people from different cultures. According to Albert (1996:331), non-verbal behaviour leads to miscommunication because most people are unaware that non-verbal patterns are determined by culture, and that people from other cultures have different interpretations of these behaviours in a given situation. This chapter will also analyse the main characteristics of non-verbal behaviour, and how culture influences the display of non-verbal behaviour when one is interacting with other people. Examples from both the Indian and Black cultures will be used to illustrate how non-verbal behaviour differs from culture to culture.

3.2 OVERVIEW OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

On many occasions when speakers communicate, they tend to focus mainly on the message that is carried by spoken words and overlook the message that is communicated by non-verbal behaviour. The main reason for this is that verbal behaviour is mainly conscious, i.e. a person thinks before s/he utters words. Asuncion-Lande (1990:12) states that non-verbal messages are mainly unconscious, i.e. they operate on a level which is out of our awareness. Consequently, spoken messages form part of the explicit factors of culture, whereas non-verbal messages are implicitly embedded within culture. Groenewald (1996:14) states that the explicit factors of culture are learned and form part of the everyday behaviour of a group as

members of the group unconsciously display implicit cultural cues. The implicit and explicit aspects of culture are impossible to separate, because in the communication process they always complement each other. Whatever one says verbally is always substantiated or contradicted by non-verbal behaviour.

3.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF NON-VERBAL BEHAVIOUR

Most researchers claim that between 65 percent and 93 percent of social meaning is carried by non-verbal behaviour (Singelis in Brislin & Yoshida 1994:275). A major portion of this non-verbal meaning is communicated through vocal tones and facial expressions. Therefore, non-verbal behaviour is a powerful medium for meaning that is conveyed through the communication process. The power of non-verbal behaviour is displayed when there is a contradiction between verbal and non-verbal messages. In these situations, it is very likely that the recipient will choose to decode and perceive non-verbal cues rather than verbal messages, because the former are more credible than the latter. Also, people seldom question their non-verbal behaviour as much as their verbal behaviour. Non-verbal behaviour is always taken at face value and is considered to be the absolute truth. Hence there is an English proverb which says "actions speak louder than words". In most instances, this unquestioning behaviour leads to misunderstandings and miscommunication.

Three important/ main characteristics of non-verbal behaviour have been identified by Samovar *et al* (1998:153). The first is that it is multi-channelled. This means that it uses a number of mediums to send a message to the receiver, e.g. body movements, facial expressions, touch, paralinguistic features, space and territory, time, etc, Messages can be sent using either one of these channels or a combination of

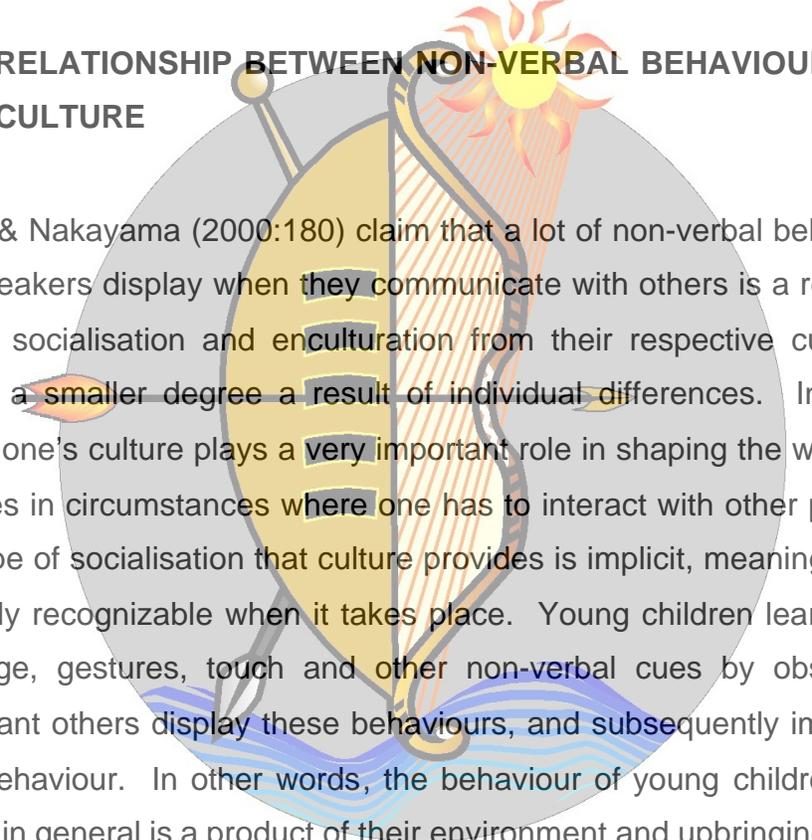
different body movements. For instance, a person may wave a hand to someone and smile at the same time within one message context. When the person interprets this message s/he will focus on the totality of the message and the context in which it is used.

The second characteristic of non-verbal cues is that they are sometimes ambiguous. There can be two or more interpretations and meanings offered for one non-verbal cue, depending on the context of the communication, the cultures of the participants and their affective mode. Singelis (1994:277) confirms this view by saying that the meaning of non-verbal behaviour is, most of the time, determined by the receiver, who seldom confirms it with the sender. In other words, the meaning depends on the interpretation that the receiver wants to attach to the non-verbal cues displayed by the communicator. For instance, one rarely asks the speaker to repeat the gaze or the eye-movement the speaker has just displayed in order to confirm one's interpretation, but with verbal behaviour it is acceptable to ask the speaker to repeat the statement s/he has just uttered so that one can clearly understand what has been said.

The third characteristic that is stated by Singelis (1994:278) relates to the unintentional and spontaneous nature of non-verbal behaviour. People use non-verbal behaviour to make unconscious decisions about the nature of the relationship that exists between two or more people who are involved in communication. The onlookers can interpret the gestures and body language used by participants as indicating the type of relationship that they have with each other. Generally, people interpret the close proximity of the interlocutors' bodies as meaning an intimate or friendly relationship; the opposite is true where there is a distance between the interlocutors. But this situation can have other interpretations in different cultures. Occasionally, people may behave

in ways which give a different message to others about their emotional and mental state from what was intended. A situation like this will lead to misinterpretation of the sender's intentions, thus causing miscommunication. In most cases, miscommunication which is the result of non-verbal behaviour can be attributed to cultural rather than individual differences. Because culture plays a major role in the display of non-verbal behaviour it is important to trace the nature of the relationship that exists between non-verbal behaviour and culture.

3.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NON-VERBAL BEHAVIOUR AND CULTURE



Martin & Nakayama (2000:180) claim that a lot of non-verbal behaviour that speakers display when they communicate with others is a result of implicit socialisation and enculturation from their respective cultures, and to a smaller degree a result of individual differences. In other words, one's culture plays a very important role in shaping the way one behaves in circumstances where one has to interact with other people. The type of socialisation that culture provides is implicit, meaning that it is hardly recognizable when it takes place. Young children learn body language, gestures, touch and other non-verbal cues by observing significant others display these behaviours, and subsequently imitating such behaviour. In other words, the behaviour of young children and people in general is a product of their environment and upbringing.

Different societies have different non-verbal languages just as they have different spoken languages. As mentioned in Chapter 2, some cultures are high-context and others are low-context. Talbet-Johnson & Beron (1999:4) state that the meanings of messages from high-context cultures depend on non-verbal signals and require one to read between the lines. Kwenda *et al* (1997:128) state that a number of Black

cultures (including the Zulu and Xhosa cultures) are examples of high-context cultures, where meaning is derived from the social environment and traditions. When people from these cultural groups interact with people from different cultures, they expect the listeners to “read between the lines” and to understand the traditions and customs in order to interpret the message. Most of the message is not given explicitly; sometimes silence itself communicates something. Low-context cultures place greater importance in the spoken word than on non-verbal behaviour. Albert (1996:343) believes that miscommunication occurs when the communication process does not go according to expectations. The person from a low-context culture does not know that s/he has to pay much attention to contextual factors and to “decipher” what is being conveyed. The person from the high-context culture expects the listener to read the message from factors like non-verbal behaviour and the context in which communication takes place. When these expectations are not confirmed by the speaker’s behaviour, the listener is likely to develop a negative attitude about the speaker and this could develop into stereotypes and prejudice.

There are two main reasons for the occurrence of stereotypes and prejudice in intercultural miscommunication. One is that people expect the same behaviour in the target culture that they find in their own culture. The second reason is that people often don’t realise that the same behaviour can be interpreted differently in two cultures (Albert 1996:343). If a different interpretation is given, the listener does not blame him/herself or his/her culture as being at fault, but points fingers at the speaker’s lack of manners and may also develop negative perceptions and prejudices about people of that culture. For example, Chick (1985:309) states that in his study 50 percent of South African English speakers chose the generalisation that Black English speakers

fail to take the opportunity to speak when given a turn to speak. Similarly, 40 percent of the South African English speakers made the generalisation that Blacks fail to produce a whole coherent idea. Chick further states that this stereotype probably arose because Blacks prefer to speak at a steady and measured pace, as has been confirmed in this study in section 3.5.5. There is also an assumption that Blacks do not like to interrupt or be interrupted whilst they are speaking or whilst the other person is speaking. Clearly, these generalisations arise as a result of transferring culturally relevant behaviour into intercultural situations. This approach is very damaging to interracial and cross-cultural relationships and they can lead to racial conflicts.

In order to elaborate further on this, it is useful to discuss three ways in which non-verbal behaviour differs from culture to culture. These differences are as follows:

Firstly, cultures differ in the *specific repertoire* of behaviours that are enacted, (Lustig and Koester 1993:187). Movements, body positions, postures, vocal intonations, gestures, dress codes, spatial movements and dances, and other ritualised actions are specific to a particular culture. For instance, wearing a veil or headscarf to cover the head and face is peculiar to Muslim women as a sign of respect to the women's body. Elion and Strieman (2001:119) also stipulate that married Muslim women are expected to dress modestly. They also wear black clothing. In the Zulu and Xhosa culture, black is regarded as the colour of mourning or death. Furthermore, Elion and Strieman (2001:47) state that in traditional Zulu and Xhosa culture, married women are also expected to cover their heads and wear long dresses which are below knee level. In some regions, one finds that these married women are also expected to cover their shoulders with scarves if they are in the company of their in-laws.

Secondly, all cultures have *display rules* that govern when and under what circumstances various non-verbal expressions are required or prohibited. Display rules indicate such things as how far apart people should stand while talking, whom to touch and where. These rules also indicate the speed and timing of movements and gestures, when to look directly at others in a conversation and when to look away, whether loud talking and expansive gestures or quietness and controlled movements should be used, when to smile and when to frown, and the overall pacing of communication (Lustig and Koester 1993:188). For example, there is a behavioural norm in the Zulu culture which states that one is not supposed to shout, play loud music or make any unnecessary noise when one's family member has died. If one acts in this manner, the norm claims that he/she will not be able to control his/her behaviour in future and will always do prohibited things. This is called *ukwedlula*. Kwenda *et al* (1997:25) state that norms of this nature are used to control people's behaviour and to guide them into being acceptable citizens.

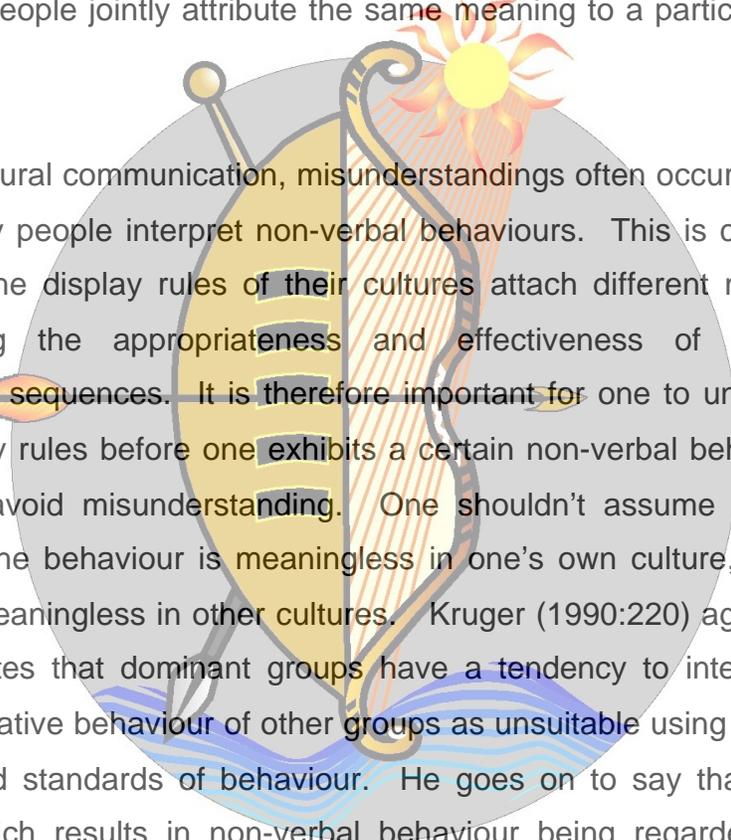
Another example where one finds cultural differences is the use of touch. Most Black people use touch minimally. In some instances, touch may be viewed as a sign of disrespect. Amongst the Zulus, for example, men hardly ever hug or embrace each other; instead they shake hands when they greet each other. In traditional Zulu communities one finds that women are not allowed to touch a man on the head because the head is believed to be a very important part of a man's body (Elion and Strieman 2001:20). The Hindus greet each other by holding fingertips together at chest height, elbows slightly extended and the head slightly bowed. In some Hindu communities, shaking hands is prohibited, especially between males and females. In some cases, Hindus take great offence if one sits in such a way that one's

feet point at the other person, or else if one uses the foot to touch another person. This is considered the greatest form of disrespect one can show another person.

Differences in display rules can cause discomfort and misinterpretations. Martin & Nakayama (2000:188) suggest that display rules also indicate the intensity of the behavioural display that is acceptable. In showing grief or sadness, for instance, some people may tend to exaggerate or amplify their emotions, for example by crying loudly, whilst others tend to try to remain calm, neutral and in control. In the Xhosa and Zulu cultures, for example, men are prohibited from displaying feelings of grief and loss. If a man cries or shows any emotion, he is regarded as a lesser man. In the Xhosa culture when boys go to the circumcision schools, they are expected to display their manhood by not crying when they are circumcised. Within the Hindu culture on the other hand one finds that men can display emotions like crying when someone has passed away. According to Hermnant Kaniktar (1989:29) after the death of a family member, men are the only ones who mourn and grieve. Men are not supposed to shave their beards for ten to fifteen days after the death of a senior family member. In the olden days in the Hindu culture, widowed women were expected to show their commitment to their dead husband by killing themselves. Furthermore, Hermnant Kaniktar states that nowadays, a widow is only expected to remove the red dot on her face and the jewellery she was given by her late husband.

Thirdly, cultures vary in the *interpretation of meanings* that are attributed to particular non-verbal behaviours. Lustig and Koester (1993:188) identify three possible interpretations that can be ascribed to a given instance of non-verbal behaviour. They state that non-verbal behaviour can either be random, idiosyncratic, or shared. An

interpretation that the behaviour is random means that it has no particular meaning to anyone, like the ordinary blinking of the eyes, which everyone does because of the inherent physiological nature of human beings. An idiosyncratic interpretation suggests that the behaviours are unique to special individuals or relationships, therefore have particular meaning only to these specific people. The third interpretation, which is more relevant to intercultural communication, is that behaviours have shared meaning and significance, as when a group of people jointly attribute the same meaning to a particular non-verbal act.

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In intercultural communication, misunderstandings often occur because of the way people interpret non-verbal behaviours. This is caused by the way the display rules of their cultures attach different meanings concerning the appropriateness and effectiveness of particular interaction sequences. It is therefore important for one to understand the display rules before one exhibits a certain non-verbal behaviour in order to avoid misunderstanding. One shouldn't assume that, just because the behaviour is meaningless in one's own culture, it would also be meaningless in other cultures. Kruger (1990:220) agrees and further notes that dominant groups have a tendency to interpret the communicative behaviour of other groups as unsuitable using their own norms and standards of behaviour. He goes on to say that conflict arises which results in non-verbal behaviour being regarded as an obstacle to successful communication. Whereas it is people who do not want to accept that their judgements may be wrong and that they need to be more accommodative to others who are considered obstacles.

3.5 DIFFERENCES IN NON-VERBAL CATEGORIES BETWEEN THE BLACK AND INDIAN CULTURES

The discussion in 3.4 has outlined that different cultural groups use nonverbal cues differently. Similarly, Blacks and Indians differ in their use of non-verbal behaviour. The following discussion will focus on differences in the use of proxemics, kinesics, chronemics, haptics, paralinguistic cues and cultural signs and symbols. Potlane (1991:22) argues that an understanding of intercultural communication is incomplete without consideration of meanings conveyed through non-verbal behaviour. It is therefore important that members of different cultural groups have an understanding of how non-verbal behaviour differs from culture to culture and that the lack of this knowledge can lead to miscommunication. It is also important to note that non-verbal behaviours are a major source of negative attitudes.

In analysing the differences between the Indian and Black cultures, it is important to note that there is a major influence of the Western culture in both these cultures. One may find that people who live in urban areas may not practice some of the norms and customs which are performed by people who live in a rural area or those who still believe in their traditional culture. The Western culture has nullified some of the cultural practices in both groups and people from these cultures are very keen to adopt behaviour displayed by their White counterparts. One of the reasons for such migration is that the Western culture is seen as a progressive culture. For example, traditionally Zulu-speaking people do not maintain eye-contact with their elders and superiors. But in the study, the Black participants indicated that eye-contact is important so that one can see whether the speaker is honest or not. Overall, 67 percent of the Black respondents view eye-contact as an important indicator of honesty, whereas 33 percent says eye-contact

does not represent honesty. These results indicate the strong influence of Western culture, where people look each other straight in the eyes to see how sincere and honest one is.

Also, Westernisation is associated with status and if one displays behaviour which is typical of the Western culture one is regarded as cultured and educated. The other reason pertains to the environment that Blacks and Indians find themselves in daily. The work environment adopts Western standards of life and one has to adapt to these. Therefore, it is important to analyse differences between these two cultures and people in the context of the influence of Western non-verbal standards.

There are different types of non-verbal categories. These are proxemics, kinesics, chronemics, haptics, paralinguistic features, clothing, appearance and cultural signs and symbols. These types of non-verbal behaviour differ from culture to culture, and the following discussion shows how Indians and Blacks interpret these behaviours.

3.5.1 KINESICS

Lustig and Koester (1993:192) define kinesics as the study of body movements and body language. Body movements include gestures, head movements, facial expressions, eye movement and movement of any other body part. When one communicates, these movements always occur within the totality of human behaviour. In other words, these movements do not occur in isolation but can always be understood within the context of communication. According to Samovar *et al* (1998:155) kinesic cues send messages about "...our attitude, our emotional state, and our desire to control the outside environment." These writers further argue that, even though all people use kinesic

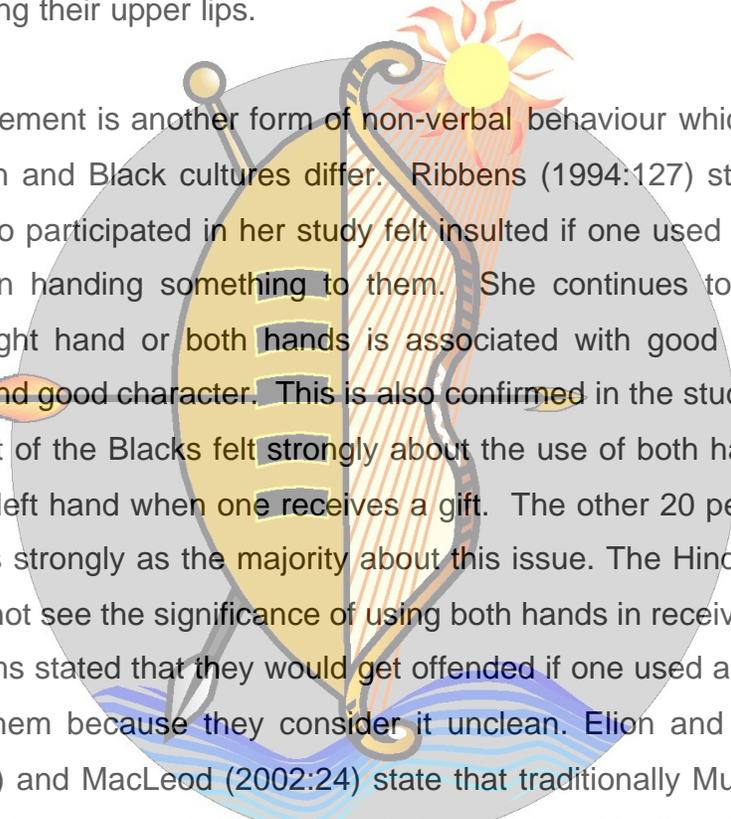
cues when they communicate and culture teaches them to use and interpret these movements differently. Otherwise without the influence of culture people would have a uniform way of interpreting any body movement.

According to Kwenda *et al* (1997:44), within the Xhosa and Zulu culture, sitting down in the presence of an elder or a person in a position of authority is a sign of respect. Thus youth and people of lower position are expected to sit down when they enter the house or any place where there are elders or people of higher authority. When a young person enters a room full of adults, s/he will sit down and greet the elders before continuing with the conversation. De Kadt (1992:146) maintains that respect and reverence always follow the upward movement and certain body movements accompany it.

In the Indian community, one finds that when one enters the room, one must wait for the host or hostess to ask him to sit down. Hermnant Kaniktar (1989:32) states that if one sits down before the host(ess) asks him/her to do so, it is considered presumptuous and the host(ess) might be offended by such a behaviour. It is also the host's duty to greet the visitor first and offer him/her something to eat or drink. In some Indian homes one finds that one is expected to take off one's shoes when entering the house and walk bare foot. This is a sign of respect to the host or head of the house. In addition, to display power differentials, the person who has power must stand up. If there is no difference in status between the interlocutors, both of them can talk whilst standing up or sitting down.

Eye movement is another kinesic signal which Blacks use in order to display respect or disapproval of the person who is talking. Kruger (1990:26) notes that the Xhosas in the Eastern Cape roll their eyes

when they communicate impudence or disapproval of the person in the authority role. They move their eyes from one side of the socket to the other and lower their eyelids whilst that person is talking. In some cases, this eye-movement is followed by facial expressions like frowning and a slightly lifted upper-lip to show one's disapproval of the other person or the topic under discussion. This has also been confirmed in this study, as most Xhosa participants claim that they show their disapproval of the Indian supervisors by rolling their eyes and slightly lifting their upper lips.

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Hand movement is another form of non-verbal behaviour which shows how Indian and Black cultures differ. Ribbens (1994:127) states that Blacks who participated in her study felt insulted if one used one's left hand when handing something to them. She continues to say that using a right hand or both hands is associated with good manners, sincerity and good character. This is also confirmed in the study, where 80 percent of the Blacks felt strongly about the use of both hands and never the left hand when one receives a gift. The other 20 percent did not feel as strongly as the majority about this issue. The Hindus in the study did not see the significance of using both hands in receiving a gift. But Muslims stated that they would get offended if one used a left hand to greet them because they consider it unclean. Elion and Strieman (2001:118) and MacLeod (2002:24) state that traditionally Muslims eat with the right hand, and never the left, but modern Muslims follow the Western custom of eating with cutlery and disregard the importance of the right hand.

According to Huebsch (1995:6), the face mirrors the person's deepest inner thought and feelings. A person's face may depict anger, disgust, surprise, sadness, happiness or shock. Facial expressions can cause breakdown in communication when one misreads what is displayed on

the face. For example, in some cultures, a smile is a sign of politeness and acknowledgement of the other person's presence. In Ribbens' study, Black people expressed an objection that a White person did not greet but simply smiled when they passed each other or when entering a room. Black people interpreted the smile as an insincere and inappropriate way of greeting. On the other hand, White people accepted a smile or a grin as an appropriate way of greeting or acknowledging a person's presence. In this study, Blacks also expressed their objection to using a smile instead of a verbal greeting. 67 percent of the Blacks expressed a strong objection to this practice by Indians in the institution. The other 33 percent also expressed an objection but not as strongly as the majority. The Indians said they used a smile or a grin instead of verbally greeting a person. These differences could lead to miscommunication and labelling other people as ill-mannered and impolite. Thus, what is intended to be a politeness marker in one culture can be an offence in another culture. This leads to the development of stereotypes which can be very difficult to change.

3.5.2 PROXEMICS

Proxemics is the study of how people use the personal space and distance that is around them to mark a territory between them and those they are communicating with (Martin & Nakayama 2000:184). Many scholars believe that the space between interlocutors signifies the type of relationship that exists between them. A shorter distance between interlocutors portrays an intimate relationship. On the other hand, if one leaves a bigger personal space between oneself and the other person, it means the relationship is not intimate.

According to Edward Hall, quoted by Martin & Nakayama (2000:185), there are also cultural variations in how much distance their members place between themselves and others. He distinguishes contact cultures from non-contact cultures. Contact cultures are those whose members are much more intimate, i.e. they touch more frequently, stand close to one another when they talk, maintain direct eye contact when they communicate and speak in softer voices. Westernised societies are examples of contact cultures. In the traditional Hindu and Muslim cultures, physical contact between men and women is prohibited. Even if these people are good friends, they are not allowed to embrace or shake hands. But in an environment like a tertiary institution one finds young Indian lovers touching, kissing and standing close together in public. This is another sign that there is a major difference between traditional Indians and the so-called 'educated' Indians. There seems to be a lot of Westernisation where young people openly display intimacy between members of the opposite sex. The same thing is happening within the Black cultures - one finds young people openly embracing, touching and kissing.

Ribbens (1994:132) further says that White informants in her study complained that Black people stand close to them, especially when waiting in a queue. Finlayson, cited in Ribbens, confirms this view by saying: "...one may notice in queues that typically Black people will stand much closer to the next person in the queue, while this measure of social distance might offend a White person. Whites prefer to stand at a greater distance from the person with whom they are talking while a Black person will be quite happy standing much closer". This view is echoed by Elion and Strieman (2001:135) when they say that traditional Black people are accustomed to standing close to each other. MacLeod (2002:13) also argues that among the Blacks men avoid

physical contact like holding hands, hugging or embracing. But when open physical contact is displayed by people of opposite sex, it means there is a purely platonic relationship between them. In other words, Black people do not display intimacy by touching in public, which makes their culture non-contact.

Proximity and territoriality cause a lot of discomfort and uneasiness, especially when people do not share an intimate relationship. In some cases, a person may misread or send a wrong signal to someone from a different culture. For example, some people may read sexual undertones and affection when one stands close to them, whereas it may only be a social gesture. It is therefore important that one reads the signs correctly so as not to embarrass oneself when communicating with people from diverse cultures.

3.5.3 CHRONEMICS

Parry (2000:67) defines chronemics as the concept of time and the rules which govern its use. Levine (1998:29) adds that as people grow up, they pick up their society's conception of "...early and late, of waiting and rushing, of the past, the present and the future". In some societies and cultures time is treated as an important commodity which has to be conserved and used properly. Thus, in the Western culture, one finds that there are even proverbs and idioms which are used to indicate the importance of time. For example, there is an English idiom which says "procrastination is the thief of time", which emphasizes the importance of punctuality and doing things early. Cultures which view time as an important commodity value punctuality, completion of tasks on time and keeping to schedules (Martin & Nakayama 2000:186). In these cultures, punctuality and keeping schedules takes precedence over one's personal and social circumstances. People from these

cultures believe in using time efficiently and usually associate it with currency. A person who holds this viewpoint regards lateness and tardiness as an insult. Most of the Indians have adopted this view on time management, which is to a large extent a more Westernised viewpoint. Most Blacks still hold on to the concept of 'African time'.

The concept of African time does not emphasize immediacy or urgency to get things done. According to MacLeod (2002:15), most Black cultures have their roots in the Agrarian societies, where there was no rigid time-keeping. These cultures used the sun and other meteorological conditions to determine time, which constantly change from time to time. Hence, one finds that most Black people grapple with the Westernised concept of time, which is rigid and strict about time usage. MacLeod further says that Blacks do not consider arriving late at a function as bad manners, but leaving too soon might be misconstrued as being unhappy with the host(ess).

Black cultures also conceptualise time as a more holistic and circular commodity. These cultures adopt a very "laid-back" style, where the pace of life in general is slow and there is very little concern for clock time, (Levine 1998:30). In the study conducted by Parry (1993:11), 60 percent of the Black women said time was not their number one priority. They said that when they have an appointment they might be ten or twenty minutes late. On the other hand, 95 percent of the White women said it is extremely important for them to be punctual and to keep time schedules. Black people put more emphasis on network and familial ties when planning the use of their time. They are more flexible and fluid when they spend their time, that is, more accommodating to external factors which may disturb their time schedule.

Decision-making is also related to chronemics. People from different cultures have different ways of taking decisions. Some cultures promote impulsivity and living for the moment, whilst other cultures encourage their members to take their time to reach a decision or to speak in public. Chick (1985:309) says that Zulus value behaviour which follows a steady, measured and dignified pace. One finds that Zulu people speak at a slower pace when they deliver a speech and they are not concise. Other cultural groups may view this as being stupid or incompetent.

3.5.4 HAPTICS

Samovar and Porter (1991:159) define haptics as the study of the meaning of touch in communication. Touch is always associated with a person's feelings about the other person. These feelings may either be positive or negative. Touching associated with positive feelings comes in the form of hugging, stroking, kissing, cuddling or patting. Negative touch displays negative feelings towards a person and includes slapping, hitting, pushing and kicking.

According to Lustig and Koester (1993:199) cultures differ in the overall amount of touch they prefer and the meaning assigned to the touching. Some cultures use touch a lot, whilst others use minimal touch. In section 3.5.2 the characteristics of contact and non-contact cultures were discussed. There it was said that traditional Hindu and Muslim cultures prohibit touch between members of the opposite sex. But with the influence of Westernisation, these cultures have become contact cultures. Similarly, Black cultures prohibit intimate touch between men and women but platonic friends can touch in public.

The Eastern cultures also use touch for healing purposes. Massages are used to stimulate the recovery of weary body parts, ease tension and pain in muscles. This type of healing is rapidly gaining popularity because people are realising the benefits for these alternative forms of healing.

3.5.5 PARALANGUAGE

Fielding (1995:115) defines paralinguistics as the way in which people speak and the characteristics of their voice when they say something. Paralinguistics includes intonation, pace, resonance, volume and silence. The author further says that people make up their minds about people's age, emotions, attitudes, intelligence and level of sophistication based on the quality of their voices. Like the other non-verbal categories, paralinguistics is culturally determined and acquired.

In terms of intonation and volume of the voice, Elion and Strieman (2001:135) state that Blacks speak to each other in louder voices – so as to indicate that there are no secrets between the two participants. This means that Blacks consider speaking in a soft voice as gossiping or speaking something which should be kept a secret. Indians, on the other hand tend to speak at a faster pace and they disregard the rules of turn-taking. Furthermore, Elion and Strieman claim that whenever Indians are involved in a conversation, it is likely that they speak all at the same time, they do not wait until the other person has finished his/her speech. Kruger (1990:27) reaches the same conclusion in his study. He says that when Blacks communicate with each other they are verbose and loud. But when they speak to Whites they are less verbose. Parry (1993:15) also states that White women in her study indicated that Black women tended to shout and speak in shrill voices.

This behaviour offended the White women because their culture taught them not to shout to each other.

Silence is another paralinguistic cue which causes people to stereotype others. Silence can mean different things to different people. Some cultures promote silence, whilst others discourage it. In this study, 60 percent of the Indian group felt that being silent means that one does not understand what is being said. The Blacks presented a totally different picture; 22 percent of the respondents agreed that silence means lack of understanding, but the other 78 percent felt that silence does not mean that one does not understand what is being said. As mentioned in the last paragraph of 3.5.3, Blacks value reflective behaviour, so when one is silent, it is viewed as reflecting on what has been said and taking one's time before making a decision.

3.5.6 PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND CLOTHING

When identifying people of a particular culture, people rely on their physical appearance and clothing. Culture determines an acceptable and appropriate way in which people who belong to a certain age group, position or status should dress and appear. Huebsch (1995:6) states that cultures also differ in terms of appendages such as beard, moustache, body and facial hair, skin, grooming and general cleanliness. In Muslim societies, for instance, men do not shave their beards and moustaches for religious purposes. According to Elion and Strieman (2001:109) Muslim men only shave or trim their beards after they have sacrificed an animal after the *hajj*. In the Zulu and Xhosa culture, if a man has shaved his head it can mean that he is mourning the death of a close relative. However, nowadays a shaved head in males is a fashion statement. Therefore, it becomes difficult to

differentiate between a person who is mourning and the one who is following a certain fashion trend.

Clothing and dress also have a cultural dimension and can sometimes be a source of discord and discrimination. Certain cultural groups signal their group affiliation by the clothes they wear. For example, the traditional clothes for Zulus are different from those for Xhosas. MacLeod (2002:10) states that Zulu women wear *isidwaba* (a pleated skirt made of skin) and Xhosa women wear *umbhaco* (colourful clothing). Hindu women, on the other hand wear a *sari*. When one sees a woman wearing any of these traditional dresses he/she will automatically assume that she belongs to a particular group.

3.5.7 CULTURAL SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

Kwenda *et al* (1997:28) states that people use signs and symbols to refer to things they see, hear, do and experience in their environment. Some of these things carry specific significant meanings to the groups therefore they become sacred. In the traditional Zulu and Xhosa culture the clay pot (*ukhamba*) is a most important symbol. It is not only a source of nourishment but it also symbolises the unity and solidarity of the community.

In the Indian community, there are also things which carry meaning. For example, Elion and Strieman (2001) state that in the Hindu culture fire or light has purifying and destructive meaning. Before the Hindus can pray, they have to light a lamp or a small fire. Also, they cremate their dead because fire signifies the transition from the natural to the supernatural. This practice of cremation is unheard of in the traditional Black cultures. Recently, there have been disagreements between the Durban Metropolitan Council, specifically the department of Parks and

Recreation and the traditional leaders because of the suggestion that Zulus who live in the Durban and surrounding townships should cremate their loved ones because of the lack of burial space. This example shows how differently the Zulu culture views the issue of burial and cremation from the Hindus. The fire is a very important element of the Hindu culture and there are even events to celebrate this. The Festival of Lights or Diwali or Deepavali is celebrated each year around September. This celebration commemorates the triumph of good over evil.

For further discussion on cultural and religious symbols refer to appendix C on page 115 to 116.

In the following section, the theory that has been discussed above will be applied to the study to see how the non-verbal categories lead to miscommunication. The results of the study may be the participants' subjective views and may not apply to the greater population. One of the major influences is the environment in which the participants operate. This environment is a tertiary institution which adopts the Western culture.

3.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The questionnaire had five questions on the use of non-verbal cues when communicating with people of other cultural groups. These questions pertained to the explicit nature of non-verbal signs, silence, eye contact, interruptions during speech, and the tone of voice that is used when talking. The questions were in the form of statements where the respondents had to state whether they strongly agree, agree,

disagree or strongly disagree. Hereunder are the statements which were on the questionnaire on non-verbal behaviour:

1. It is important to send non-verbal signals which are not confusing when communicating.
2. Silence during communication means that one does not understand the message and does not know how to ask.
3. It is important to maintain eye contact with a person in order to see whether s/he is honest or not.
4. Interrupting a person during one's speech is rude and impolite.
5. A person who speaks with a loud tone of voice is either upset or angry.
6. It is impolite to hand out or to receive a gift with one hand or a left hand.
7. Smiling, instead of a verbal greeting is enough when greeting a person.

The responses to these statements varied according to individuals' preferences and cultural background. The results of the responses are summarized in the table below:

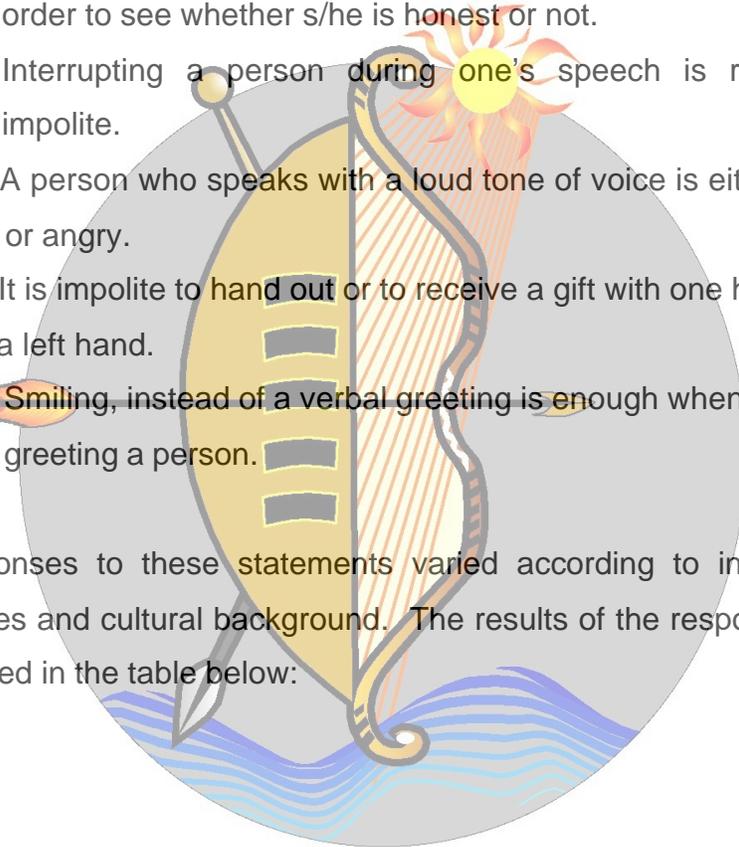


TABLE A: RESPONSES ON NON-VERBAL CUES

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. It is important to send non-verbal signals which are not confusing when communicating	B= 44% I = 50%	B = 56% I = 50%	B = 0% I = 0%	B = 0% I = 0%
2. Silence means that one does not understand the message and also does not know how to ask	B = 0% I = 20%	B = 22% I = 40%	B = 78% I = 40%	B = 0% I = 0%
3. It is important to maintain eye contact with a person in order to see whether s/he is honest or not	B = 23% I = 50%	B = 44% I = 50%	B = 33% I = 0%	B = 0% I = 0%
4. Interrupting a person during one's speech is rude and impolite	B = 78% I = 20%	B = 22% I = 20%	B = 0% I = 0%	B = 0% I = 60%
5. A person who speaks with a loud tone of voice is either upset or angry.	B = 0% I = 20%	B = 0% I = 20%	B = 67% I = 60%	B = 33% I = 0%
6. Receiving a gift with both hands, and never with a left hand is a sign of appreciation	B = 78% I = 0%	B = 22% I = 0%	B = 0% I = 67%	B = 0% I = 33%
7. A smile is enough as a form of greeting.	B = 0% I = 50%	B = 0% I = 50%	B = 33% I = 0%	B = 67% I = 0%

B = Blacks

I = Indians

3.6.1 INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS (TABLE A)

This section is going to interpret the results that have been obtained from the questionnaires and interviews. The responses that both groups gave will be compared.

The responses to question 1 indicate that both groups feel that when people communicate, non-verbal signals should be clearly expressed and should not be confusing. In terms of the level of agreement, one can see that there is a small difference between the Blacks and the Indians. Only 44 percent of the Black group strongly agree with the question compared to the 50 percent of the Indian group. The other 56 percent of the Black participants agree with the statement as compared to the 50 percent of the Indian group. Therefore, it can be concluded that both groups agree that non-verbal signals are important in the communication process and that they should not be confusing in order for communication to be successful.

The second question, which deals with the meaning of silence during communication yielded varied responses. 60 percent of the Indian group felt that being silent means that one does not understand what is being said. In the Black group, one finds a different picture being presented by the participants' responses. 22 percent of the respondents agreed that silence means lack of understanding, but the other 78 percent felt that silence does not mean this. One can, therefore, say that in the Black community, silence has a different meaning and Indians do not have an understanding of the meaning that is attached to silence by Blacks. According to Kruger (1990:27) silence among the Blacks, especially among the Xhosas, is a way of showing respect for authority. It can equally mean that one is thinking deeply about what one is listening to and s/he is taking one's time to respond because one wants to give an appropriate response.

On the question of eye contact, it seems there are varied responses. The whole Indian group which participated in the study felt that it is important to maintain eye contact with the other person because it displays honesty and sincerity. On the other hand, only 66 percent of the Blacks view eye contact as important in the communication process. The other 34 percent disagreed, meaning that they did not think that eye contact was important when one communicates with others. These results concur with the results that Parry (1993) obtained in her study, where 80 percent of the Black women felt that eye contact was important and only 20 percent declared that it was not important. It seems that there is a shift in the way the Blacks view eye contact as they become more modernised and westernised.

The fourth question also displayed differences in the way both groups perceive interruptions during speech. 78 percent of the Blacks felt strongly about interruptions, whereas the other 22 percent had moderate views. It seems that the Blacks do not like to be interrupted when they are speaking because they view that act as an insult and very rude. This view is supported by Kruger (1990:28), who states that conversational rules stipulate that the listener must wait until the speaker has finished speaking before s/he starts to speak. The Indians on the other hand, had mixed views about interruptions. 60 percent of the Indians did not think that interrupting a person whilst s/he is still talking was rude. The other 40 percent saw interrupting the speaker as rudeness. One can say that perhaps this 40 percent is exposed to the Black way of life and they have adopted their viewpoint. These different views might be a major cause of conflict between the two groups because the majority of Indians do not understand what the fuss is about when one interrupts the other person during speech. The Blacks, on the other hand, take strong offence when they are interrupted whilst they are trying to speak.

The groups have different views in terms of the tone of voice that is used by speakers. All Blacks in the study do not view a loud tone of voice as a sign of anger. Other researchers say that Blacks are generally loud when they speak. In the study conducted by Parry (1993), White women felt that Black women shout and speak in high-pitched voices. On the Indian side, 40 percent of them view a loud tone as a sign of anger and being upset. The other 60 percent agreed with the Blacks, by saying speaking aloud does not necessarily mean that one is angry or upset.

On the question of the use of hands in receiving gifts from others, the Black respondents felt that using both hands is a sign of appreciation of the gift. 78 percent of the Black participants strongly agreed with the statement that using both hands and not the left hand alone was a sign of appreciation. The other 22 percent simply agree with the statement. These responses show the belief among the Black people that using the left hand alone is offensive and impolite. Also, appreciation of a gift is important among Black people, that is why it is important to use non-verbal behaviour to display one's appreciation. The Indian group had contrasting views to the Blacks. 67 percent of the Indian group felt that it was not important to use both hands in receiving a gift and that receiving a gift with a left hand had no particular significance to them. The other 33 percent simply disagreed with the statement.

Another form of non-verbal behaviour that was investigated was the use of a smile as a form greeting. The responses of the participants revealed that Indians and Blacks have different views about the meaning of a smile. 67 percent of the Blacks felt that it was not enough just to smile when greeting a person. In other words, the Black participants disagreed with the statement that was posed to them. They

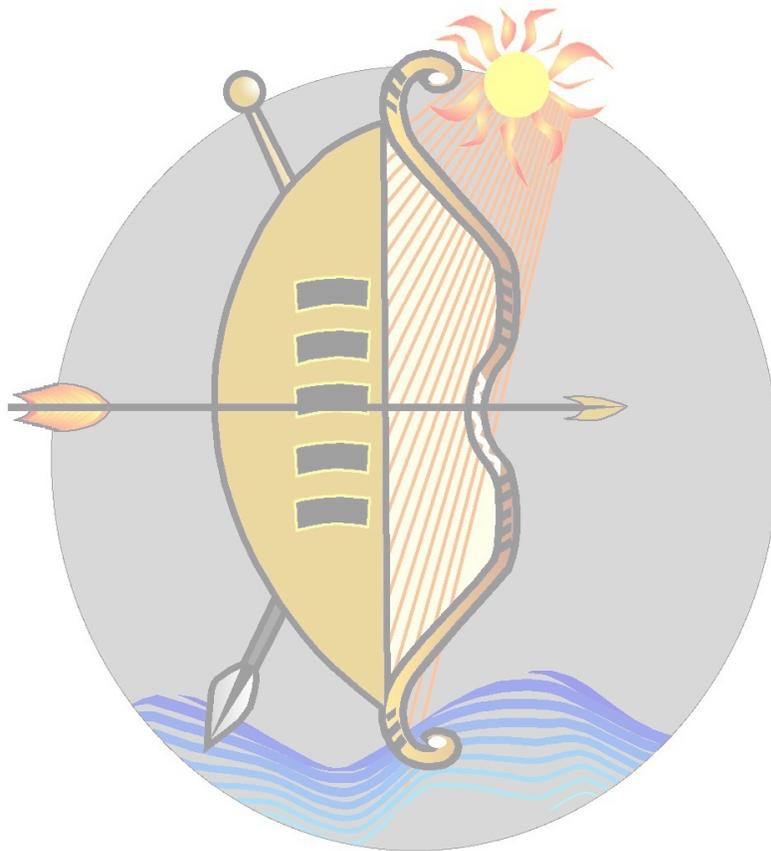
said verbal utterance shows that the person acknowledges your presence and respects you as a person. The other 33 percent strongly disagreed with the statement. Blacks said that sometimes the Indian people just grin instead of smiling, and they regard this as insincerity. On the Indian side, the responses were in contrast to the Blacks' responses. 50 percent felt that a smile can also function as a form of greeting and it is enough when greeting a person. The other 50 percent simply agreed with the statement that smiling is enough when greeting a person. They did not see it as insincerity but as one form of non-verbal communication.

Generally, Blacks and Indians attach different meanings to non-verbal behaviour and they also have different rules for displaying non-verbal behaviour. It is also interesting to note that both groups say non-verbal signals should not be ambiguous, yet in the context of communication they tend to emulate behaviour which is confusing. This confusion may lead to miscommunication and negative attitudes. The key to solving these communication problems is for one to match one's communication behaviour to the context of communication. People should also be aware of the discrepancies that are caused by non-verbal behaviour. It is also important for people to be accommodative to different kinds of non-verbal behaviour.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has revealed that non-verbal behaviour is a very important aspect of communication. Ignoring or misinterpreting non-verbal behaviour can have devastating effects on the success of communication. This chapter has also shown that Blacks and Indians interpret silence, eye contact, interruptions, tone of voice, hand

gestures and facial movements differently. A number of examples have been given to show that Indians and Blacks interpret these non-verbal signals differently and that these differences lead to negative stereotypes and prejudice. Incorrect interpretation of non-verbal behaviour also leads to the development of negative attitudes.



CHAPTER 4

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND VALUES IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the discussion is on how language attitudes and values are formed and how these reflect people's perceptions in different social and political categories. The gist of the discussion will be on how language attitudes contribute to the failure of communication between people who come from different cultural backgrounds. Throughout the discussion, examples of the language attitudes of the groups researched will be cited.

4.2 THE ROLE OF ATTITUDES IN COMMUNICATION

When people communicate with others they tend to evaluate and classify each other's behaviour based on speech, pronunciation and accent. Based on the information they obtain, they make value judgements about whether the language that others use is acceptable or unacceptable, sophisticated or uncultured, right or wrong. These value judgements lead to the development of attitudes towards people of certain classes, ethnic groups, religions and cultures. Attitudes can either be positive or negative. If they are positive, it becomes easier to relate to and to form relationships with these groups of people. But if these attitudes are negative, they lead to the formation of stereotypes, prejudice, ethnocentrism and other dysfunctional outcomes (Dodd 1991:22).

Samovar *et al* (1998:60) claim that attitudes are implicit cultural factors which influence the way people communicate with others from their own society and with those who fall outside the spectrum of their society. Attitudes are implicit because one cannot directly pinpoint them but they can be attributed to the behaviour that one displays. For example, if a Black person uses the word “koelie” or “charo” to describe Indians, it means s/he has a negative attitude towards them and this might make him/her behave in a discriminatory manner towards them. This behaviour might lead to the exchange of insults between Indians and Blacks. This may lead to more cultural conflicts, which will make communication ineffective. Samovar *et al* further contend that attitudes displayed by children towards cultural or racial groups reflect the attitudes that parents have towards those groups. This is because children copy the behaviour that is modelled by their parents, and they will use these attitudes to make sense of their environment. Attitudes also guide people about what is regarded as appropriate or inappropriate ways of behaving in the society. If a person adopts appropriate ways of behaving it makes him/her have a sense of solidarity and comfort in being a member of the cultural in-group.

4.3 DEFINING LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

Fishman cited in Ryan *et al* (1982:2) has this to say about the relationship between language and attitudes:

“...Language is not just a carrier of content, but is also a referent for loyalties and animosities, an indicator of social status and personal relationships and a marker of societal goals ... that typify every speech community”.

This quotation shows that language plays a very important role in the development of attitudes towards certain groups in the society and also perpetuates negative attitudes which have already been developed.

The World Book Dictionary (1997:132) defines an attitude as a way in which a person views something or a situation and the way in which s/he tends to behave towards it, often in an evaluative manner. In other words, attitudes reflect one's perceptions and worldviews and prompt one to react favourably or unfavourably towards a specific object or person. According to Edwards (1982:20), there are three components which comprise attitudes. These are the feeling or affective element, thoughts or cognitive element and predisposition to act or behavioural element. This means that when one has an attitude towards something, one knows or believes something, has an emotional reaction to it, and acts on this basis.

Language attitudes pertain to the way people react towards the use of language or varieties and people's perceptions towards the speakers of these varieties. This makes people classify some languages or varieties as better, more valuable and prestigious than others. For example, Silva (2003:3) mentions that standard South African English (SAE) is increasingly gaining popularity among all racial and cultural groups, even though there are only 9 percent mother-tongue English speakers in South Africa. One can therefore say that all racial and cultural groups in South Africa view SAE positively and would like to speak this variety in order to communicate with others. According to Saville-Troike (1989:182), language attitudes are acquired as a result of group membership and as a result of the enculturation process that takes place within a particular speech community. When one is introduced to the culture of the speech community, one is also introduced to the language attitudes held by that speech community.

As one copies all the other adaptive behaviour one also adopts the attitudes which are held by the members of that society towards the people who speak the other varieties of language.

Not only is a person introduced to language attitudes but s/he is also introduced to cultural values held by that group. According to Samovar *et al* (1998:60) values are "...learned organisation of rules for making choices and resolving conflicts." Groenewald (1996:15) further says that there are individual and cultural values. Cultural values are standards and guidelines that establish appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in a society. In other words cultural values guide us to what is right, or wrong, good or bad, and how to live life as acceptable members of the society. The role of cultural values is to guide both perception and conversational principles. Kaschula & Anthonissen (1995:6) give an example of how cultural values guide a Xhosa speaking person about a proper way of requesting a loan. S/he may start by talking generally about a number of matters before mentioning the need to perhaps travel home urgently. S/he may talk in a roundabout manner about the bus fare and prefer the listener to make an offer of a loan. This is in contrast to the way an Indian person would request a loan. S/he will directly state the need for a loan from the listener without wasting any time. This shows that cultural values help a person to display appropriate communication behaviour for politeness.

Both language attitudes and cultural values contribute to the success or failure of communication. Groenewald (1996:17) claims that there is a tendency by people to judge people from other cultures using their own values and to base these judgements on the languages and varieties that they use. The out-group may be seen as cultured or uncultured, intelligent or dull and superior or inferior using the cultural values and language attitudes. When one classifies people this way, s/he may not

accept the out-group's ideas and reasoning, even if those do not support his/her original evaluation. This is when miscommunication occurs because this form of communication is clouded by pre-judgements and prejudices. In order to limit these judgements, one needs to understand the value differences and attitudes held by others and try to accommodate the differences which are expressed by others.

4.4 FACTORS LEADING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ATTITUDES

The logo of the University of Limpopo is a circular emblem. It features a central shield with a yellow and orange design, possibly representing a sun or a traditional symbol. Above the shield is a stylized sun with rays. The shield is flanked by two figures, one on each side, holding up the shield. The entire emblem is set against a light blue background with wavy lines at the bottom, suggesting water or a landscape. The logo is semi-transparent and serves as a watermark for the document.

In terms of the human rights stated in the South African Constitution, all languages or varieties should be respected and encouraged to coexist in mutual harmony with others in the social environment within which they are found and used. But in reality this rarely occurs, one finds that some languages or varieties of language are treated with disrespect and are not given the attention they deserve. This negative attitude is further transferred to the speakers of that particular language or variety. According to Finlayson *et al* (1987:225), ex-colonial languages are spoken and employed by political and economic elite and these are accorded far more power and institutional function than they deserve. Ex-colonial languages, as they are viewed in the African context, include English, French and Portuguese. Hence, one finds that the attitudes towards these languages is positive and most of the time they are regarded as the *lingua franca*. In South Africa, the language of business and government is English, which means that it has a higher status than other official languages. Finlayson *et al* further state that attitudes like these reflect the views of those who speak the language, and the contexts and functions with which it is associated.

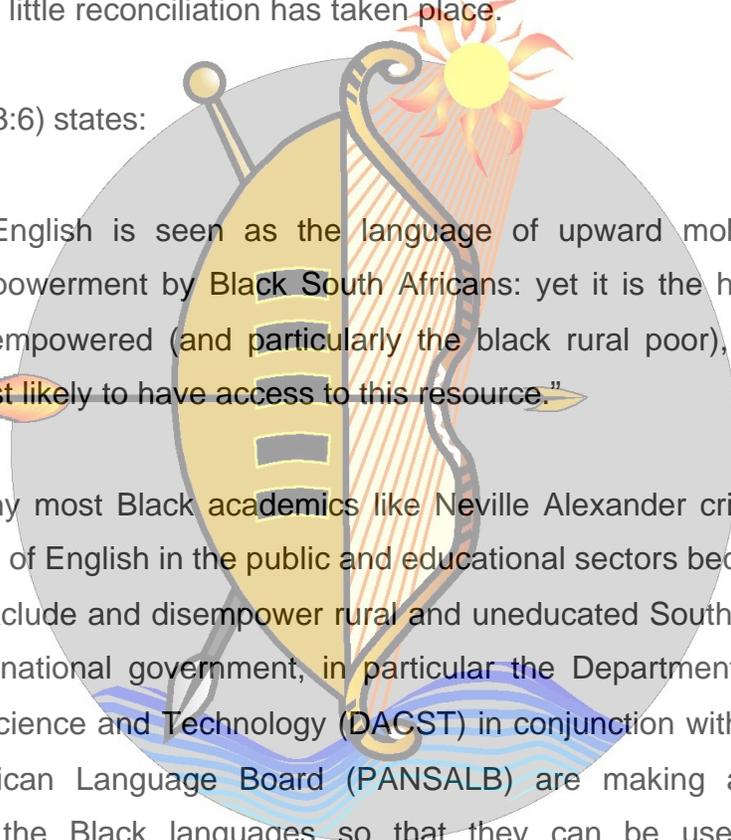


According to Holmes (1992:188), the two major influences on the development of language attitudes are social and political changes that take place in communities. People's attitudes towards languages or varieties reflect the politics of that particular country, rather than the intrinsic features of that particular language. If one racial or political group comes into power, it automatically elevates the status of its mother language. The language of the group that is in power becomes the language of government, business, and most importantly the medium of instruction in schools. When the British imperialists colonized Southern Africa, they imposed their language on the Southern African people and they elevated it into the status of an official language. Adebija cited in Finlayson *et al* (1987:255), states that Black people's languages have not been recognized; they have been lowly rated by policy planners and by Black masses themselves. This indoctrination caused every Black South Africans to aspire to speak, read and write English proficiently because it was the language which opened opportunities for employment and economic advancement. The opposite happened when the Afrikaners came into power. Silva (2003:5) states that an attempt by the Afrikaner government to introduce Afrikaans as the language of instruction in 'Bantu Education' schools supplanting English in some subjects, was the spark which ignited the Soweto uprisings of 1976.

A society can react to the situation discussed above in different ways. The members of a society can either accept the language and look forward to learning and using it in everyday communication, or they can totally reject and fight against this elevation. Finlayson *et al* (1987:227) claim that knowledge of English is instrumental in gaining material rewards and in boosting the ego of the individuals involved. As already mentioned, the elevation of Afrikaans to the language of power had devastating results on the society. Black people's reaction to Afrikaans

is still very negative because of various political reasons. Silva (2003:6) states that most Black people view Afrikaans as a language of the oppressor, and they associate it with discrimination and apartheid. This negative attitude towards Afrikaans as a language has been transferred to mother tongue speakers of Afrikaans. There is a lot of animosity between Black people and Afrikaners because of the legacy of apartheid and the suffering it brought to the Black South Africans. Even after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was implemented in 1996, very little reconciliation has taken place.

Silva (2003:6) states:



“...English is seen as the language of upward mobility and empowerment by Black South Africans: yet it is the historically disempowered (and particularly the black rural poor), who are least likely to have access to this resource.”

That is why most Black academics like Neville Alexander criticize the hegemony of English in the public and educational sectors because it is used to exclude and disempower rural and uneducated South Africans. Even the national government, in particular the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST) in conjunction with the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) are making a call to empower the Black languages so that they can be used in the economic, political, and educational sectors.

In this study, one finds the same trend shown by the participants. The majority of the participants use English to communicate with colleagues, even in cases where Blacks speak several African languages. The same situation was also observed in the Indian group, they still used English, even if they can speak Tamil, Telegu or Gujarati. Interestingly

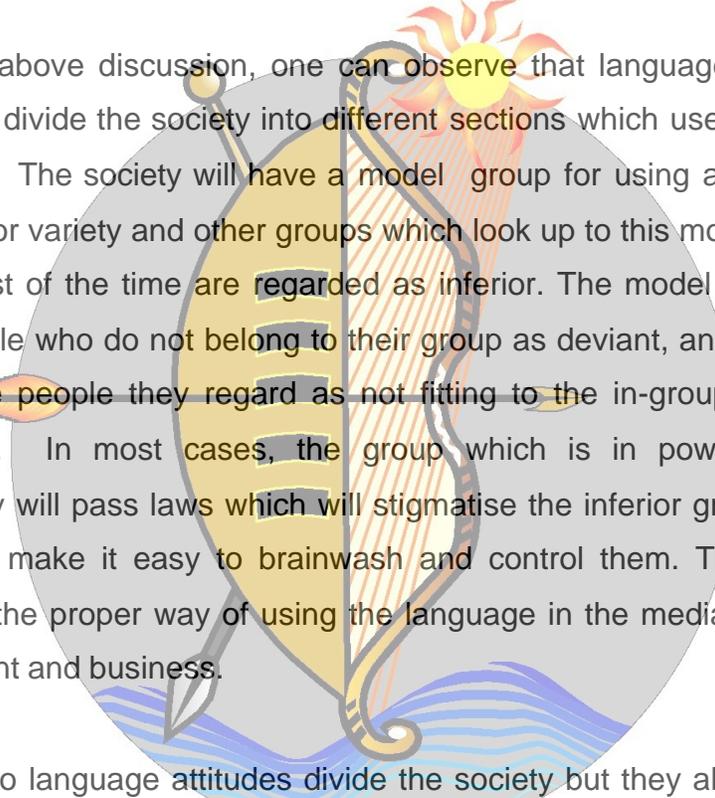
enough, Afrikaans was hardly ever used to communicate with others. This negative attitude is also transferred to the speakers of the Afrikaans language. The Indians indicated that they do not want to have a White (Afrikaner) supervisor, they would prefer one of their own kind or a Black person.

Hymes (1974:184) is of the view that the social structure influences people's attitudes towards particular languages and varieties. This means that the social differences that exist in the society teach people to discriminate, control, categorize, and keep certain people in their positions. Social factors which lead to the development of language attitudes are prestige, status and maintaining solidarity with the speakers of that language or variety. According to Ryan *et al* (1982:4), status refers to the economic, social and socio-historical power wielded by the speakers of a language variety. The standard varieties are overtly admired and generally identified as a model of good speech by all sections of the community. Holmes (1992:348) maintains that speakers who use a standard variety are rated highly on scales of educational and occupational status, and one finds that members of a society usually display positive attitudes towards standard varieties.

Among the Black South Africans, languages have also been used to promote tribalism and cultural relativity. Chick (1985:305) claims that there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that Zulu people have a tendency to judge and label people who do not speak IsiZulu fluently or those who speak Zulu with a unfamiliar accent. One finds names like "isilwanyana" meaning an animal used when referring to people who are not Zulus. Of late, Black South Africans tend to display xenophobia towards other Blacks. Words like "amakwerekwere" are used to describe Blacks who do not originate in South Africa. Also, one finds that Zulus do not fully trust Xhosas. There are stereotypes which crop

up when these groups interact. In these situations one finds those who are labelled and rejected trying by all means to adjust the way they speak so that dominant groups will accept them. Some people even go to the extent of denying their roots so that they can form part of the dominant group.

4.5 INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND VALUES ON INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION



From the above discussion, one can observe that language attitudes can easily divide the society into different sections which use language differently. The society will have a model group for using a particular language or variety and other groups which look up to this model group, which most of the time are regarded as inferior. The model group will label people who do not belong to their group as deviant, and they can isolate the people they regard as not fitting to the in-group (St Clair 1982:167). In most cases, the group which is in power in that community will pass laws which will stigmatise the inferior groups, and which will make it easy to brainwash and control them. These laws prescribe the proper way of using the language in the media, schools, government and business.

Not only do language attitudes divide the society but they also lead to linguistic prejudice. According to Kaschula & Anthonissen (1995:29) linguistic prejudice is a judgemental, denigrating attitude towards the language or language variety spoken by others. Linguistic prejudice makes people judge others as intelligent, stupid, friendly, rude, cultured, and uncultured because of their language usage, accent, vocabulary and register. In most instances, these judgements, which are based on language usage, are false and unfounded. Usually linguistic prejudice comes after, for example, incorrect transfer of communicative rules from

one language to the other. De Kadt (1992:144) calls this type of behaviour 'pragmalinguistic transfer'. Kaschula & Anthonissen (1995:3) make an example of how a Xhosa speaking person may transfer communicative rules of politeness from Xhosa to English, and this can cause listeners to be either offended or confused. Politeness rules may involve using indirect speech when one communicates with a superior or an adult. This transfer of communication rules can create linguistic prejudice which can be displayed by negative judgemental attitudes by other groups towards Xhosa-speaking people. Xhosa-speaking people may be labelled rude and uncultured.

Negative language attitudes can lead to the abandonment and rejection of cultural values and identity by those groups who are regarded as deviant. Members of these language groups may want to feel "normal" and to be accepted by everyone in the community, and this acceptance means that they should sever the ties with the language which is the source of their embarrassment and degradation. This has been the situation with regards to the South African Indian groups. Most of them have abandoned Hindi, Tamil and Telegu languages and adopted English because they wanted to feel like real South Africans. Marshfield (1998:2) states that most Indians express profound regret and a sense of deculturation at having lost their ancestral languages and at their inability to speak these languages. This study shows that a fraction of the Indian population can speak the Indian languages. The little Tamil or Hindi they know is from the religious rituals, chants and prayers they recite. The Indian great-grandparents feel that the younger generation has betrayed the Indian culture and feel that they are not to be trusted. On the other hand, this generation does not feel fully accepted within the English community because they are not fully part of the English culture.

There are two ways in which people react to the attitudes that others display towards them. Some people react by giving in to the pressure that people put on them, or they may distance themselves further from those who have negative attitudes towards them. In Saville-Troike (1989:203) it is stated that the behaviour displayed by the former group is 'convergence', which is the modification of one's language or variety towards the language or variety used by other speakers, due to a desire for the listener's social approval. An example of convergence occurs when the a Xhosa-speaking person from the Eastern Cape goes to Gauteng and starts to adopt the lingo that is used by people in Gauteng so that s/he will be accepted as part of the cliques in Gauteng. This person will have some Sotho, Zulu, Tswana, English and Afrikaans words and the tone of voice and pronunciation will be much softer and will not stress some sounds. The reason why this person changes his/her language is that s/he does not want to be identified as an outsider.

In other circumstances, one finds that people who are ostracized for being different will become more determined to retain their original identity. Saville-Troike (1989:203) calls this behaviour 'linguistic divergence.' This occurs when speakers of a language or variety dissociate themselves from those who have a variety which is prestigious. The person will maintain his/her distinctiveness in terms of the language s/he uses, accent, prosodic features like pitch contours, rate and volume of speech. In this situation, one becomes like an ambassador of one's culture and carries the hopes and pride for one's culture.

Even though one may think that convergence is a useful way of adjusting to the new environment or maintaining solidarity with those who speak a certain variety, others may view it as artificial. Those who

speak the variety or language may view the person who changes his/her speech to imitate them as mocking or condescending, especially if the person is from a group with lower prestige (Saville-Troike 1989:204). Also, divergence may not be something that is negative, but may rather be regarded as being free to be oneself in a comfortable environment where one is able to express one's true self. One must realise that being different is not a bad thing, that is how people were created and so we should be proud of who we are and the way we speak. A quote from Sure cited by Finlayson *et al* (1987:244) summarizes the dilemma that Black people find themselves in:

“...the conflict between loyalty to one language and the utility of another; the choice of learning a language because it is useful (instrumentation) and learning another because it marks the individual's cultural, ethnic or national identity (integration).”

This can further be illustrated by the findings in the study concerning Indians' and Blacks' attitudes towards each other and also on the way each group communicates in English.

4.6 RESEARCH FINDINGS ON LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AMONG BLACKS AND INDIANS

The method of investigation which has been used to test the participants' language attitudes is the direct measurement tool. It was easier for the researcher to ask direct questions about the participants' attitudes than to infer from their evaluations. A series of questions were posed during the interviews and in the questionnaires. The following are some of the questions which were posed to the participants:

1. Does your culture influence the way you view your supervisor, middle manager or colleagues from different cultures?
2. Do you judge people by the way they speak English?
3. Can you tell the person's level of education by listening to his/her speech?
4. If a person speaks English with a Zulu/Xhosa accent, would you treat him/her differently?
5. If someone speaks English with an Indian accent, would you treat him/her differently?
6. Do you change your speech style when you speak to the following types of people:
 Family and friends
 Colleagues
 Supervisor or manager
7. Would you choose a Black, Indian, White or any other racial group manager/supervisor, if you had a choice?
8. How do you feel about the relationship between Indian and Black employees at the Durban Institute of Technology?
9. What suggestions do you have to improve communication between Blacks and Indians at Durban Institute of Technology?

4.6.1 FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

In Chapter 2, it is stated that participants were asked about their language preference. The findings reveal that 83 percent of the Blacks prefer to use English when communicating with their colleagues. Ten percent of participants use Zulu and the other 7 percent use Xhosa to communicate with their colleagues. The Indians, on the other hand, use English all the time when they communicate with colleagues, whether they are Indians or Blacks. These results prove that English is a very

desirable and popular language. Unfortunately the results did not reveal which variety of English was most popular among the participants. Even though they may choose a specific variety, one may find discrepancies when they have to use that variety. For example, most Blacks might say they prefer Standard English which is spoken by White South Africans, but they would still continue to use Black English when they communicate. On the other hand, Indians use Standard English when they talk to White people and Blacks but use Indian English when they communicate with one another.

TABLE B: PERCENTAGES OF PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES

Question no	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6		7.	8.
						Y	N		
Blacks	Y=25%	N=100%	Y = 90%	Y=80%	Y=20%	Fm 20	80%	Blck 60%	Gd 0%
	N=75%	Y= 0%	N=10%	N=20%	N=80%	Col 70	30%	Indn 0%	Fr 45%
						Spv 100	0	Wht 5%	Pr 55%
Indians	Y=10%	N=100%	Y=80%	Y=60%	Y=20%	Fm 70	30%	Blck 25%	Gd 30%
	N=90%	Y= 0%	N=20%	N=40%	N=80%	Col 100%(Y)		Indn 25%	Fr 70%
						Spv100%(Y)		Wht 0%	Pr 0%
								Any 50%	

Key: Question 1-6 Y = Yes

N = No

Question 6 Fm = Family

Col = Colleagues

Spv = Supervisor

Question 8 Gd = Good

Fr = Fair

Pr = Poor

Question 7 Blck = Black

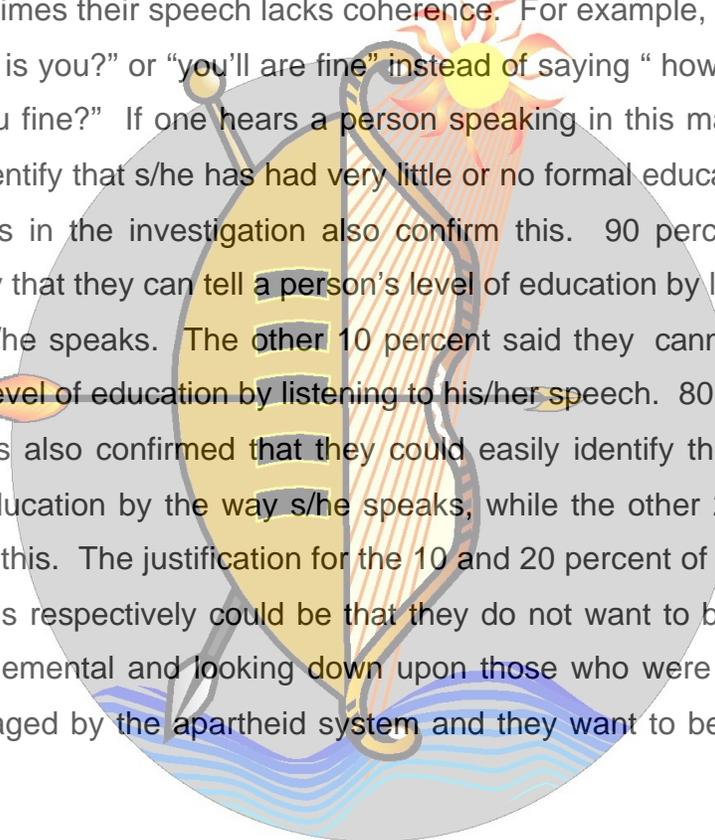
Indn = Indian

Wht = White

4.6.2 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The first question focused on the way culture influences perception. The reason for asking this question is that perception is the major determiner of attitudes. The way one perceives a person or thing leads to the formation of an attitude towards that person or thing. Perception is mainly shaped by one's culture. However, the results negate this view as the majority of the Indians and the Blacks in the group disagree with the question. 90 percent of the Indians say they do not believe that their culture influences the way they view and interact with their colleagues, supervisors and managers. The responses of the Blacks display the same trend - 75 percent of them responded the same way as the Indians. 25 percent of the Blacks acknowledge the role that is played by culture in their perception of their colleagues, supervisors and senior managers. This means that if the perception is negative the working relationship may also be negative.

The second question pertained to the participants' judgements about the way others speak English. In section 4.5 of this chapter, it was found that linguistic prejudice causes people to judge others as stupid, intelligent, cultured, uncultured and so on, based on the way they speak the language. The truth of this prejudice cannot be substantiated with the results. The results reveal that all the participants do not judge people based on the way they speak English. There seems to be a fear from the participants to show their true feelings about judging people who cannot speak English well and who are mostly Blacks. Black participants seem to be showing patriotism towards their fellow people and Indians do not want to be labelled as unsympathetic towards the disadvantaged group.



According to Holmes (1992:348), the speakers who use a standard variety are rated highly on scales of educational and occupational status. This means that those who speak a standard variety of English are always associated with good education and good job opportunities. Those who speak a different English variety are always said to be lacking education and holding low positions in terms of jobs. The speech of those who speak a non-standard variety contains ungrammatical sentences, have an awkward accent and pronunciation, and sometimes their speech lacks coherence. For example, the person says “how is you?” or “you’ll are fine” instead of saying “ how are you?” or “are you fine?” If one hears a person speaking in this manner, it is easy to identify that s/he has had very little or no formal education. The participants in the investigation also confirm this. 90 percent of the Blacks say that they can tell a person’s level of education by listening to the way s/he speaks. The other 10 percent said they cannot tell the person’s level of education by listening to his/her speech. 80 percent of the Indians also confirmed that they could easily identify the person’s level of education by the way s/he speaks, while the other 20 percent cannot do this. The justification for the 10 and 20 percent of the Blacks and Indians respectively could be that they do not want to be seen as being judgemental and looking down upon those who were previously disadvantaged by the apartheid system and they want to be politically correct.

One of the strategies that the ‘model’ group uses when communicating with those who speak a non-standard variety is to use accommodation strategies. According to Dodd (1995:123), communication accommodation occurs when members of an in-group use an elaborated code when communicating with members of an out-group. Questions 4 and 5 tested the reaction of the participants to an unfamiliar accent that is used to speak English. It is clearly revealed in

question 4 that 40 percent of the Indians treat the Zulus and Xhosas differently from the Indians when they speak English. Indians employ more accommodation strategies like using simple language and gestures to get their ideas across, whilst the other 60 percent do not use these strategies. This means that the 60 percent continue to communicate normally even if the other person uses an unfamiliar accent or words. When it comes to their own racial group, they are not very accommodating. Only 20 percent of the Indians treat fellow Indians differently if they speak English with an Indian accent. The other 80 percent communicate normally even if a person uses an Indian accent when speaking English. It may be that the 80 percent may also be using the Indian accent themselves to speak English, so they do not change their strategies to communicate. They continue with their speech as normal because it is a way of maintaining solidarity with other Indians, and also because they are not having any problems understanding each other.

The Blacks, on the other hand, do not treat fellow Blacks differently if they speak English with either a Zulu or Xhosa accent. This is because most of them use an accent associated with their first languages. 80 percent of Blacks gave negative responses, whereas only 20 percent said they treat a person differently if s/he speaks English with a Zulu or Xhosa accent. The justification of the 80 percent response is still the same as that of the Indians, i.e. people are more understanding and accommodating of their own kind, because they may have inside information about the reasons why people use a particular accent. Interestingly enough, 80 percent of the Blacks are not as understanding and accommodative of the Indians who speak English with a unfamiliar accent. The other 20 percent showed understanding of the Indians when they speak with an unfamiliar accent.

The sixth question is aimed at determining whether participants attempt to illustrate solidarity with a particular group by using the language that the group understands. The participants were asked whether they change their speech style when they communicate with family and friends, colleagues, supervisors or managers. 70 percent of the Indians in the study revealed that they do change their speech style when they communicate with their family and friends. This means that they use informal and more colloquial language or any other informal variety with their family and friends, and it doesn't have to be standard language. The other 30 percent said they do not change their language when they communicate with their family and friends. With the Blacks in the study the responses are the opposite of that of the Indians. Only 20 percent said they change their speech style when they communicate with family and friends. The other 80 percent maintain that their speech style remains the same.

The other responses show a similar trend in terms of the responses of the two groups. Both groups seem to change the way they speak when they communicate with their supervisors and colleagues. These responses are somehow linked to the responses in question 1, where the participants review the way they perceive their colleagues and supervisors or managers. In the Black culture a person with a lower position is expected to respect the person who is in authority. Even the language s/he uses must reflect respect and politeness. That is why all the Blacks responded by saying they change their speech style when they communicate with people in authority positions. The same goes for the Indians, they respect their superiors and elders, that is why they use a different speech style when they communicate with them. Chick (1985:306) confirms these findings in his analysis of communication conventions. He says the Zulus and Asians in the study found it difficult to use the leader's first name though they were frequently invited to do

so. With colleagues or equals, the language will also change, but not to the level of the language that is used with supervisors and managers. The speech style will be more informal and colloquial depending on the type of relationship that exists between people who work together.

The participants were also asked to state their preferences for supervisors, so that we can really find out how they feel about each cultural group. However, on the Indian side, the majority of the respondents were not willing to reveal their attitudes towards other racial groups if they become their supervisor or managers. 50 percent of the Indians preferred any supervisor as long as s/he is fairly appointed and is competent enough for the particular job s/he is selected for. The other 25 percent was equally shared by Black and Indian supervisors. These participants preferred either to have a Black or Indian supervisor. None of them prefer Whites as supervisors, which also points out that they view Whites in the same light as in the apartheid era when they were perceived as oppressed by other racial groups.

Blacks responded differently to question 7. 60 percent of the Blacks preferred Black supervisors. None of them would like to have an Indian as a supervisor. 5 percent would like to have a White person as a supervisor and then there was the other 35 percent who would accept any of the racial groups as supervisor. Among the Blacks, there seems to be an idea that Indians do not make good supervisors or managers and that Blacks are the best supervisors. This is based on the participants' responses to this particular question. Also, these responses reveal the way both groups feel about each other and the relationship that exists between them. As mentioned in chapter 1, there is a lot of animosity and mistrust between the two groups, hence they

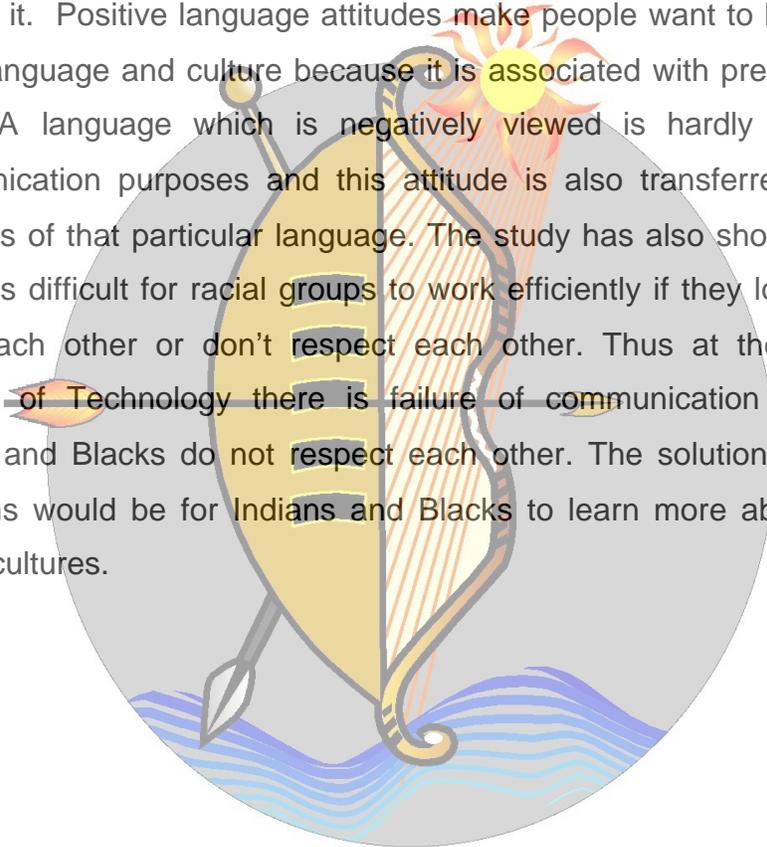
feel that if one of them gets into a position of power, there would be tensions.

For intercultural communication to succeed, there has to be a good relationship between the interlocutors. If a person views the other person negatively and uses cultural stereotypes rather than individual differences, there might be miscommunication. It is therefore important for this study to find out how the two groups view the relationship between them. Hence, question 8 asks both groups to rate the relationship between them. The majority of Blacks, i.e. 55 percent, feel that the relationship is poor. The other 45 percent says the relationship is fair, which means it is neither good nor bad. The way the Blacks view the relationship between themselves and Indians shows that they have a negative attitude towards them. This could negatively influence the way they communicate with each other. On the Indians side, 70 percent say the relationship is fair and the other 30 percent says it is good.

Finally, the participants were asked to suggest measures which could be used to improve the relationship between these two cultural groups. Most of the participants suggested there should be open dialogue to share their cultural beliefs and values without the fear of being labelled negatively. The participants also suggested that the members of these cultural groups should be ambassadors for their culture and teach others about appropriate and acceptable behaviours in their culture.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has once again shown that culture plays a very important role in the way people view others and the languages they use. The theoretical discussion reveals that language attitudes develop as a result of social and political issues in that particular community. If a language is forced on people, they may either accept or reject it. Acceptance of that language results in people having a positive attitude towards it. Positive language attitudes make people want to learn and use a language and culture because it is associated with prestige and power. A language which is negatively viewed is hardly used for communication purposes and this attitude is also transferred to the speakers of that particular language. The study has also shown that it becomes difficult for racial groups to work efficiently if they look down upon each other or don't respect each other. Thus at the Durban Institute of Technology there is failure of communication because Indians and Blacks do not respect each other. The solution to these problems would be for Indians and Blacks to learn more about each other's cultures.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Leedy's view the final part of any research study should be a stage where the researcher asks the question "what does it all mean"? (1993:99). In other words, the researcher should interpret findings to an understandable level and make connections with real-life situations so that the findings are applicable to an ordinary person in the street. Hence, the main idea behind this final chapter is to summarize the study and to review the implication of the study to the Technikon community and South African society at large. Recommendations will also be made on how to fruitfully resolve intercultural communication barriers between Blacks and Indians at the Durban Institute of Technology.

5.2 REVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The study has five chapters, each of these deals with a cultural barrier to intercultural communication. These chapters are summarized below:

5.2.1 CHAPTER 1

The purpose of this study is outlined in this chapter and it read thus:

To establish whether different English language varieties, non-verbal behaviour and language attitudes and values impede successful

intercultural communication between two cultural groups, namely, Indians and Blacks. This purpose was encapsulated in three research problems which are stated below:

- Differences in language varieties used by Indians and Blacks result in miscommunication.
- Non-verbal behaviour of Indian and Black groups impedes successful communication.
- Language attitudes and cultural values lead someone to stereotype a person of a different culture.

These problems form the basis of the discussion in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. These chapters cite evidence to prove whether or not these research problems lead to miscommunication through theoretical discussion and the results of the study.

5.2.2 CHAPTER 2

This chapter attempts to answer Research Question 1, which states that language varieties spoken by Indians and Blacks lead to communication breakdown. The following results were obtained:

Speakers use different varieties of English; Blacks speak Black English which is influenced by African languages and Indians speak Indian English which is influenced by Indian languages. The participants have different levels of fluency in English. Those who speak English as a home language speak better English than those who speak it as a second or third language. Because of the different varieties of English spoken by these groups one finds that Blacks feel misunderstood by Indians. Blacks also do not have enough English words to express themselves when they communicate with Indians. Indians, on the other

hand, have to repeat themselves several times before Blacks can understand them. This is because Indians speak at a faster pace and their English accent is unfamiliar. Participants also use different styles of speaking and these also influence the way they are understood or perceived by others.

These misunderstandings lead to communication breakdown and looking down upon speakers of a particular language variety. As a result of this breakdown the participants came up with a few solutions to these communication problems. One is to have Indians learning to speak one or more African languages. The other solution that the participants suggested is sensitivity and tolerance towards the limited fluency and the language variety that is used by another group.

5.2.3 CHAPTER 3

In this chapter, non-verbal behaviour as the cause of miscommunication is investigated. Non-verbal behaviour causes miscommunication because each group attaches different meanings to the behaviour displayed by the other. For example, Indians interpret silence and speech interruptions as an indication that the speaker does not understand what is said and as a conversational strategy respectively. On the other hand, Blacks believe that silence and interruptions are politeness and respect markers. Miscommunication also occurs when these groups transfer the meaning their culture attaches to a particular non-verbal behaviour into intercultural communication. The speakers are also unaware about the cultural differences that non-verbal behaviour carries and they unconsciously assume universality of meaning.

Another significant finding is that participants interpret a neutral non-verbal message incorrectly. Examples which showed this are the significance of the right and left hands and a smile in both the Black and Indian cultures. In the Indian culture, the left and the right hands are neutral and one can receive a gift with any of these hands because they don't have any special significance. Within the Zulu and Xhosa cultures, using the left hand shows that one is not grateful for the gift that one is receiving and this may greatly offend the giver. Hence, using a left hand to receive a gift while saying "thank you" would contradict the verbal message and may be construed as insincerity.

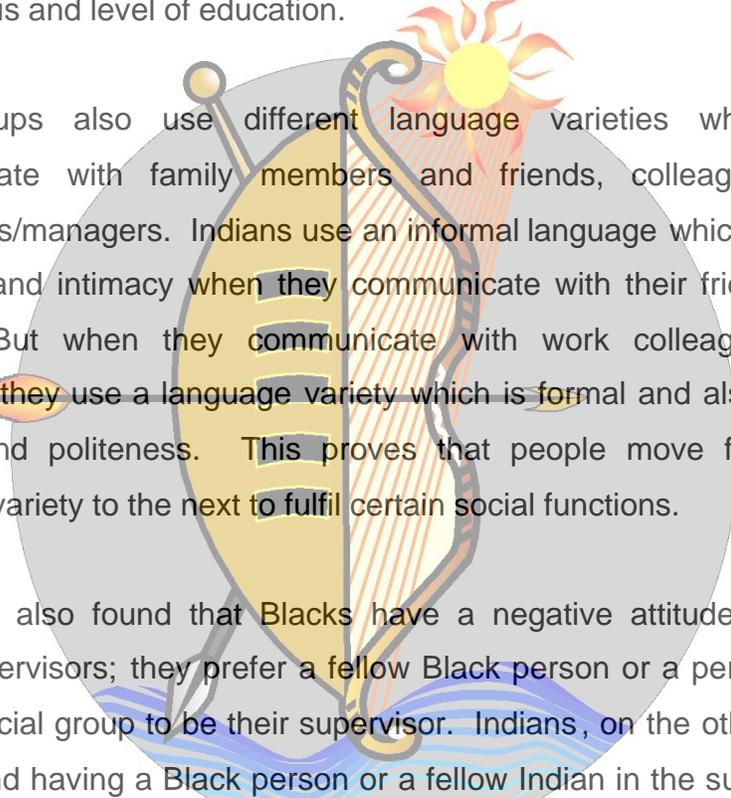
Differences between Indians and Blacks were also displayed in the way they interpreted interruptions and speaking in a loud voice. Generally, it is assumed that Blacks speak louder than Indians. Whilst Blacks viewed loudness as a normal way of speaking, Indians attached emotions to the loud voice. In terms of interruptions during the speech, differences also emerged in the way they were viewed.

It was also discovered that the incorrect use of non-verbal behaviour could lead to the development of stereotypes and negative attitudes. Based on non-verbal behaviour, one can judge whether the speaker is polite or rude. Each group uses different politeness strategies and these are usually expressed non-verbally. Differences in the politeness strategy can lead to miscommunication.

5.2.4 CHAPTER 4

The last cultural barrier is discussed in this chapter. Here the role of language attitudes in the failure of communication between Indians and Blacks has been discussed. The study reveals that a negative attitude towards a group leads to the failure of communication. It has also been

revealed that people would not use a language if they perceive it negatively. In the case of English, it was found that the participants viewed it as a desirable language and therefore used it to communicate with each other. It was also found that listeners judge the speakers as intelligent or stupid, cultured or uncultured, educated or uneducated, based on the way they speak English. When someone speaks English incorrectly, both groups view him/her as being uneducated. This confirms the theory that English is used as a yardstick for showing one's status and level of education.



Both groups also use different language varieties when they communicate with family members and friends, colleagues and supervisors/managers. Indians use an informal language which reflects solidarity and intimacy when they communicate with their friends and family. But when they communicate with work colleagues and superiors, they use a language variety which is formal and also shows respect and politeness. This proves that people move from one language variety to the next to fulfil certain social functions.

The study also found that Blacks have a negative attitude towards Indian supervisors; they prefer a fellow Black person or a person from another racial group to be their supervisor. Indians, on the other hand, do not mind having a Black person or a fellow Indian in the supervisory or management position. However, Indians do not like to have a White person to be their manager or supervisor. These findings display the kind of relationship that exists between these two groups. Blacks feel that overall the relationship is not as good as it should be but it is average. The Indians are more optimistic about the relationship between them and Blacks and they view it as relatively good.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

From the analysis of the findings, conclusions were drawn based on the three cultural barriers named above.

In the whole study it emerges that communication between Indians and Blacks is not successful because these groups do not have a full understanding of each other's cultures. Firstly, these cultural groups speak different varieties of English, which makes messages unclear and misinterpretation of intentions arise every time these groups interact. One can therefore say different varieties contribute to a certain extent to the failure of intercultural communication.

One may also reach the conclusion that non-verbal behaviour may lead to misinterpretation of the speaker's intention. As mentioned in Chapter 3, people believe non-verbal behaviour more than verbal communication. If one misinterprets or transfers the meaning of non-verbal behaviour from one's own culture, serious communication problems may arise. Both Indians and Blacks interpret silence, eye contact, interruption, loudness, smiles and hand gestures differently. According to Ribbens (1994:184), non-verbal behaviours play an important role in assessing the level of respect and politeness of the other group. Within the Black culture, status and authority are communicated through the use of non-verbal behaviour. MacLeod (2002:13) says that Blacks avoid eye contact because it is regarded as disrespectful, arrogant and threatening. Among the Indians, men are not allowed to touch women in public; even shaking their hands is forbidden.

In terms of attitudes, the findings indicate clearly that Blacks have a negative attitude towards Indians and they go so far as not wanting to

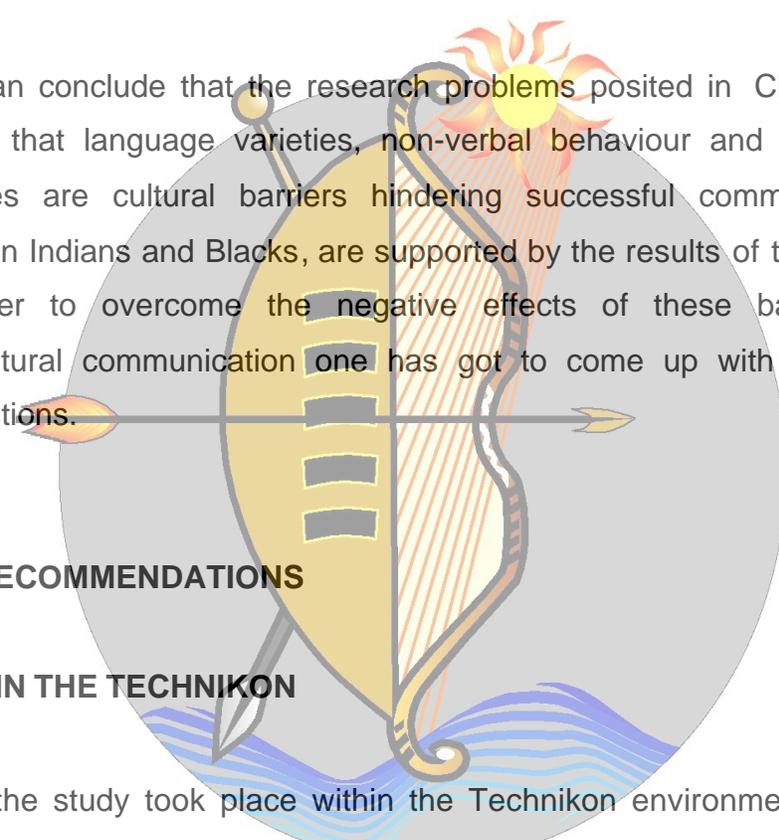
have them as supervisors or managers. This situation is likely to make Black staff disrespect and have racial prejudice towards Indian managers and supervisors. If one does not respect another person, s/he will not use respectful language when referring to him or her and will negatively judge everything that s/he says. This is when miscommunication occurs and intercultural conflict may arise. Also, the results reveal problems with the relationship between the two groups which could interfere with communication between them.

One can conclude that the research problems posited in Chapter 1, stating that language varieties, non-verbal behaviour and language attitudes are cultural barriers hindering successful communication between Indians and Blacks, are supported by the results of the study. In order to overcome the negative effects of these barriers in intercultural communication one has got to come up with strategic suggestions.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 IN THE TECHNIKON

Since the study took place within the Technikon environment, it is a good idea to have solutions to the problems which are applicable to this environment. The first solution to organisational communication problems which Ribbens (1994:190) suggests is that organisations should develop suitable intercultural communication awareness training courses for their employees. The staff development department working hand-in-hand with skills development facilitators should design these courses to help Black and Indian employees cope with the challenges of intercultural communication. The content of these



courses should incorporate sensitising participants about the importance of their own cultures, appreciation of other cultures, and developing important skills like listening, empathy, reading non-verbal behaviour correctly in intercultural interaction and being non-judgemental towards other groups. To make these training courses realistic, simulations of real-life situations should be used so that participants get the full benefits of these awareness programmes.

In 1998, the Department of Communication at ex-ML Sultan Technikon started teaching Indian and White academic staff basic conversation skills in Zulu. This project helped the people who participated to understand the language which is used by the majority of people in KwaZulu-Natal. It is suggested that the Durban Institute of Technology management should re-introduce this programme and involve administrative and support services sectors. This project should be taken further by developing intermediate and advanced levels courses in conversational Zulu. There should be monitored progression so that the full benefits of this course could be enjoyed. Not only should staff learn to speak Zulu, they should also learn the sociolinguistic rules associated with speaking it.

One can go further and recommend that Blacks also learn the conversational strategies that all racial and cultural groups in the Technikon use in communication. The other suggestion, which is made by du Preez (1987:13), is the use of interpreters when there are big gatherings of all employees. This would work well because there is a department which teaches interpreting and translation at the Technikon.

5.4.2 IN SOUTH AFRICA

Reagan (1986:66) suggests that cultural barriers can be overcome by using the Cultural Synergy Model which was established by Godsell in 1983. This model is based on the assumption that culture-specific ways of conducting business and communicating should be recognised and valued. This means that the business and organisational culture should not only adopt Western ways of doing things, but should also take into consideration the Black and Indian cultural practices of the employees. For example, employers should recognise that the Black way of life involves taking into consideration the high-context style of communication, which relies mainly on non-verbal behaviour and other implicit means of communication.

For nation-building to succeed in South Africa, the citizens of this country should put more emphasis on similarities between cultures than on differences. Steyn (1994:21) states that "...highlighting differences tends to bring into focus possible conflict areas, but emphasizing similarities highlights potential for mutual satisfaction." This view is echoed by Kruger (1990) who emphasizes that speakers must focus on language and cultural universalia. This does not mean that people ignore and deny the existence of differences, but that they acknowledge and deal with them in a positive manner.

Other solutions to intercultural problems are: cultivating the spirit of '*ubuntu*' or humaneness and considerateness when communicating with other people (refer to Appendix B on page 114 for guidelines on the concept of *ubuntu*). People should also acknowledge and respect other cultures and make an effort to learn more about them. Finally, du Preez (1987:14) states that successful communication is a result of knowing one's true values and beliefs and what one stands for.

5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study should be replicated to the larger community of KwaZulu-Natal because over the past year relations between the two groups were put to the test with Mbongeni Ngema's controversial song titled "AmaNdiya." This song highlighted that there is animosity and a need for reconciliation between these two cultural groups.

In future a study of this nature should also take into consideration different demographic factors like the religion of the participants. In the Indian community, for example, culture is equal to religion. Hindus follow a Hindu way of life and Muslims a Muslim way of life. Within the Black group, one can differentiate between religion and culture because there are Blacks who still practise one or two aspects of Black culture like sacrificing animals to ancestors but are also Christians.

5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has highlighted the influence of culture on our perception of the world around us and the people in it. It has also pointed out that things that we regard as universal can lead to stereotyping, misjudging and miscommunication. People always think that they will perceive things the same way as others do. When this does not happen, they tend to point at others and tell them to change, whereas they should be changing their own behaviour. It is believed that if people are aware of their ethnocentric tendencies, it will be easier for them to accept and live in harmony with other racial groups. South Africans need to develop effective interpersonal and interaction skills so that the walls of racial and cultural segregation can be broken down.

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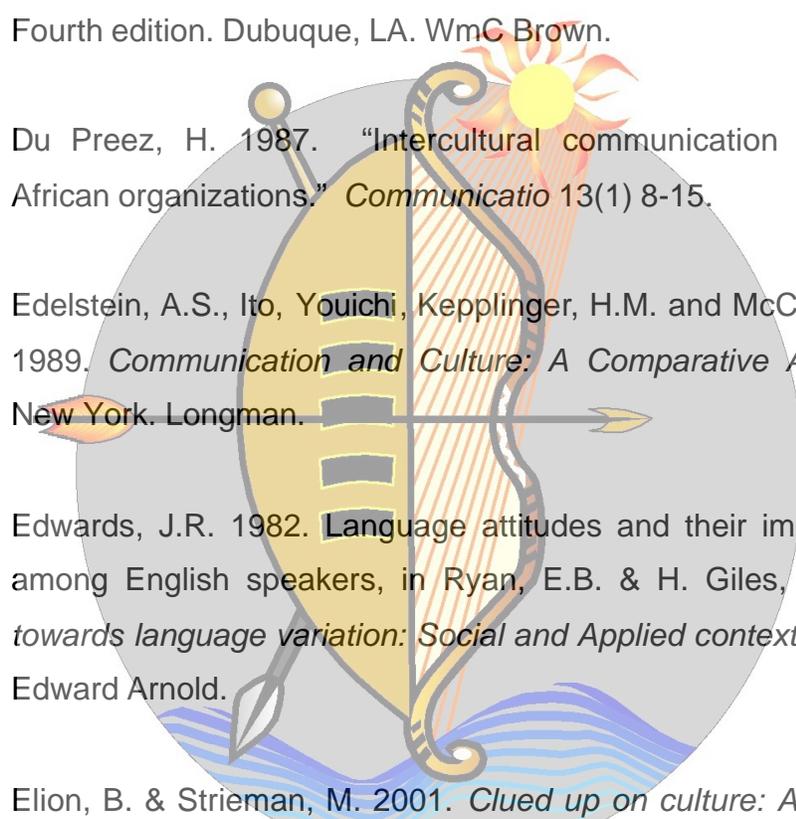
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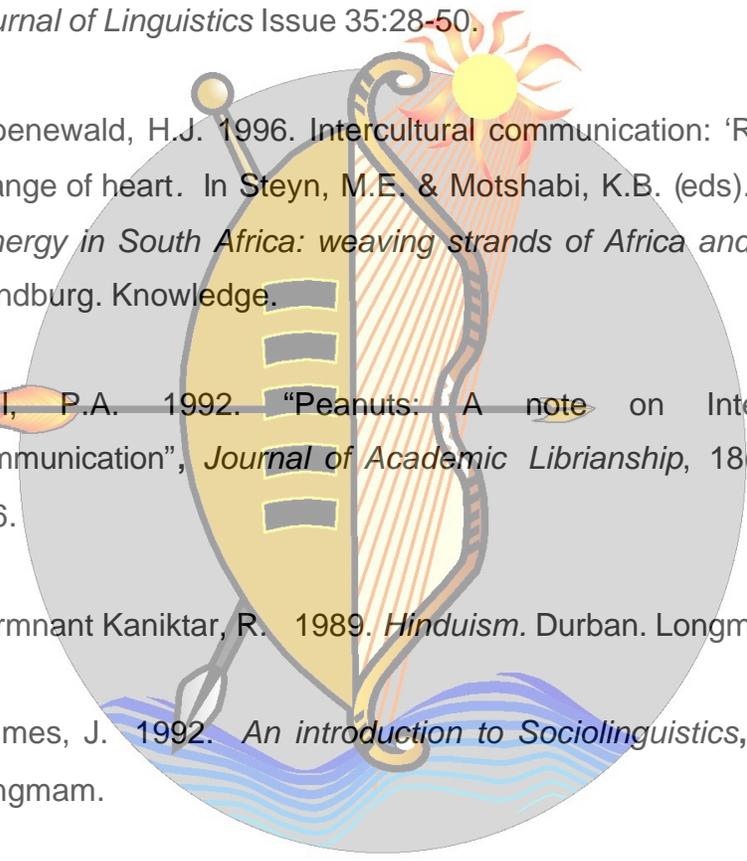
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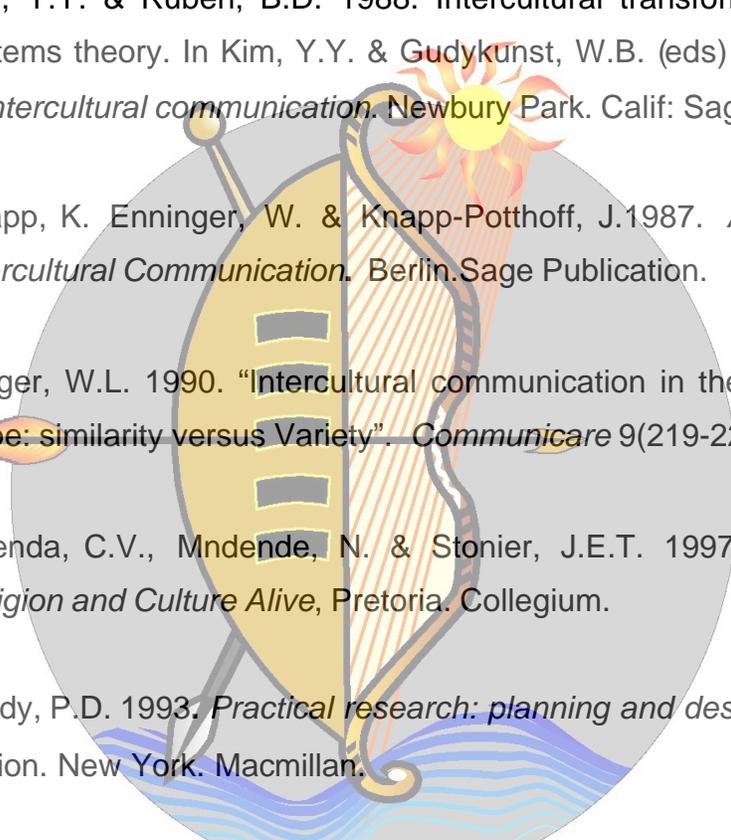
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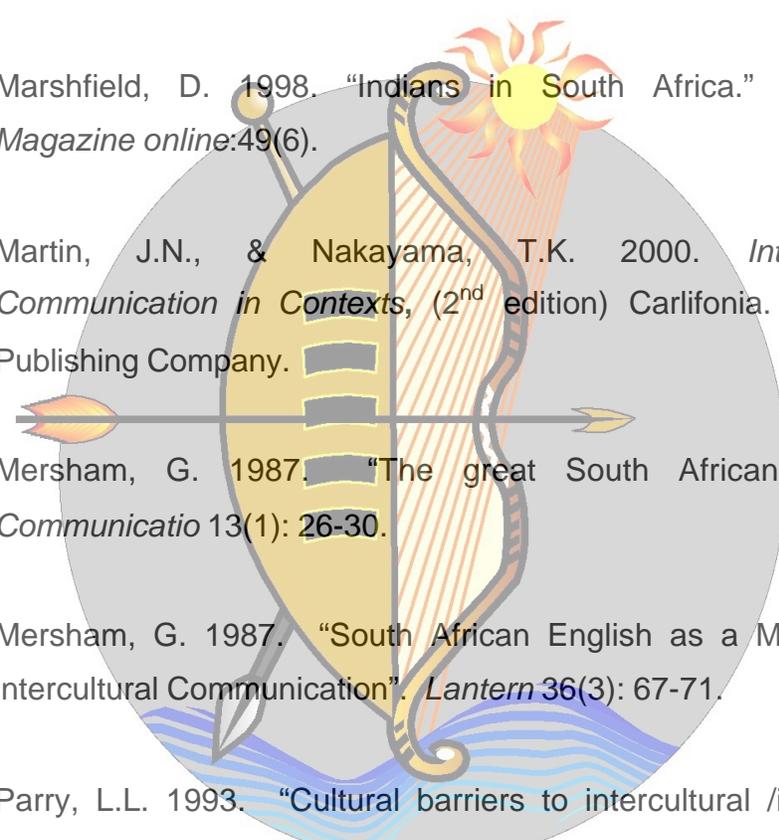
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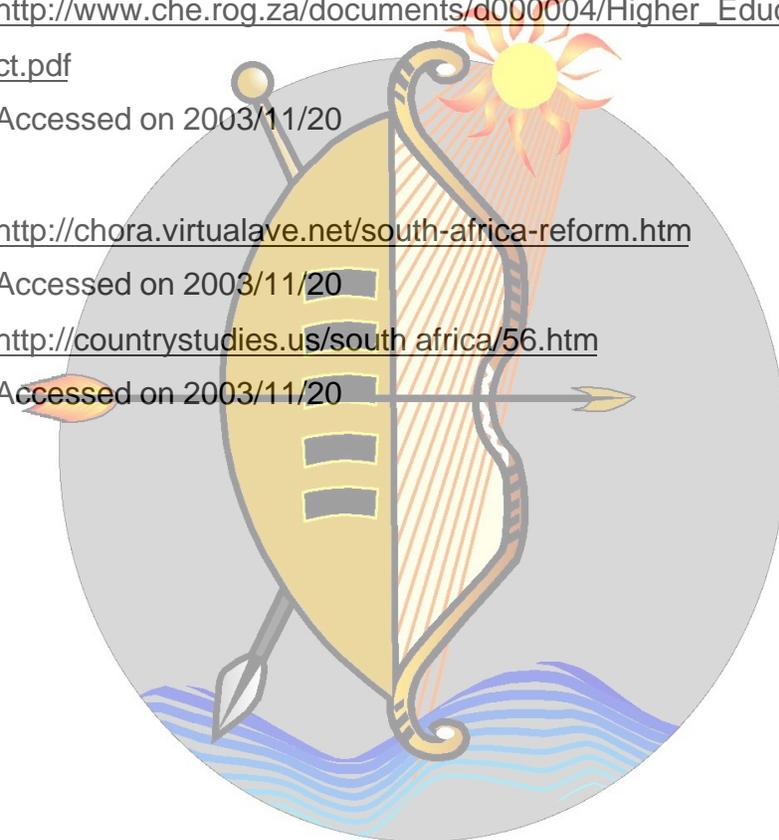
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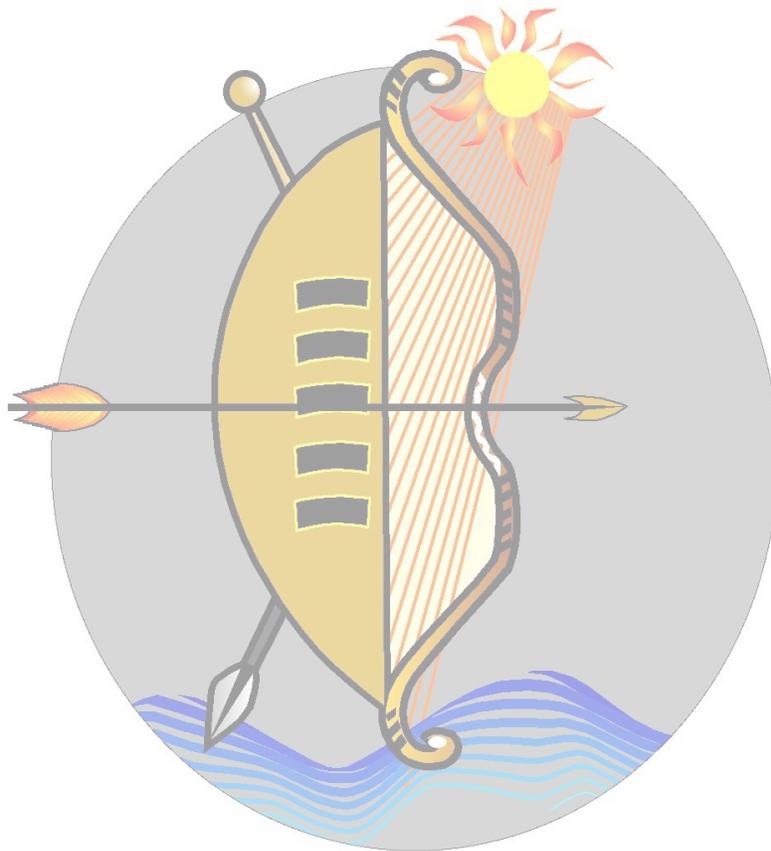
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APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS AND QUESTIONNAIRES



Department of Language & Translation Studies
Durban Institute of Technology
M L Sultan Campus
Tel: 308 6736
e-mail : dhlom@dit.ac.za
25 October 2003

Dear Colleague

In partial fulfilment of my Masters degree, I am conducting a study on
“Cultural barriers in intercultural communication between Indians and
Blacks at D.I.T.”

I would like to get your help in filling in the attached questionnaire on
the problems that you have encountered when communicating with
colleagues who do not belong to the same cultural group as yours. I
would appreciate it if you could kindly complete the attached
questionnaire as honestly as possible. Your confidentiality in this
regard will be respected and your input will be highly appreciated.

If you have any queries with regard to the questionnaire and the study,
please contact me at the telephone number or e-mail address above.

Thanking you in advance.

Sincerely

Thabisile Dhlomo
Lecturer
Department of Language and Translation studies

QUESTIONNAIRE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN BLACKS AND INDIANS

Instructions: Please tick () the appropriate items in the box. Where applicable, specify or comment in the blank spaces under or next to the question.

SECTION A: PERSONAL DETAILS

1. Department : _____

2. Gender:

1. Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
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3. Race:

1. Black	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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4. Culture

4.1 Indian Culture

1. Hindu	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Muslim	<input type="checkbox"/>
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4.2 Black Culture

3. Zulu	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Xhosa	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Sotho	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
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5. Home language :

English	<input type="checkbox"/>	IsiZulu	<input type="checkbox"/>	IsiXhosa	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Afrikaans	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other/ Black	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>
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6. Highest qualification

1. Matric	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Certificate	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Diploma	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Degree or above	<input type="checkbox"/>
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7. How long have you been working at D.I.T (MLST)?

Less than 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/>	1-7-years	<input type="checkbox"/>	8-15 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	16 and more years	<input type="checkbox"/>
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8. Age

20-35years	<input type="checkbox"/>	36-45 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	45-55 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	55 + years	<input type="checkbox"/>
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SECTION B

9. How often do you use the following language(s) to communicate with your colleagues?

	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
IsiZulu	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
IsiXhosa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Afrikaans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. If you speak English as a second or third language, do you find that your first language influences the way you speak English?

Yes	
No	

11. Specify language problems you encounter (if any) when you communicate with people who do not speak your language?

	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
People misunderstand me			
I misunderstand other people			
I do not have enough words to express myself			
I have to repeat myself several times			
Other (specify)			

12. When communicating with a person from another culture, do you prefer to use language which is:

	Most of the time	Sometimes
Direct & straight forward		
Indirect		

13 Which of the following do you use to make sure that you get your ideas across:

	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
More explanations			
Gestures			
Simple language			

14. When people with whom you work are from different cultural background, you try to respect differences in the way they behave.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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15. Consider the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
It is important to send non-verbal signals which are not confusing when communicating				
A person who is silent means that s/he does not understand the message and does not know how to ask				
It is important to maintain eye contact with a person in order to see whether s/he is honest or not				
Interrupting a person during one speech is rude and impolite				

A person who speaks with a loud tone of voice is either upset or angry.				
6. Receiving a gift with both hands, and never with a left hand is assign of appreciation				
7. A smile is enough as a form of greeting.				

16. Does your culture influence the way you view the following people from different cultures?

	Yes	No
Colleagues		
Middle Managers/Supervisors		
Senior Managers		

17. If you had to choose your manager/supervisor, which would you prefer to manage you?

	Explain your choice
Black	
Indian	
White	
Other	

18. Which of the following do you prefer when you are in the work environment?

	Yes	No
Individual Performance		
Teamwork/effort		
Other (specify)		

19. Do you feel the relationship between Indian and Black employees at D.I.T. is:

1. Excellent	2. Good	3. Fair	4. Poor	5. Very Poor
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20. Which means or suggestions could be used to improve communication between Blacks and Indians at Durban Institute of Technology?

Dialogue	
Cultural awareness campaigns	
Sharing departmental tasks	
Other (Specify)	

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION !!

APPENDIX B

GUIDELINES TO *UBUNTU*

Taken from the book titled 'Clued up on culture' by Elion and Strieman (2001:41)

The concept of *ubuntu*

- more perfectly understood as expressed in the Zulu saying: “*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*”, which implies that a person is only a person through his interaction with other people
- is an intuitive practice, done without any intellectual forethought or premeditation.

Ubuntu lies in caring for others

- acting kindly towards others, being hospitable, compassionate and fair and above all, having sound morals.

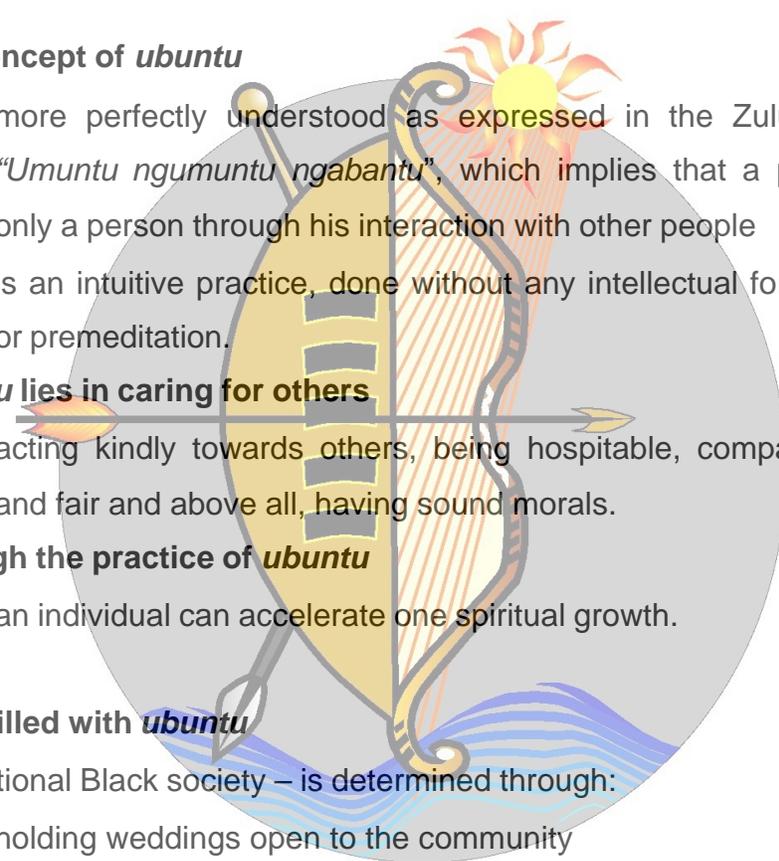
Through the practice of *ubuntu*

- an individual can accelerate one's spiritual growth.

A life filled with *ubuntu*

In traditional Black society – is determined through:

- holding weddings open to the community
- absorbing orphans and problem children into family life
- all adults taking parental/brotherly/sisterly roles to others in the community



APPENDIX C

RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL AND SOUTH AFRICAN SYMBOLS

Taken from the book titled 'Clued up on culture' by Elion and Strieman (2001)

Zulu and Xhosa culture

1. The goat called *imbuzi* in IsiZulu or *ibhokwe* in IsiXhosa. This animal is very important because it is used in ritual sacrifice done so that one can appease the ancestors or spirits (*amadlozi* or *izinyanya*). The goat is used because when it is slaughtered it cries, and this is a sign that the ancestors have accepted the sacrifice.
2. Beadwork is used mainly by females as accessories to decorate themselves. Young women also gave beadwork to young men during courtship. The different colours on these beads communicate secret messages. For instance white symbolises purity and virginity and red symbolises a heart overflowing with love and so on.
3. Spear (*umkhonto*) symbolises masculinity and the role that is played by males in protecting women and children.

Hindu culture

1. AUM symbol

This symbolises the Divine absolute and the most comprehensive name for God

A – is the beginning, the power of God to create the universe

U – transition, the power of God to preserve the universe

M – the end, the power of God to dissolve the universe so as to recreate it.

2. Flowers and garlands

The flower signifies that all beauty is temporary and fleeting.

Garlands symbolise that all in the universe is connected.

3. Burning incense

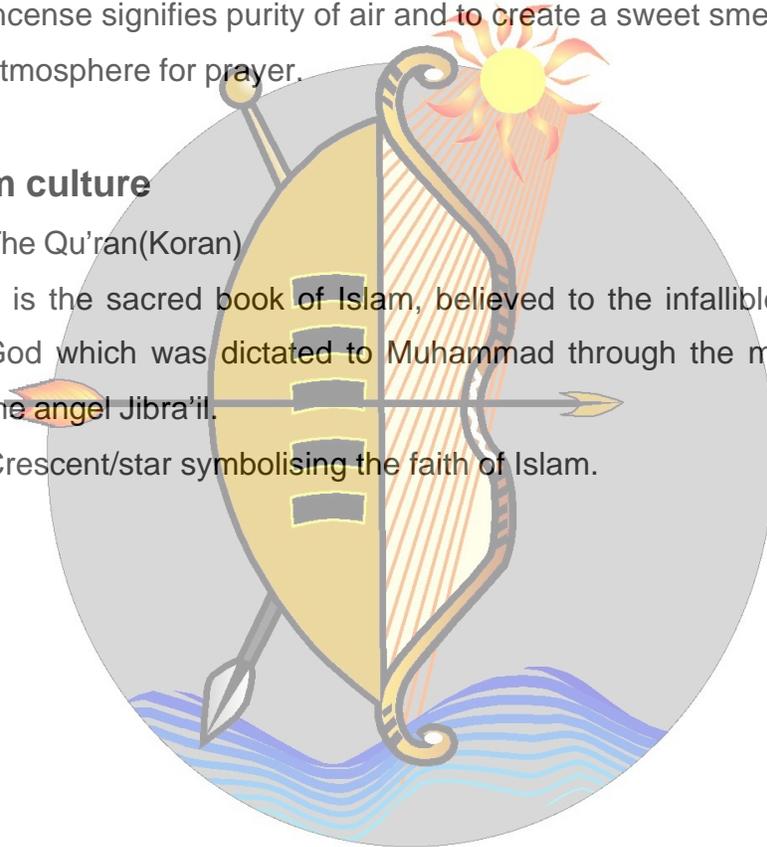
Incense is burnt when one prays at home or in the temple. The incense signifies purity of air and to create a sweet smelling, holy atmosphere for prayer.

Muslim culture

1. The Qu'ran(Koran)

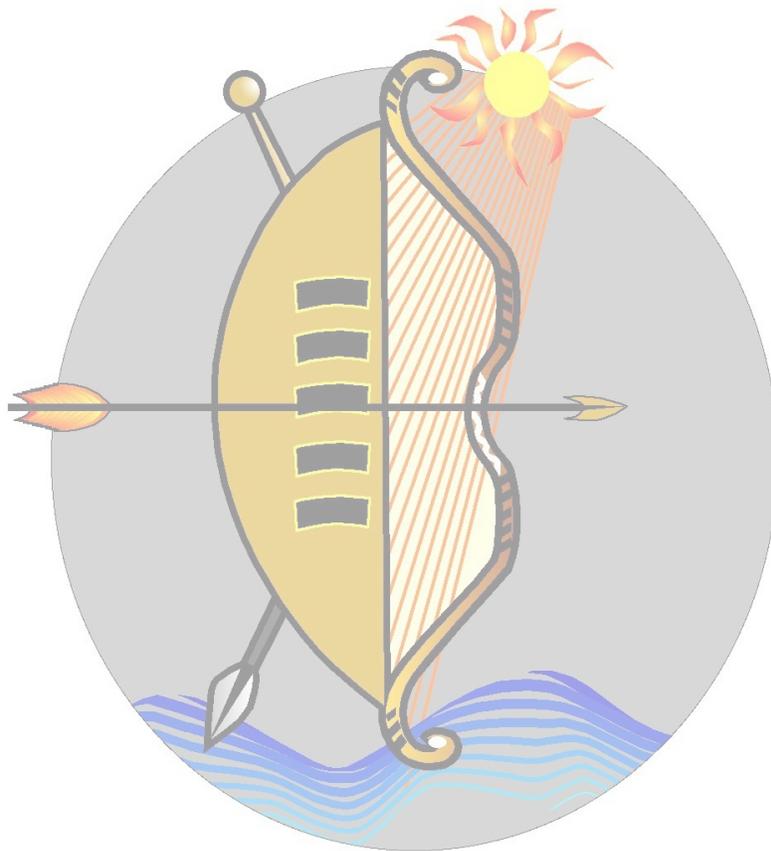
It is the sacred book of Islam, believed to be the infallible word of God which was dictated to Muhammad through the medium of the angel Jibra'il.

2. Crescent/star symbolising the faith of Islam.



South African symbols

1. Coat of Arms



2. South African National symbols

