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“English is the best way to communicate” – South African Indian students’ blind spot towards the relevance of Zulu

Abstract: The South African University of KwaZulu-Natal has developed an ambitious language policy aiming “to achieve for isiZulu the institutional and academic status of English” (UKZN LP 2006/2014). Part of this ambition is a mandatory Zulu language module that all undergraduate students have to pass if they cannot prove knowledge of the language. In this article, we examine attitudes of South African Indian students towards this compulsory module against the strained history and relationship between Zulu and Indian people in the province. Situated within the approach of Language Management Theory (LMT), our focus is on students as micro level actors who are affected by a macro level policy decision. Methodologically combining quantitative and qualitative tools, we attempt to find answers to the following broad question: What attitudes do South African Indian students have towards Zulu more generally and the UKZN module more specifically? The empirical findings show that students’ motivations to learn Zulu are more instrumental than integrative as the primary goal is to ‘pass’ the module. South African Indian students have developed a blind spot for the prevalence and significance of Zulu in the country which impacts negatively on the general attitudes towards the language more general and the module more specifically. Language ideologies that elevate the status of English in the country further hamper the success of Zulu language learning.

Keywords: Language Management Theory, South Africa, Zulu, English, university language policy

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1 Introduction

If you talk to a man in a language he understands,
that goes to his head.
If you talk to him in his language,
that goes to his heart.

This frequently cited comment made by Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela stems from a time when very few non-Bantu language speakers had made any effort to learn one of the nine Bantu languages of the country. In the now 26 years past apartheid, this has not changed significantly¹, and the issue of language remains a socio-politically contested one in the country. South Africa has 11 official languages: nine that belong to the Bantu language family, English and Afrikaans. There are several universities in the country which have made provisions to strengthen the learning and teaching in one of the Bantu languages. The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) has been one of the institutions at the forefront of Bantu language development, or more specifically the promotion of Zulu. The UKZN language policy, in fact, stipulates the optimistic goal to achieve for “isiZulu the institutional and academic status of English” (UKZN LP 2006/ 2014). The institution is also the only university in the country which facilitates a mandatory Bantu language (Zulu) module for all undergraduate students, independent of the field of study.

The establishment of this Higher Education module in 2013 is unprecedented. For the first time in South African history a tertiary institution made the learning of a Bantu language compulsory. Zulu language practitioners have applauded this step, some with more, others with less enthusiasm. The main issue hampering some of the enthusiasm is the unease about the mandatory component of the ruling and the identity politics brewing at grassroots level but there are also more practical problems involved². South Africa has a conflict-riddled history of compulsory language learning in education. Among black people, Afrikaans carries a stigma as the ‘language of the oppressor’ till today and for many older South Africans, the tragedy of the Soweto Uprising³ is a grim reminder not to allow a language to be forced upon people. In the context of UKZN and specifically the compulsory Zulu module, diverse

¹ To this day, the overwhelming majority of non-African language speakers choose Afrikaans as a first additional language in school and although Bantu languages might be learned as second additional languages (listed in the curriculum as “African languages”), the proficiency level remains very low (Posel/Rudwick 2016; Turner 2012; Gumbi/Hlongwa-Ndimande 2015)

² For more detail on the practical challenges and micro language dynamics, see Rudwick (2017).

³ The apartheid school system for black South Africans, *Bantu Education*, was badly funded, mal-resourced and characterized by poorly trained teachers and dysfunctional schools (Heugh 2000). In the 1970s the Department of Bantu Education enforced Afrikaans next to English in black schools despite the preference of black teachers and learners for English. This came to a head on June 16th, in 1976 when in Soweto, a black township bordering on Johannesburg, students and teachers protested against the usage of Afrikaans as medium of instruction. The apartheid government reacted with bru-

attitudes have been expressed, varying from commendation (De Vos 2013) to skepticism (Jansen 2013) and outright rejection (Mashele 2013).⁴ Prior to the implementation of the course, a paper analysing news commentaries on mandatory Zulu learning, demonstrated that there were “negative or erroneous perceptions” towards Bantu languages (Olivier 2014: 496). One can assume that the student population of UKZN who have been affected by the ruling might also have varying perceptions towards the module and this paper explores language attitudes with reference to a specific student body: South African Indians.

Situated in Language Management Theory (LMT) and based on the results of an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews this article analyses Indian students' attitudes towards the UKZN Zulu module and the language more broadly. At the macro level, we only briefly contextualise the implementation of the module but at the micro level we describe, in empirical detail, how students have responded to the course and the learning of Zulu, more generally. The paper first discusses students' attitudes and inherent ideologies against the background of the historically strained relations between black and Indian people in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). We then summarize the main goals of the UKZN language policy including the mandatory Zulu module before analysing the data in relation to two interrelated themes emerging from the data: 1) integrative *vis-à-vis* instrumental motivation, and 2) vertical *vis-à-vis* horizontal communication. The last section discusses ambiguities and paradoxes involving the mandatory Zulu module and focuses on the widespread erroneous belief among South African Indians that “English is the best way to communicate”. We argue that UKZN Indian students in our sample have developed a blind spot for the practical relevance of Zulu in the country.

2 Brief socio-political considerations: Zulu-Indian relations

South African Indians and Zulu people have a long and complicated history of strained relations. From 1860 and the arrival of the first Indian workers, Zulu people have been located in a still lower quarter of the matrix of apartheid oppression (Vahed/Desai 2017). To this day, there is much anti-black sentiment among South African Indians and there is much anti-Indian rhetoric among Zulu people. Indians' negativity towards Zulu people, and vice versa are a result of the deliberate stirring of negative identity politics from the apartheid era. The oppressive white government had elevated Indian

tality and through ruthless police intervention hundreds of people (many of them young learners) lost their lives.

⁴ It has been shown that even among high school learners the learning of Zulu is controversial (see Zungu/Pillay 2010).

people to a, albeit slightly, higher position in the hierarchy of racial oppression and, tragically, many South Africans have internalised these oppressive identity politics. In short, the relationship between Indian and Zulu people in KZN has remained volatile (Ramsamy 2007). Most Zulu people continue to be economically disadvantaged compared to the Indian population in KZN and in South Africa more broadly⁵ and Zulu people continue to work as “servants” in Indian households in KwaZulu-Natal, while the opposite is hardly to be found. Part of this domestic set-up is the pidgin language Fanakalo which makes usage of Zulu vocabulary. While this was a variety primarily used in the mining industry, it has been a communicative tool employed in a range of settings in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (Adendorff 2002; Mesthrie 2007). The way it is spoken in the KZN Indian community is largely based on sets of demands and instructions (lacking the polite Zulu verb stem *-cela* which replaces *-please*) and, hence its usage is representative for horizontal interaction. While it is widely perceived as derogatory among Zulu-speakers, it remains to be spoken in many Indian homes.

Both Indian and Zulu people, albeit mostly separately, fought against white supremacy and discrimination during apartheid (Kaarsholm 2008) and while there were tensions between Zulu and Indian people throughout the twentieth century it escalated in 1949. The Durban riots became known as “one of the most traumatic and controversial events in Natal’s history” (Soske 2009: 106),⁶ and signified the large divide between Indian and Zulu people in South Africa (Edwards/Nuttall 1990; Soske 2009; Ramamurthi 1994). When official apartheid ended in 1994, much discord continued and throughout the post-1994 era, their relationship remained charged (Singh 2014).⁷ It is against this background that we discuss South African Indian students’ attitudes towards being required to mandatorily learn Zulu at UKZN.

⁵ In 2017, about 47.0% of black households earned less than R54 000 (lower income) per annum. In contrast, the majority of Indian households (51.2%) fall within what is seen as the emerging middle class (R96 000 – R360 000 per annum) (Socio-economic Review & Outlook 2019–20).

⁶ On the 13th of January that year a fight between an Indian shopkeeper and Zulu youths escalated into a black-Indian warfare in the Durban Grey Street area and beyond. Large-scale violence was directed towards Indians in Durban and surroundings resulting in over 140 deaths and displacement of Indians in previously mixed neighbourhoods such as Cato Manor (Soske 2009). There were also many Zulu people who died in the course of the fighting.

⁷ In the late 1990s, for example, negativity and fear towards black South Africans was fuelled by the managing editor of the newspaper *Ilanga Libalele* (Ebrahim-Vally 1999: 7). In an editorial on 23 March 1999, Maphumulo suggested that Indians were responsible for the majority of problems faced by the black population and that he hoped for a day when “an African would give birth to another Idi Amin” (Ebrahim Vally 1999: 7 – implying black South Africans). Animosity continued to grow and negative comments towards Indians among black celebrities are not uncommon (Ramsamy 2007). The musician Mbongeni Ngema, for instance, ignited controversy in May 2002 with his song *Amandiya* (Indians). Recently in 2014, another song *Umhlab Uzobuya* (The Land Will Return) modelled on *Amandiya* made similar disparaging comments about Indians (Sisobo 2014).

As per the last census (2011), black people in Kwa Zulu Natal (KZN) remain the most populous group at 86.81%. Indian South Africans make up 7.37% of KZN residents, white and coloured people make up 4.18% and 1.38% respectively. In the most recently available demographics at UKZN (2016), black students form 71.6% of the student population and Indian students form 21.9%. White students make up 4.05% while coloured people form 2.08%. It is notable from these statistics that within KZN, it is first Africans and then Indians that form the majority of the population both within the province, and at UKZN. Given the majority status of black people in KZN and the prevalence of Zulu as a mother tongue, the need to implement Zulu as a viable language of teaching and learning at UKZN has been perceived as essential by policy makers. In the next section we shift our focus to the language policy in higher education and UKZN in particular.

3 South African higher education and UKZN's language policy in a nutshell

In South Africa, English and Afrikaans have been the only languages that functioned as legitimate sources for higher education teaching and research during apartheid. Ironically the 2002 *Language Policy for Higher Education*⁸ acknowledged this as the *status quo* position. Since 1994, there have been efforts, at least on paper, to promote and develop the Bantu languages, but paradoxically, this has resulted in English occupying an even stronger position as *the* academic lingua franca in the country. The recent Constitutional Court ruling that English is elevated above Afrikaans at Stellenbosch University bears testimony to this development.⁹ UKZN, however, is fighting against English hegemony and the Language Policy of the institution (UKZN LP 2014) is a sophisticated document which “seeks to make explicit the benefits of being fully bilingual in English and isiZulu” throughout its seven pages. More specifically, the policy (UKZN LP 2014: 1) aims to:

- preserve and promote respect for, and proficiency in, the languages referred to in the Constitution, and other languages, including the heritage languages, that facilitate potentially valuable cultural, scientific and economic ties;
- develop an awareness of multilingualism through an acknowledgement of all the official languages of the province of KwaZulu-Natal;
- achieve for Zulu the institutional and academic status of English;

⁸ Ministry of Education (2002): *Language policy for higher education*. Pretoria: Department of Education.

⁹ For more detail, see [<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-10-10-english-prevails-in-stellenbosch-university-language-battle/>] (last access on 1 October 2020).

- provide facilities to enable the use of Zulu as a language of learning, instruction, research and administration;
- foster research in language planning and development;
- become a national hub in the development of Zulu national corpus and the development and standardization of Zulu technical terminology and its dissemination;
- support the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN), which seeks to promote and develop official languages of the African Union; and promote the intellectualization of Zulu as language of the African continent.

In developing Zulu at the institution, staff members have also been urged to improve their language skills. A recent study, however, shows that the realities of language practices and teaching at the University are not in sync with the aims of the language policy: most teaching staff are not proficient in Zulu (for more detail see Wildsmith-Cromarty/Turner 2018). While there is no explicit mentioning of the compulsory Zulu module in the actual language policy document, its implementation is obviously in line with several of the above goals. Arguably, the module is symbolically important as the learning of Zulu, numerically the majority language in South Africa, contributes to nation building and “effective communication” (UKZN LP 2014: 1). However, below we illustrate how the aim of ‘effective communication’ is not a realistic one in relation to the mandatory module as it is currently facilitated. But before we analyse the empirical data, we will provide in the next section the theoretical underpinnings of this study.

4 Our study in the light of Language Management Theory

Theoretically, we locate this paper within the language management approach which examines the agency of actors affected by language policy processes and explains behaviour towards language. Language Management Theory (LMT) distinguishes between *micro* – *macro* levels of language management (Jernudd/Neustupny 1987; Nekvapil 2006; Nekvapil/Sherman 2015; Fairbrother/Nekvapil/ Sloboda 2018). The meta-language issue examined here is a mandatory Zulu module which represents a top-down decision by UKZN, hence at macro level. We focus in this paper, however, on the actors (students) at the micro level who are impacted by the macro level decision (i. e. the implementation of the module). The LMT framework outlines the main language management strategies as noting, evaluation, adjustment design and (potential) implementation and we employ these stages as responses to the module. We consider the Zulu module as the stimulus for micro language management among the students. They note the new policy of being expected to learn Zulu, they evaluate it in certain ways, they plan an adjustment (by learning the language) which is poten-

tially followed by the implementation of making an effort to communicate in Zulu. We analyse students' responses from questionnaires and interviews in terms of their individual language management regarding the acquisition of Zulu.

Rothe/Wagner (2015) show how in any language management process stakeholders influence each other. Arguably, the value of a language depends on the place and position provided for it in education (Bourdieu 1991). From this perspective, one might want to argue that the language policy of UKZN could ultimately change the public's views about Zulu and raise its status. It remains to be seen, however, in how far the language will be perceived as "linguistic capital" (ibid.), and in how far learners see individual or societal advantages accompanied with proficiency in the language. Currently at UKZN, Zulu holds together with English institutional power but English is *de facto* the primary language of business, commerce, and politics. In order to analyse the status of a language in society attitude research is informative and much of this work has distinguished between instrumental and integrative motivations (Baker 1992; Baker/Prys Jones 1998; Gardner 1979; Thomas 2010; Wesely 2012). As will be seen below, we will also make this distinction in the analysis, but before we can get there, a brief section on methodology is offered.

5 Methodology

This study is based on a two-fold empirical approach. Initially, in 2017, the first author distributed a questionnaire on the UKZN's Moodle system in order to elicit attitudes of South African Indian students towards the mandatory Zulu module and the language more broadly. The survey contained 27 open and closed questions ranging from specifically referring to the module to, more generally, enquiring about attitudes towards learning Zulu through means of 1) a Likert scale, and 2) open ended questions. Although the Moodle survey did not inspire students to elaborate to a great extent, it provided initial insights of the attitudes of precisely 100 out of a total of 389 South African Indian students who completed the module (which corresponds to a response rate of 25.71%). The South African Indian students build the majority of the 530 students that completed the module. To assure the anonymity of our research subjects, the 100 respondents (R) are labelled $R_1 - R_{100}$.

Subsequently, we conducted semi-structured interviews based on opportunity sampling with fifteen Indian students between January and April 2017. All interviewees were undergraduate UKZN students who had completed the mandatory Zulu module in 2017. They greatly varied in terms of their engagement with the interviewer, but all interviews provided some indications of how students perceived the language course and the learning of Zulu more broadly. In September 2019, we interviewed six more Indian students who had completed the module in the previous year. Interviewee participants are labelled $P_1 - P_{21}$ ($P_1 - P_{15}$ were interviewed in Durban from

January to April 2017, P₁₆–P₂₁ in Durban during October 2019). All our interviewees had filled in the questionnaire and had passed the course, but the overall final marks ranged considerably. We had designed semi-structured schedules for the interviews, but in principle interviewees were free to develop their own narratives. The objective was to let the participants take some agency and to speak about aspects of the module and their attitudes towards learning isiZulu in their own terms. Despite considerable diversity of opinion among these students, there were two major themes we identified as emerging from the interviews. The first was the topic of motivation and the second one was the contested issue of the ‘communicative’ value of what had been learned and of Zulu more broadly. Having identified these two themes from the interviews, we went back to the questionnaires and scanned them for these two themes and their potential relevance. Hence in the analysis we make reference, first, considering the questionnaires and, secondly, the interviews in terms of 1) instrumental *vis-à-vis* integrative motivation and 2) vertical versus horizontal communication skills.

6 Analysis

6.1 *Instrumental versus integrative motivation*

Given that the module is mandatory it can be expected that the students’ language learning motivation is not the same than for language learners who make the conscious choice to study a language. The questionnaires suggest that the majority of students did not see much instrumental value in learning Zulu beyond the passing of the module. “Zulu is not the main language used in a professional environment” was one student’s (R₇₇) response. Another student (R₅₄) indicated that rather than Bantu language knowledge it was BEE (Black Economic Empowerment) policies which assured people jobs. Only 15 (out of the 100 students) saw market value of Zulu for *employment* resulting in instrumental motivation being very low. There was, however, general acknowledgement of the local value of Zulu in KZN and of the fact that by learning the language one could contribute to nation building. But students also expressed the desire to be mobile, to become global citizens and to have knowledge of a language which would have international currency. One respondent (R₈₆) even claimed that “Zulu was limited in function to KZN”.

In the interviews, the question whether Zulu opens up professional and socio-economic opportunities received a vast range of different responses varying from affirmation to uncertainty and outright dismissiveness. Seventeen of our interviewees claimed to be more interested in learning a European language (French and German were mentioned) and two students mentioned Mandarin. According to Kamwanga-malu (2016) the status of a language is inextricably linked to its economic benefits

which, ultimately, means that attempts of UKZN to increase the status and power of Zulu are doomed to fail unless the language is perceived to be endowed with socio-economic benefits.

Upon being asked, where and when students made usage of Zulu in their daily lives and for which reasons, the majority of students conceded not to be making much use of the language at all. In justifying their lack of practicing Zulu, common responses included: “Most people speak English” (P₂₀) or “English is the best way to communicate” (P₁₇). As researchers we admit not having been prepared for this response. Recent census statistics clearly suggest that at national level, 25.3 % of individuals speak Zulu at home, while English is spoken by only 8.1 % in the domestic setting. Outside of the home, English is spoken by 16.6 % of the population while more than a quarter (25.1 %) indicate to speak Zulu (Statistics South Africa 2019). It appears, at least at first glance, that Zulu is employed as a lingua franca to a much greater extent than English, and yet several of our interviewees assume that English is the “best” communicative tool in South Africa. Despite the misguided belief that “everyone speaks English” (P₆), students acknowledged, as they did in the questionnaire, the cultural value of Zulu. In most contexts, Zulu continues to be seen as a cultural resource and related to this was at least a hint of integrative motivation. One student (P₁₇) emphatically remarked: “You’re learning about someone else’s culture. It goes into the broader thing of being a South African”. Another one (P₂₀) remarked that “... the whole ‘ngicela’¹⁰ thing and all of that on how to speak politely” was beneficial and allowed him to communicate in a much more respectful manner with Zulu people. A third student (P₂₀) elaborated that “we better understand the values, beliefs and mannerisms of Zulu people after the Zulu module.”

Clearly, there are some positive outcomes of the module which indicate that students are aiming to find a more respectful way of communicating with their fellow citizens. Given the economic power of English it is perhaps not surprising that students seem altogether more motivated due to integrative rather than instrumental reasons. It is a global phenomenon that the learning and use of local languages for cultural reasons is coupled with seeing English as the social prestige variety and international ‘linkage’ language. (For recent comparative perspectives, see Abbas/Iqbal [2018] for India, Pujolar/Puigdevall [2015] for Catalonia, and Soler/Marten [2018] for Estonia).

The only factor creating an instrumental motivation is that students do want to pass the module in order to further their studies. One interviewee (P₁₉) said: “Some people just do it as a module that they have to do in order to get that degree, [...] that’s the reality”. While there were feelings of uncertainty in terms of the practical usefulness of the module, there was wide consensus that the compulsory element of

¹⁰ For example, in Zulu *please* is expressed through the verb stem *-cela* and it seems that many students acknowledged the cultural value of learning the polite way of asking a Zulu person to do something.

the course impeded motivation as illustrated by P₂₀: “I guess the difference is if you're choosing to learn a subject like you're choosing French or you're choosing Zulu like on your own, then you would be more serious about it than when the university is forcing you to do it.” There is only little indication that motivation for learning Zulu might be hampered by continuously strained relations between South African Indians and Zulu people. Four interviewees claimed that they refrained from making use of Zulu with peers in fear of being ridiculed (P₁₈-P₂₁). They expressed worry that they could not be seen as serious in their communication efforts and that their Zulu interlocutor might be thinking they are trying to make fun of them. This is indicative of how ‘abnormal’ it is seen for an Indian and a Zulu student to converse in Zulu. It appears that only in an interaction in which students themselves feel to be in a superior position are they willing to make use of their limited Zulu knowledge.

6.2 Communication skills – *vertical versus horizontal*

A common topic that transpired in both the questionnaires and interviews was the extent of Zulu acquisition or rather the lack thereof taking place in the course. After all, a one-semester acquisition course in any language is not likely to provide sufficient proficiency for a learner to comfortably communicate with first language speakers of the language. The level of the Zulu course as it is currently being taught in the large classes is perceived to be lower than what has previously been taught in the *Zulu 1A* course for second language learners.¹¹ Nonetheless, the questionnaire results indicate that 66 % of the students claimed to try to speak some Zulu outside of the university while only 30 % of the students admitted to have never utilised the language outside of class. This is a reasonably positive outcome of the module but on closer examination it becomes clear that only 10 % of students indicate to use Zulu with peers while the overwhelming majority (56 % of the students) say that they only speak Zulu to their domestic workers (mostly ladies) or other workers they encountered. The interviews showed similar results. One student (P₁₉) recounted how he made an attempt to speak in Zulu to a petrol attendant making use of vocabulary learned in class. Another described in detail her efforts to speak to the domestic worker of her parents. These are all situations where the students are in a superior position while their communication partner is in a subordinate one. This suggests that South African Indian students primarily make an effort to speak Zulu in a “master-servant” relationship, to put it crudely. There are multiple interpretations for this vertical communication pattern, one might be that Indian students do not feel motivated to put themselves into an inferior position with Zulu speaking peers (i. e. that of a language

¹¹ In a recent paper one of the lecturers of the course was quoted as saying that the course had been down toned into a ‘Mickey Mouse’ course, insinuating its low level (Rudwick 2017).

learner), another one might be that communication between Indian and Zulu students is also not frequent. One interviewee (P₁₉) claimed that the course was not conducive for arriving at a more general understanding of how to communicate with Zulu speaking peers. Others claimed that there was no space to practice speaking Zulu and that too much grammar was being taught. In short, there were overall complaints about the way the course was taught among students which also seemed to impact on their performance. All of it, however, points to the result that communication skills acquired throughout the course do not allow for much meaningful interaction in Zulu among peers.

In the previous section, we showed that some students claimed support for the module as a symbolic act of granting socio-cultural value to Zulu. However, this attitude was not reflected in their efforts of actually acquiring language skills. Interviews suggest that students simply did not feel the “need” to use Zulu (P₈, P₁₂, P₁₄, P₁₆, P₁₇, P₁₈, P₂₁). Instead, they choose, as reported earlier, to communicate in English even when exposed to a first-language Zulu-speaking person, one even going as far as stating “a lot of people expect to talk back in English” (P₁₉). This lack of effort to practise Zulu could be interpreted either as symptomatic for the general lack of engagement between South African Indians and Zulu-speakers or the general presumption that English is the main *lingua franca*. One student (P₁₂) remarked that there was “no need for Zulu” because South Africans has access to “the widely spoken language of English” which can “promote internationalism and globalisation”. One of our interviewees (P₃) explained why Zulu speakers “should speak English” by stating that “English is taught from school level” while another (P₈) was keen to point out that “speakers of Zulu are more exposed to English through school, social media etc.” Most of the comments are indicative of a blind spot that students have when it comes to the prevalence of Zulu in the province.

In KZN, there are multiple opportunities to expose oneself to Zulu but some of it requires non-Zulu speakers to move out of their comfort zones. By virtue of the responses of many students, we observe that the use of English is taken for granted in communicating with Zulu speakers. For the most part, Indian students are not likely to communicate with Zulu-speaking peers (or people of their own social class) in Zulu. The worry to be ridiculed, as mentioned earlier, was re-featuring prominently in the interviews about the communicative function of Zulu. One student (P₁₇) complained: “If we had to speak now, they will look at us like, ahem... what are you saying?” Several other students felt that the level of language competency acquired though the course was not sufficient in order to speak in Zulu to peers, i. e. in a horizontal interaction. Regrettably, students also do not seem to look at the module as a springboard for further Zulu studies in order to improve their proficiency. This points to a mere symbolic value of the module rather than being an instrument/forum of fruitful language acquisition.

7 Discussion and conclusion

In this study we examined South African Indian students' attitudes towards a compulsory Zulu module at UKZN and to the language more broadly. Results from questionnaires and interviews show diverse attitudes and allow us to raise a number of issues here. Individual students, first of all, feel strong ambivalence towards acquiring Zulu, especially as a mandatory requirement. Some questionnaire respondents gave contradictory statements both highlighting the cultural value of the module as well as devaluing it as a political top-down decision. Many interviewees indicate that it made sense to learn Zulu (especially in KZN), but upon being asked whether they had registered for the module had it not been mandatory, almost all declined. Some students applauded the language policy *per se* but then asserted that English will always stay South Africa's academic *lingua franca*. Some students put forth benefits and drawbacks of the module in almost equal measure, indicative for their strongly ambivalent attitude.

While all our interviewees passed the module and evidently acquired some Zulu skills, their learning did not result in much further engagement with Zulu speakers according to their own estimation in interviews. Participants' motivation (both integrative and instrumental) is low for properly acquiring Zulu. Those who indicated to make an effort to employ the language in their daily life, did so primarily in communicative situations of vertical nature and where they requested things rather than just conversed. Most failed to see its value in the working world and their only instrumental motivation was the immediate aspect of passing the module. While it has long been established in sociolinguistics that attitudes are not necessarily followed by corresponding behaviour (Ladegaard 2002) there was exceptionally stark discord between students speaking of the benefits of knowing Zulu in the initial stages of the interviews and, at a later point, conceding not to use it at all. The majority of our interviewees also expressed irritation of the fact that the module was mandatory, but several conceded that they benefitted from the cultural aspect of learning the language. In the past, and during apartheid, South African Indians who made an effort to acquire 'proper' Zulu might have arguably done so for integrative reasons. Given the political power and cultural influence which many Zulu individuals hold, one might think that the learning of Zulu for social and perhaps even economic advantage might be relevant. However, a recent study (Naidoo/Gokool/Ndebele 2017) suggests that many UKZN students would not voluntarily choose to learn Zulu and would not even encourage others to do so because of the perceived lack of economic benefits.

In sum, language management among UKZN Indian students in the context of the compulsory Zulu module is complex, evaluations are ambivalent, there is little effort of an adjustment design (actual Zulu acquisition) and even less implementation strategies (usage of Zulu). One aspect impacting negatively on attitudes are underlying language ideologies. The interviews show that there is a prevalent ideological construction that South Africa's common *lingua franca* is English because 'everyone'

speaks it and that Zulu is 'only' a carrier of culture. The heritage of colonial language management continues to mark English as the powerful language and continues to stigmatize the Bantu languages as ethnic and cultural tools (see Giger/Sloboda [2008] for a comparative language management perspective in view of Russian and Belarusian). Revealing of language ideologies is instructive in the observation of linguistic practices and language management strategies (Nekvápil/Sherman 2013). If assessed from the perspective of the stages of LMT, South African Indian students at UKZN are hampered in learning Zulu by the dominant ideology that English is the main *lingua franca* and 'best' way to communicate. A sensitisation of these erroneous perceptions seems necessary as a classroom strategy. Fan (2017) suggest that the LMT stage of 'noting' is seen as a process of learning in which systematic classroom activities and strategies help students to become sensitive about language matters. In the case examined here, it is the stages of noting and evaluating which are fruitful stages in the process of language management to be examined. In noting, students can realize language dynamics such as the low economic status of Zulu and in evaluating they can realize that the low status is based on larger social injustices in society. This might motivate them to learn Zulu and in understanding that change is needed. Regrettably, the common ideology that "most people speak English" in South Africa seriously hampers students' learning motivation for Zulu and impacts negatively on their performance in the module. The integrative motivation students have for learning Zulu seems limited. It is assumed that Zulu students (like to) speak English and that employing rudimentary Zulu would only result in laughter and possible ridicule. South African Indian students might also not be fully aware of how the past lingers in their own attitudes towards Zulu. Some of the interviews suggest that students do not receive support for the learning of Zulu in their homes and also that there are parents and relatives who openly disapprove of the module. Perhaps "the impact of implicit, not-fully-conscious factors might play a stronger role in language attainment than formerly believed" (Dörnyei/Al-Hoorie 2017: 465). The ideological construction of Zulu as a mere cultural and ethnic medium contributes to the stigmatisation of learning the language.

Indian South Africans have been identified as the most monolingual (English) community in the country and UKZN stakeholders arguably have a valid point promoting Zulu in the province given that almost 80 % of its residence speak the language as a mother-tongue (Statistics SA 2019). However, several studies suggest that the promotion of Zulu as a mandatory subject at university level¹² has its problems (Turner 2012; Naidoo/Gokool/Ndebele 2017; Shandu 2016; Rudwick 2017). It is strongly questionable in how far a "compulsory" one-semester language module in higher education can

¹² Bantu language learning (possibly even per decree) is useful in primary and secondary level (Lafon 2010), but ironically, the overwhelming majority of 'white' and Indian learners currently enrolled in South African schools choose Afrikaans over isiZulu as a first additional language.

foster Zulu language skills and social cohesion in the student population. There is also a paradox in the present *macro* language management of Zulu at UKZN which concerns the teaching of the language as an L2. Since the implementation of the mandatory module, there is no continuance of courses in the second language stream as had been the case in the past on Howard College campus where our research was conducted. According to a retired Zulu lecturer¹³ the mandatory module “has destroyed the advanced learning of Zulu for second language learners”. Currently, there is only a Zulu L1 stream beyond the first year which means that learners currently enrolled in the mandatory module who are interested in progressing their Zulu studies have no chance to do so¹⁴. Given our findings, it seems there is a need to make students further aware in South Africa that English is not (necessarily) the “best” way to communicate and that Zulu, in fact, represents a major *lingua franca*, and not only in KZN but at national level. This might, at least to some extent, remedy South African Indian students’ blind spot for the significance of Zulu and multilingualism in the country more generally. Our study also raises some questions for future research. Our research points to irritation among students about the compulsory aspect of language learning at university level, comparative studies of attitudes towards compulsory language modules in other higher education institutions would be fruitful. Also, it needs to be explored further what the attitudes are of other population groups towards learning Bantu languages at other South African Universities. In conclusion, studies that examine motivations and hesitations of learning Bantu languages in South Africa are crucial in order to develop strategies to promote multilingualism, in particular among Indian South Africans.

8 References

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¹³ Personal communication with Beverly Muller, 30 October 2019.

¹⁴ Personal communication with Dr. Roshni Gokool, Lecturer (isiZulu), 16 October 2019.

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