

CHAPTER 1

1. ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This research study comes at a time when the Sindebele speaking communities campaign “to get their mother tongue officially recognized as an independent language” (Wilkes, 2001:310). After South Africa became a democracy in 1994, indigenous languages were promoted and this is having an adverse effect on Sindebele. The promotion of Sepedi, one of the indigenous languages, has led to the domination and suffocation on Sindebele, which can eventually lead to language shift. This is supported by Wilkes (2001:310) when stating that linguists believed that the Northern Ndebele (now Sindebele) language had for all practical purposes ceased to exist as its speakers had rejected it in favour of Sepedi, the dominant language of the surrounding tribes.

That Sindebele has “ceased to exist” (Wilkes, 2001: 310) is not true because at the present moment Sindebele is widely spoken in different communities. It forms absolute majority in almost all of the communities where they presently live. The researcher feels that Sindebele is still spoken as a primary language by over 1 million people in South Africa; especially parts of the Limpopo Province. As an ethnolinguistic group, the communities are still alive and active.

Sindebele is not spoken anywhere else in the world except at Mokopane, Mapankula, Kalkspruit, Wasbank, GaMashashane, Zebediela, GaLedwaba, Marble Hall, Rathoke, Matlerekeng, GaSeleka, Maganagobushwa, western parts of GaMatlala and GaNkiditlana in the Limpopo Province; Hammanskraal, Majaneng, Surimane and Makapanskrans in the North West Province; few places in the Mpumalanga Province and in some places in the Gauteng Province.

The inhabitants are interested in reviving their language and many of them want to read and write it. The problem with reading and writing is that the language is not yet standardized. The researcher says Sindebele is non-standardized because there are only two published materials on the language, (Prof Ziervogel’s Grammar of Northern Ndebele and Prof Wilkes’ Northern Ndebele Grammar and spelling Rules). Examples of

unpublished literature on the language are G.P. Kekana's *Sidla Sindebele* (Grammar) Dr P. Macgare's *Khula NesiNdebele* (Grammar), *Babulele Noni* (Folklore), *Mma Umbutile* (Novel), *Sondondolo* (Drama) and L.W.H. Molomo's *Vulani Masango YesiNdebele*. These were written primarily for participation in the literary competitions that were organized from time to time by the Northern Province Provincial Language Committee – which is now defunct.

For a language to be standardized, its orthography should first be well developed and Sindebele orthography is not yet well established. For Sindebele to be a fully fledged language, it needs to be selected and accepted by the Ndebele community to agree about what should be and included in it and what should not. Its grammar, spelling books and dictionaries need to be developed also. These functions must be expanded, that is, once accepted as a language, Sindebele can be used in all the functions associated with formal settings. Training of teachers in the language is also necessary. Since Sindebele is neither codified nor elaborated, it cannot be used in formal domains such as education, Parliament and the media. Once Sindebele is standardized, it will become possible to be taught and learned and its prestige will be acquired.

According to the Government Gazette (1999), it is generally accepted that the best way for language development to occur is for the language to be used. Conversely, Sindebele has unfortunately been discouraged from use and is in grave danger of extinction.

The researcher's primary interest in this study is the use of Sindebele within the environment of Sepedi in the region of Mokopane. Mokopane is a region situated in the western part of the Limpopo Province of South Africa. Almost all the region's present inhabitants – Ndebele and Pedi moved to this area. Although the area is predominantly a Sindebele territory, it is presided over by the Pedi and Tsonga groups. There are four chieftaincies, namely, Langa (Mapela), Langa (Bakenburg), Kekana (Moshate) and Lebelo (Grasvlei). The region was supposed to be called GaMugombhane (Ndebele name) as the original name of the king was "Mugombhane" but not Mokopane.

Today the region is multilingual due to its proximity to the town where people of different languages work. The inhabitants speak different languages, namely, English, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho, Setswana and the so-called "dialect" of the region, Sindebele. Some of these languages have few speakers; whereas others have many speakers.

Sindebele needs recognition as some of its speakers have concluded that it is pointless to spend time on the language that is fading from private and primary domains.

Sindebele, unlike other indigenous languages of the country, is not recognized. It is, therefore, neither a provincial nor a national language. It is a regional language used insignificantly. In this case, it has acquired a negative social meaning and became stigmatized. This has led other speakers to lose faith in the language, regarding it as worthless and no good for significant functions like learning or finding employment. Sepedi on the other hand, is both a provincial and a national language, that is, it is used in formal domains such as education and the media.

The communities of Mokopane use Sepedi and Sindebele interchangeably, even though Sepedi has become the home language of most of the families there including some Sindebele speaking families. Even if Sindebele is used by some families as their home language, the truth is that it has been replaced by Sepedi, the dominant language of the area.

The researcher participated in some occasions as an observer at Mokopane, and found that in the communities of Mokopane, not only Sepedi is spoken widely, but also Sindebele. The researcher attended induna Kgobudi's funeral at Mosesetjane village. Even though the programme was written in Sepedi, the speakers were employing Sindebele. On 13 September 2008, the researcher attended a wedding at Mahwelereng, the dominant language was Sindebele, although Sepedi, English, Setswana and isiZulu were used. On 14 September 2008, the researcher went to the Catholic Church at Mapela village, the service was in Sepedi but the announcements were done in Sindebele. On 20 September 2008, the researcher attended a funeral at Magongoa village, Sepedi is the home language of the bereaved family. Most speakers on the programme were employing Sindebele including "moemedi wa kgoro" (induna representative).

In some cases, mixing of both languages is common among the communities of Mokopane. The following examples are typical:

- (i) Ndoda ya Nkgadikgadi gu nka ja mo nka nona > Nkgadikgadi's husband loves women.

- (ii) Tixomo taka Kxhosana bateyebe ka moka > the whole herd of Kxhosana's cattle has been stolen.

This mixing usually occurs when the speaker identifies himself/herself. At Mokopane, most inhabitants speak Sindebele and those who are proficient in Sindebele and Sepedi, mix both in a way that marks them as more or less bilingual. This lack of a solid “lump” of speakers of Sindebele creates a linguistic problem whose origin is traced under problem statement.

1.2 **Problem Statement**

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001:43),

“the heart of every research project is the (research) problem. It is paramount in importance to the success of the research effort. To see the problem with unwavering clarity and to state it in precise and unmistakable terms is the first requirement in the research process.”

The researcher elucidates the above statement by stating the core problem that is faced by Sindebele – the regional language in Mokopane and other areas where it is spoken.

Even if Mokopane is multilingual, the population uses mostly two languages, that is, Sepedi and Sindebele. These two languages have long been spoken here. The complicating issue is that Sindebele is spoken within the environment of Sepedi. Sepedi is given recognition by the government, hence it is used for radio broadcasting, editorials in newspapers like Seipone and literature; whereas Sindebele is not recognized and it is therefore employed in casual conversations, within family and social groups. This situation creates tensions and conflict potential among speakers of these languages, especially Sindebele speakers and very little has been done about these problems.

Sindebele has long been undermined by the government system. In 1961 the Republic of South Africa was established and some indigenous languages were recognised but Sindebele was excluded. In 1968 when the homelands started, the government recognised Sepedi in Lebowa, Xitsonga in Gazankulu, Tshivenda in Venda, Siswati in

Kangwane, isiNdebele in Kwa-Ndebele, isiZulu in Kwazulu, isiXhosa in Transkei and Ciskei, Sesotho in Qwaqwa and Setswana in Bophuthatswana, still Sindebele was excluded. When a democratic government was elected, the constitution was drafted and eleven languages were recognised and promoted as official, but Sindebele was not recognised as a language.

There is a controversy among linguists that Sindebele is isiNdebele. This issue is denied by Sindebele speakers, as they claim that the two are not variants of the same language, but two different languages. By the same token, Wilkes (2001:312) maintains that Sindebele differs substantially from its counterpart.

An attempt was made by Northern Amandebele National Organisation (NANO) a group of Sindebele speakers who strived for the promotion and recognition of Sindebele, but they failed. From time immemorial authors like Dr M J Madiba, who was a Sindebele speaker could not do their writings in Sindebele, instead, they used Sindebele terms in their Sepedi writings, for example:

“lewa” (Sepedi)	“dliwa” (Sindebele) meaning “eaten”
“lefela” (Sepedi)	“siphila” (Sindebele) meaning “maize”
“lebitšo (Sepedi)	“libito” (Sindebele) meaning “name”

One objective of the National Language Policy Framework (2002:11) is to “enhance people-centeredness in addressing the interests, needs and aspirations of a wide range of language communities through ongoing dialogue and debate.” This quotation addresses issues similar to that of Sindebele at Mokopane when groups were formed to debate the recognition of Sindebele, the most appropriate orthography (spelling system) for it and the development of appropriate forms of writing for this language, but these groups dissolved. They attempted many a time to have their language standardized, but failed. This problem demoralizes them. They feel that their culture and self-identity are undermined.

The Sindebele speakers of Mokopane have fear of language shift and ultimately language death. “Language shift occurs where speakers adopt the language of the majority, or of prestige” (Comrie et al, 2003:30). On the same note, Webb and Kembo-Sure (2001) indicate that language shift is a process whereby members of a speech community

abandon the use of one language for certain functions and adapt another, the former is often a home language. Language death, on the other hand, occurs “when all the speakers of a language have totally shifted their language behaviour so that there are no persons left who will still speak the original language as a first or primary language” (Webb and Kembo-Sure; 2001:13). Unless attempts are made to preserve the language, Sindebele will face the danger of being wiped away. If Sindebele dies, then it will be difficult to identify its speakers.

Another problem is that Sindebele speakers are discriminated against. Speakers of other languages discriminate them because of the language they speak. Their language is regarded as having lower status. These speakers of other languages do not take cognizance of the fact that language and culture are intimately linked, that when a language dies, culture dies also.

On this note, one can deduce that if one kills Sindebele, one kills an indigenous species. In the same spirit, Grenoble and Whaley (1998:235) advocate that language loss threatens the survival of culture in the sense that indigenous knowledge, perceptions, and strategies that are encoded in the language are lost. This idea is supported by Krauss (as cited by Grenoble and Whaley, 1998:235) when he warns that the loss of a language entails a loss of social identity or of culture.

It is therefore of vital importance, for a community to preserve its culture, language and attire. Language and culture are closely related, therefore, such community should be made aware that the occurrence of linguistic shift may lead to cultural shift. These communities should take into cognizance the fact that when there is a cultural shift, then a society seems to lose direction and becomes victim to the twin evils of poverty and crime. Such community should not allow itself to be isolated and segregated by speakers of other languages.

All these events are symptomatic of the need for thorough investigation that will convince the reader that Sindebele is an independent language.

The researcher has traced the origin of the problem, she will therefore state the problem under investigation:

1.2.1 What is the relationship between Sepedi and Sindebele?

1.2.2 What must the first language speakers do to ensure the survival of Sindebele?

1.2.3 Which factors influence the speakers of Sindebele to use their language within the environment of Sepedi and to what extent do these factors influence them?

1.2.4 What must the authorities do on the fate of the marginalized languages?

The section on Aims of the study will share more light on the problem under investigation.

1.3 **Aims of the study**

The study intended:

- * to analyse the linguistic situation and to understand the sociopolitical situation at Mokopane.
- * to show the attitude of Sindebele speakers towards their language and its status.
- * to show the comparison between Sindebele and IsiNdebele.
- * the use of Sindebele in the midst of Sepedi as well as to examine the influence of Sepedi upon Sindebele.

1.4 **Scope and delimitation of the study**

The research focused specifically on two languages, that is, Sepedi and Sindebele. The area of focus is Mokopane in the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

1.5 **Significance of the study**

The study is significant in the sense that:

- * It will help to expose the language situation at Mokopane and to account for the negligence of one variety of speech – Sindebele.
- * It will further add to the existing body of knowledge in the politics of language and sociolinguistics.
- * It will further inform Language Planners about the communicative and cultural importance of minority language speakers whose “languages” are not classified as ‘languages.’
- * Linguists, Language Planners and the government may reconsider the status of Sindebele.
- * It will provide the Sindebele speakers with a positive self-esteem and pride in their own indigenous mother tongue as a carrier of their culture and heritage.

Researching such a complex problem discussed in 1.2 requires the use of carefully chosen research methods.

1.6 **Research Methodology**

This section describes the design of the study, including the collection of data and number of participants and how they were selected.

The researcher has chosen the qualitative research method to collect different forms of data. This research method was used in this research with the aim of achieving the goal of this study:

In qualitative research, we must dig deep to get a complete understanding of the phenomenon we are studying. We collect numerous forms of data and examine them from various angles to construct a rich and meaning picture of a complex, multifaceted situation. (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005:133)

Furthermore, qualitative researchers are primarily concerned with collecting data using observation, note taking and interviewing. On the same note, qualitative research should indicate the nature of evidence that will be collected and how it will be collected (e.g. observed field notes taken during funerals, church services and a wedding the researcher attended). In addition, “qualitative researchers also tend to collect their data through sustained contact with people in setting where subjects normally spend their time” (Mbalati, 2006:55)

It is interesting to note that the qualitative researcher uses multi-method strategies, for example structured and semi-structured (informal) open-ended interviews, participant’s observation, questionnaires as well as grounded theory to gather data.

“Data are collected by interacting with research participants in their natural settings” (Hoberg, 1999:76). For the purpose of this research, structured interviews were conducted with the male and female adults from five different villages, educators and learners from five different schools.

In this research study, the researcher used the qualitative research method simply “because it uses different methods which are concerned with life as it is lived, things as they happen, situations as they are constructed in the day-to-day, moment-to-moment course of events” (Mbalati, 2006:56).

A careful collection of data is also of special significance in this research method.

1.6.1 **Collection of Data**

According to Lecompte, Milroy and Pressle (1992:19-29) as cited by Mbalati (2006), ‘the range of data gathering techniques employed in qualitative research can be subsumed under three categories of activity as follows:

- watching/observing/experiencing
- asking/interviewing/inquiring
- reviewing/document analysis/archival/research/examining’.

To be able to answer the research question, the researcher needs to be well trained in observation techniques, interview strategies and other methods of collecting data.

Different methods were used in the process of collecting data in this research study.

1.6.1.1 Primary Research Method

For the researcher to obtain the required sample, structured interviews were conducted, which entail direct personal contact with the participants who were requested to answer questions. (See addendum)

The researcher can ask questions related to any of the following Silverman (1993) as cited by Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 146):

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| → Motives | → Facts (e.g. biographical information) |
| → Present and Past behaviours | → People’s beliefs and perspectives about the facts |
| → Standards for behaviours | → Feelings |

1.6.1.2 Secondary Research Method

In addition to interviews, the secondary research method was employed. This method is of vital importance to complement the data set obtained from the responses to interviews. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used this method to utilize data already provided in the works of experts and other researchers, (i.e. data from the internet,

literature, academic articles, government articles, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 as well as journals).

1.6.1.3 Subjects/Population

Haines (1996:471) as cited by Mbalati (2006:57) defines subjects as someone or something that is talked about, written about, etc while McMillan and Schumacher (1993:161) indicate that the individuals who participate in the investigation or a research study, it is from them that data is collected.

Mbalati (2006:57-58) states that as a group, subjects are usually referred to as sample. On the other hand, the sample consists of individuals selected from a larger group of persons called the population.

The study targeted the following population:

105 participants were classified as follows:

- Three male and three female adults who speak Sindebele (from each village)
- Three male and three female adults who speak Sepedi (from each village).

This sample was taken from five different villages at Mokopane where Sepedi and Sindebele are spoken. The villages included, inter alia:

- * Moshate (Vaalbyn) – where the paramount chief lives.
 - * Mahwelereng – residents are from different speech communities.
 - * Tshamahansi – Xitsonga is the dominant language, but there are Sepedi and Sindebele speakers
 - * Mosetjane - mostly Sindebele speaking only.
 - * Ga-Seleka - residents speak Sindebele with some influence of Setswana
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- Six Grade 12 learners (3 Sepedi and 3 Sindebele speakers from each school).
 - Six Grade 7 learners (3 Sepedi and 3 Sindebele speakers from each school).
 - Three educators from each school, whose home language is Sindebele.

The sample is also taken from five different schools in the Mokopane area. The schools included Mmadikana High, Nonchimudi Primary, Seritarita High, Nkgodi-Siphungo Primary and Sepedi Primary.

For the purpose of this research, male and female respondents were chosen for gender equality purposes. On the other hand, adults and children were chosen for the purpose of proficiency in the language they speak. The educators were also chosen to highlight the researcher about the situation at schools with regard to Ndebele learners.

1.6.2 Data analysis

A note book was employed to capture discoveries.

1.7 **Literature Review**

Mbalati (2006:14) states that before a researcher undertakes a project of any study, it is essential to review literature relevant to the topic under investigation.

According to Struwig and Stead (2001:38) in Mbalati (2006:14) no research work has to be seen as an entity into itself, but as a continuation of already completed research of the same type of related research. On the same note, Mouton (2001:87) emphasizes that the researcher ensures that nobody else has already performed what is essentially the same research. Literature review saves time and avoids duplication and unnecessary duplication

On the other hand, De Vos, A. S; Strydom, H; Fouche, C. B. and Delpont, C. S. L (2002:127) state that the researcher may identify a gap in previous research and that the proposed study will meet a proven need. In relation to this, Neuman (2000:446) states that literature review shows the path and prior research and how the current project is linked to the former. It also provides the framework of the research and identifies the area of knowledge that the study is intended to expand.

Leedy and Ormrod (2001:70) support De Vos, et. al (2002) as well as Neuman (2000) when they state that the review describes theoretical perspectives and previous research findings related to the topic at hand. They further indicate that the function of literature

review is to 'look again' at what others have done in areas that are similar though not necessarily identical to one's own area of investigation.

It is evident that studies have already been conducted on Sepedi and Sindebele, but not specifically on the use of Sindebele in the midst of Sepedi. All literature on this topic is based on a case for Sindebele, the minority language in the region of Mokopane.

Ziervogel (1959) compiled a grammar of the Northern (Transvaal) Ndebele (the Northern AmaNdebele people prefer to use the name Sindebele), provided an historical account of the development of Sindebele; but did not write anything about Sindebele spoken in the environment of Sepedi which is the focal point of the researcher. This is a problem among the Northern Amandebele people because they fear that their language, which is in contact with Sepedi, the dominant language of the area, may result in language shift.

Setumo (2005) gave an account of the migration of the Ndebele people, but silent about Sindebele as a minority language facing extinction. However, the researcher focused on the relationship between Sepedi and Sindebele which led to the borrowing of Sepedi vocabulary.

Calteaux (1987) wrote an article on a Status Quo Report on Northern Ndebele (now Sindebele); but did not say anything about Sindebele spoken with Sepedi.

Wilkes (1999-2000) researched about Northern and Southern Ndebele – why harmonization won't work but did not provide anything on the case for Sindebele.

Wilkes (2000) wrote about Northern Ndebele as different from Southern Ndebele based on preliminary research conducted in the Mashashane area, but not specifically in the Mokopane area. In his dissertation on Foreign Influences in the sound, grammatical and lexical system of Southern Ndebele, Skhosana (1998) included also the origin and distribution of the linguistic differences between Southern Ndebele and Northern Ndebele, but did not say anything about the influence of Sepedi on Sindebele.

In the light of the above account, one may say that not a comprehensive research was conducted about this variety as it is an example of a minority language oppressed and suppressed by some majority languages. Few conducted formal studies about this variety

and those who wrote about it have their materials unpublished. The next chapter gives an account of the history of the Ndebele people.

CHAPTER 2

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE NDEBELE PEOPLE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an historical account of the Ndebele people. It further glimpses at the relationship between the Ndebele and Pedi people. As the chapter progresses, it deals mainly with the origin and migration of the Northern Ndebele group (now Sindebele speaking communities) as well as the history of their chiefs. This will ultimately lead us to the fact that Sindebele speakers are an independent tribe with a different language and culture. The history of the Ndebele people (Southern and Northern) will be dealt with first.

2.2 The History of the Ndebele people

The Ndebele tribes are divided into two main groups:

2.2.1 The Southern Ndebele (now isiNdebele speakers) comprising:

- (a) the Manala (abakaManala)
- (b) the Ndzundza (abaka Ndzundza)
- (c) the Hwaduba (baHwaduba)

It is indicated that “the Hwaduba are also of Natal origin, it is Sothoized and linguistically it is claimed that it belongs to the Kgatla” (Ziervogel, 1959:3).

2.2.2 The Northern Ndebele (now Sindebele speakers) comprising:

- (a) the Muledlane (basemuLedlane – in Sepedi (baMoletlane) who are divided into:
 - (i) bakaSibidiela (Sepedi: baSebitiela – around Zebediela)
 - (ii) baka Gegana (Sepedi: ba GaKekana)
 - (iii) bakaMugombhane (Sepedi: ba GaMokopane – Vaaltyn Makapans location outside Potgietersrus – now Mokopane town).

- (b) The Langa (bakaLanga – Sepedi: baGaLaka) who are divided into:
 - (i) the Mapela section
 - (ii) the Bakenberg section.

- (c) The Lidwaba (bakaLidwaba – or basemaUne: Sepedi – ba GaLetwaba – they live around Maune) who are divided into:
 - (i) bakaMashashane
 - (ii) basemaUne (basemaWune)
 - (iii) the tribe of Eland Maraba
 - (iv) the tribe of Ngidigidlana Maraba.

There are different views regarding the Southern Ndebele group (now isiNdebele speakers) and the Northern Ndebele group (now Sindebele speakers).

Some linguists claim that their first settlement area was at eMhlangeni in the vicinity of Randfontein under chieftainship of Mafana who was succeeded by his son Mhlanga. Other linguists claim that both groups originated from the Nguni chiefdoms in Zululand-Natal (now Kwazulu-Natal) and migrated through Zululand as part of the Nguni migration process (late 16th early 17th century). According to Setumo (2005), “on their migration from Zululand, they passed areas such as Matatiele, Free State and Bethal until they settled in the former Transvaal” (Setumo, 2005:4).

It is claimed that they were of Hlubi origin. According to Bryant (1929) in Jackson (2000:3), the Hlubi occupied a position near the Drakensberg mountains along the upper reaches of the Mzinyathi (Buffalo River) before the rise to power of Shaka Zulu, that is, before 1820. The source further indicates that the groups were an exceptionally large tribe, comprising many clans and sub-clans. It is also indicated that at some stage they parted from the Nguni groups and moved in a more northwesterly direction. There they settled at KwaMnyamane north of Pretoria (now Tshwane).

Setumo (2005) indicates that these Ndebele people are the descendants of a common ancestral chief known as Musi; who was succeeded by his son Manala. It is said that the chiefdom split due to a succession struggle between the six sons of Musi.

The history of the tribal split of the Transvaal Ndebele centres around the area of KwaMnyamana. The succession struggle led the group to split into two sub-groups, that is, the Southern Ndebele comprising the descendants of Ndzundza and Manala and the Northern Ndebele comprising descendants of Mthombeni. According to Setumo (2005) the split resulted in the distinction between the present Kekana on the one hand and the Manala and Mahlangu on the other.

2.2.3 The Manala and Ndzundza live far apart.

The Manala section went to the former KwaNdebele homeland (now Mpumalanga) in areas such as Loding, Libangeni, Allemansdrft, KwaMusi, Verena, Tweefontein and Witbank and in Gauteng in the area of Soshanguve; whereas the Ndzundza abandoned their home and went to live in areas such as Stoffberg, Middelburg, Belfast, Bethal, Hendrina, Delmas, Leandra and Standerton; also in Monsterlus, Saaipus and Groblersdal and in Gauteng around Pretoria (now Tshwane) and in some townships on the East Rand.

It is the latter group (Ndzundza Ndebele) who settled amongst the Tswana and Pedi. They intermarried and pursued cultural exchange, that is why they adopted their house-paint strategies from a Pedi original. This Ndzundza Ndebele group, under chief Nyabela, fought with the Boers (armies of the Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek) in 1883. Finally, they were held out in the caverns of Mapoch for more than eight months. They went out of their enclave due to lack of water and starvation. The language of the Southern tribes now enjoys official status and is being taught in schools.

The second group, that is, the Northern Ndebele (now Sindebele speakers), settled in the Limpopo Province (previously known as the Northern Province) around the towns of Mokopane and Polokwane. According to Skhosana (1998:14-15) the Northern Ndebele are found in Limpopo and Gauteng Provinces, mainly in Soshanguve and Mamelodi near Pretoria (now Tshwane). Skhosana (1999) claims that the group comprises descendants of Mthombeni who later became known as Gegana (Kekana). Mthombeni was one of Manala's sons who left with his group from their original settlement area at KwaMnyamana (now Bon Accord) near Tshwane and moved northwards to settle in Potgietersrus (now Mokopane). A further split took place in this area, resulting in a number of Mthombeni's followers leaving the main group and moving away in the

easterly direction to Phalaborwa and from there northwards to Zimbabwe before turning back home via Venda to their present home in the Mokopane area.

According to Ziervogel (1959) the Northern Ndebele proper are the Gegana, Mugombhane and Lidwaba (Maraba). He further indicates that these tribes are not originally from Natal, but that they come from the north, that is, Zimbabwe. An indication is made that they were influenced by the Swazi and later by the Southern Ndebele, but are not related to the latter. Their language is generally spoken amongst people of the Ndebele culture and unlike isiNdebele, Sindebele is not taught at any school.

As already indicated that the Ndzundza Ndebele settled amongst the Pedi, a brief account of both groups will be outlined.

2.3 Brief account of the Ndzundza Ndebele in contact with the Pedi

According to James (1990:39) both the Southern Ndebele and the Northern Ndebele who shared the same Nguni origins, have lived close to Pedi influence for an equivalent amount of time, but the Northern Ndebele did not retain Nguni language or tradition in any measure (Journal of Southern African Studies Volume 16. Number 1, March 1990).

The Ndzundza Ndebele and Pedi are the inhabitants of a village called Morotse which is situated on the peripheries of the Pedi area in the Limpopo Province. Both groups moved to this village since the thirties from the white farms where they lived as tenants. Administratively, the village, which is part of the Limpopo Province was presided over by an Ndzundza Ndebele chief Mphuzulu Jack Mahlangu and is part of the Mahlangu Tribal Area which takes its name from the chief's family.

James (1990) says that among the people that settled here during the thirties was a group of Ndzundza Ndebele under their chief, a predecessor and grandfather of Jack Mahlangu. She further indicates that "by the time an official head of the Tribal Authority in the area came to be appointed in 1957, there had been no recognition by the South African government of the Ndebele as a group to which land or political status would be allocated within the Homeland system" (James, 1990:36).

The leader of the Nebo-Ndebele, as the group is often called, taking this name from the magisterial district, came to occupy the position of the chief in the area. As years passed by, the government designated a homeland for the Ndebele. Unfortunately, a split developed between two Ndebele leaders. There were those who opted to live in the new territory of Mpumalanga and those of the Nebo-Ndebele, who preferred to remain in the Limpopo Province. This group was adamant that they would never accept any Ndebele area other than their original land which was known as Mapochs-gronde.

A tense relationship arose between the Ndebele and Pedi that led to a special separation of the village into Pedi and Ndebele sections. Esoteric ritual, especially that which is associated with initiation ensured that each group found it difficult to understand each other. Pedi group undermined the Ndebele whereas the Ndebele on the other hand, thought the Pedi were likely to create trouble with any other form of authority. The Pedi were seen as a group that claimed to be Christians while the Ndebele were seen as rural and primitive.

James (1990:30) comments that there is a remarkable distinction between the two groups. He says the Southern Ndebele, even though they were in close contact with Pedi people, “their language, form of initiation and marriage rules appear to be typically Nguni” rather than Sotho traits. Within the same village, the Ndebele and Pedi groups lived totally different life styles. An indication is given that “Pedi are modern, civilized, educated and Christian” whereas Ndebele were primitive and disliked education and church and favoured traditional ancestor worship (James, 1990:39).

The Northern Ndebele, on the other hand, lived in close contact with the Pedi. It was indicated at the onset of this section that the Ndebele were also influenced by the Pedi group as they lived together for a certain period. It is this tribe (the Northern Ndebele) that will form the subject of the following section of this study:

2.4 Origin and History of the Northern Ndebele group

The group used to call themselves Matebele a Lebowa (now Limpopo Province). They prefer to use the name Sindebele to refer to their language. Today (2010), the Sindebele speaking communities adopted elephant (tlou) in Sepedi and (ndlovhu) in Sindebele as their totem; and therefore, their praise name is Ditlou. This is an indication that they were an independent entity with a unique identity.

It is already mentioned in the previous section of this study that the Northern Ndebele comprise:

2.4.1 The Muledlane who are divided into:

- bakaSibidiela (Sepedi: ba Sebitiela)
- bakaGegana (Sepedi: ba GaKekana)
- baka Mugombhane (Sepedi: ba GaMokopane)

2.4.2 The Langa who are divided into:

- the Mapela section
- the Bakenberg section

2.4.3 The Lidwaba who are divided into:

- baka Mashashane
- basemaWune (Maune)
- the tribe of Eland
- the tribe of Ngidigidlana Maraba

2.4.1 The Muledlane section

It is noted by Ziervogel (1959) that the Kekana split into the Muledlane who remained at Moletlane and the Kekana section who settled near Hammanskraal, whereas the Mugombhane tribe left for Mokopane.

It is further indicated that both the Kekana and Mugombhane sections belong to the same original tribe, of which the Mugombhane is said to be an off-shoot. The Gegana and Muledlane are not related to the Manala-Ndzundza. The Muledlane has another branch by the name of Seleka tribe. The tribe is completely Sothoized. The Mugombhane tribe live at Vaaltyn Makapan's location just outside Potgietersrus (now Mokopane) and the tribe owns the farm Lisbon. Their western neighbours are the Langa tribe.

2.4.2 The Langa section

The Ndebele of Langa are not related to any other Ndebele tribe. Their language is more Nguni-like as compared to that of the Mugombhane and Maraba tribes. They are said to be of Zululand stock. The Ndebele spoken at Langa's in former times was nearer to Zulu than that of today, for example: They used to say: nje nya nkholuma (now when I speak).

2.4.3 The Lidwaba section

The MaWune (Lidwaba) tribes live on the following farms: Abrahmsfontein, Bultfontein, Uitzicht, Vlaklaagte, Bergzicht, Christina, Cornelia, Kalkspruit, Uithoek, Utrecht, Waschbank, Zandfontein and Zomerfontein. The tribe of Felix Eland Lidwaba occupies the Trust farms Gladdespruit, Randjies, Schuinsrand and Droogte. The tribe of Ngidigidlana Lidwaba lives on the Trust farms Weltevreden, Sterkwater, Slaapkraal.

The tribes of the Eland and Ngidigidlana are the off-shoots of the Lidwaba section. They have become Sothoized. Ziervogel (1959) says that the first i.e. Eland, has completely dispersed and the second, i.e. Ngidigidlana speaks some form of Tlokwa.

The source further indicates that the Mashashane and MaWune speak the same dialect. The Mugombhanes are different from the two groups.

2.4.4 The Mashashane tribe

The Mashashane tribe occupies Machichaan's Location, also Mars, Glen Ray, Waterplaats, and Uitvlucht, Doornfontein, Diana and Doornspruit. Their neighbours on the west are the Matlala and to the north are the Maune and Moletjie.

The following table shows the interrelationship between the Maune and Mashashane tribes:

It is said that Northern Ndebele is spoken in the Mugombhane, Mashashane and Maune territories, as well as in large portions of the Springbok Flats, north of Hammanskraal. It is also indicated that only a minority of old people speak the language and they prefer to speak it at tribal and court meetings. Other tribes who claim Ndebele origin speak Sepedi. School education is received through the medium of Sepedi.

2.5 Historical evidence

Historically, the Ndebele come from North of the Limpopo. It is said that they were first in contact with the Swazi, hence the tekela t and substitution of e. The following vocabulary is of Swazi:

sihlahla	(tree)
livi	(voice)
- thaba	(be glad)

It is said that later, they came into contact with the Ndebele of Mapoch. The following vocabulary is of Southern Ndebele:

- jama (stand)
- sela (drink)
- munrwatana (girl)

The second version indicates that they (northern Ndebele) come from the East, from the country of Malaji. They were referred to as Kalanga originally and their chief was Nungu (Noko in Sepedi). Previously, they adopted porcupine (noko) as their totem. Nungu lived at Phalaborwa and had two sons, Malaji – the elder and Malajana – the younger. The two brothers quarrelled and Malajana fled with his group towards Swaziland. On their way to Swaziland, they saw an elephant and killed it. The aim of Malajana was to change his clan name. Indeed, Malajana had the elephant as a totem and no longer the porcupine. That is why at the present moment the Ndebele still have elephant as their totem.

On their arrival in Swaziland, they destroyed the Kalanga language and spoke Swazi. They intermarried and when Malajana saw that his tribe had been changed and that it was good, he left the place. He then turned towards Mapoch's (Sindebele Mabhoxo's). Mapoch permitted them to live in his country. Malajana lived there until his death. After

his death, his son, Bulongo remained at Maphoch's but he also died there. His son Sikhubana remained. He also died and Kxabe was left. Kxabe left Mapoch's and went to live in Uba. He died there and his son Madidzi remained. Madidzi was blessed with two sons, Gegana and Lidwaba. While at Uba, they split into the Mandebele of Lidwaba and of Gegana. Lidwaba went to live in Maxashula and Gegana went to Muledlane.

The Mandebele of Gegana, together with those of Mugombhane (Makapan) went to Muledlane. At Muledlane (Moletlane), they too split and those of Mugombhane went to Potgietersrus (now Mokopane) and it is this tribe that is emphasized in this research. The history of the Northern Ndebele chiefs will shed more light on the origin of this tribe in the next section of this study.

2.6 History of the Northern Ndebele chiefs

Before any account of the Ndebele chiefs is given, their genealogical tables will be presented first:

Since the Northern Ndebele are divided into the Muledlane, Langa, and Lidwaba sections, they have different chiefs, each with his own group (following). An account of these chiefs will be outlined as follows:

2.6.1 The Matebele of Gegana (Kekana)

This is a subgroup under Muledlane section. Like other Northern Ndebele groups, they were called bakaMuthombheni. Mthombeni settled at Moletlane and established the Kekana chiefdom. The first branch established is that of Matebele of Kekana that settled in the Hammanskraal area in the Gauteng Province. This tribe was very unlucky with its chiefs.

Historically, it was indicated that Nnomugebe's (Mmamokebe-Sepedi) son was Ramabele. Ramabele bore a son, Shikwane (Shigwane II) who had first married his cousin Maria, Mugombhane II's daughter, and later he married Tjhita, Nnomugebe's daughter, that is, Ramabele's sister. They had no issue. He then married from the Masemola tribe and they had a son, Sello. Shikwane died and his brother, Lesetja (Cornelius) was not allowed to act as regent due to ill-health. Seswai, a brother from another hut, became regent. He also became ill and Johannes, his brother, became regent but died within a month and a month later, Seswai also died. Abel, Lesetja's son became regent. Later Sello became chief, but he became ill and his brother, Patrick took over the reigns. Sello died and Patrick was succeeded by Frans Kekana. Johannes, Sello's son, became the chief designate.

Matebele of Mugombhane is another branch of the Kekana that settled near Sefakaola Hills at present day town of Mokopane (then Potgietersrus). This branch is commonly known as those of Mokopane, named after one of their chiefs. During their stay at Sefakaola Hills, Kgopa (Kxumbha-Sindebele) and Kgaba (Kxhaba-Sindebele) became their leaders as they did not have a chief. Kgopa was their senior leader. Kgaba was chief Kgopa's, (of the Kekana of Moletlane) younger brother. Kgaba was then succeeded by Tšhumana who was later succeeded by Mokopane.

On the death of Chief Tšhumana, grandson of Gegana (Kekana), his two sons, Kgaba and Kgopa fell out. Kgaba was defeated and he then left with his group to Moordrif. Kgaba had two sons, Tšhumana and Kwenane. After the death of Kgaba, Tšhumana was made

chief. Tšhumana was the youngest, but because Kwenane (the eldest) did not take care of their mother, she convinced the community to make Tšhumana chief. Tšhumana bore a son, Mokopane (also known as Setšwamadi). Seeing that he was not recognized, Kwenane fled and lived in the Bapedi area.

Tšhumana's father, Kgaba, had two assistants, Tlokwa and Manyelenyele. Tlokwa was Kgaba's main assistant and he took over the reigns of power. As Tlokwa was ruling, Mokopane, Tšhumana's son was growing. It was revealed to him that Tlokwa had murdered Tšhumana, Mokopane's father and took power by force. Tlokwa was strangled by bakgomana and Mokopane was then inaugurated as chief.

It was believed that kgoši Mokopane was more like a prophet. He married and had two sons. With his power of "seeing", kgoši Mokopane "saw" that his elder son had ambition to take over power from him. This made him furious and then he killed his son with a knobkerrie. His youngest son Matsebe, grew up and married. Mokopane again, with his power of seeing, "saw" that Matsebe also wanted to take power from him. Kgoši Mokopane also killed him. Matsebe had no child.

As Kgoši Mokopane was ageing, the community began to look for an heir to the throne. The problem arose of who will be their next chief as Kgoši Mokopane had killed his two sons. The community then urged the ageing kgoši Mokopane to sleep with Matsebe's wife, his daughter-in-law in order to bear his successor. He protested, but the community persuaded him until he succumbed. Kgoši Mokopane with Matsebe's wife had a son, Mokopane II. Mokopane II was both Kgoši Mokopane's blood son and grandson as he was born from Matsebe's wife.

After their clash with the Boers had subsided, the Kekana went to GaMmachidi (GanoChidi-Sindebele) around Mokopane to settle there. Kgoši Mokopane, who was old then asked Magemi to go and look for Mokopane II who was captured by the Boers. Kgoši Mokopane wanted Mokopane II to come to be the new chief. Kgoši Mokopane told bakgomana that he saw Mokopane II in dreams. Kgoši Mokopane died and Magemi became regent.

Mokopane II was then found by some Matebele migrant labourers who were looking after a certain Boer farmer's livestock around Brits. They returned home to inform the

community. Mokopane II then came back home. Magemi took him to the circumcision school and thereafter he took over the reigns.

According to other informants at Mugombhane, when Likxhobho (Vaaltyn) died, his brother, Mashupya became regent. Vaaltyn's son Bennet had no issue before he died. His brother Gwejela (Piet Makapan) became regent for Bennet's son who was still a baby. The child's name was also Vaaltyn.

The Gegana community then married a wife (mmasetšhaba in Sepedi) for Vaaltyn in order to produce an heir to the throne. A baby girl was born. Vaaltyn then begot Kgatabela II with another wife. Kgatabela II married mmasetšhaba who unfortunately died while pregnant. Kgatabela II died too and his uncle, Gojela (Shikwane) acted on behalf of Kgatabela II's son Alfred, of the other wife, Sedibu. Naum Langa was then married as mmasetšhaba and she gave birth to Vaaltyn Lesiba Kekana who is now the present (2010) ruler of the Matebele of Mokopane. Gegana and Lidwaba were two sons of Kxabe. After their split, Gegana was left at Muledlane, whereas Lidwaba left for Maxashula's. The Lidwaba tribe form part of the next section:

2.6.2 The Matebele of Lidwaba

This tribe settled at Maxashula's around Maune. At Maxashula's, Lidwaba begot Bhegedzana who begot Sekhwebetana. Sekhwebetana begot Lidwaba and Milente. Milente was born from a small hut, whereas Lidwaba was born of the great hut. Lidwaba and Milente's father had to choose his heir between these two children. Milente (the younger brother) was then chosen instead of Lidwaba who should have received the chieftainship.

Milente went to Mbhutasama's with his following and died there. After his death, his child Mathetha took over the reign. Mathetha begot Nrimbha who begot Sibasa, Nrimbha died and the reign was taken by his son, Sibasa. After Sibasa's death, the chieftainship was taken by Maraba. Maraba died also, and the reign was taken by his son, Phatlhaphatlha. Phatlhaphatlha died in a cave and his son, Maraba II was still young to take over the reign. The brother of the father of Phatlhaphatlha took the chieftainship and Maraba II took over the reign when he was a grown up. Chief Maraba II's kraal was

on the east of the railway station called Marabastat south of the present day town of Polokwane.

The next section deals with the Matebele of Langa:

2.6.3 The Matebele of Langa

Hans was the first Chief of the Mapela branch of the Ndebele of Langa. The other division was ruled by Hendrik Bakenberg Langa. He (Hans) married twenty-nine wives. The first five were involved in the determination of the chiefs that followed after Hans. Their names and issue are as follows:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Mallega Maria
(daughter of Matopa Langa) | 1. Alfred Sedibu |
| | 2. Nkgalabe Johannes |
| | 3. Lydia Masempame |
| | 4. Salome Mmantutule |
| 2. Raesetša Makanu
(of the Mashashane Lidwaba
Chiefly family) | 1. Nkopo Hendrik |
| | 2. Helena |
| | 3. Mpelana Robert |
| | 4. Manyenyana |
| 3. Ngwana Mogale | - no issue |
| 4. Matswinya
(Ngwana Langa) | 1. Ramadimetša (died as child) |
| | 2. Difela |
| 5. Madikana
(ngwana Mabusela) | 1. Godwin Motape |
| | 2. Hendrik Madikwe |
| | 3. Mabina (died as child) |
| | 4. Motepana (died as child) |

Chief Hans Langa was one of the two sons of Masebe III. The Langa group lived at Thaba Tšhweu hill, south-east of the present day town of Polokwane. The following

chiefs ruled and died at Thaba Tšhweu: Masebe I, Mapuso, Podile (a Pedi name), and Masebe II.

Masebe II was succeeded by Seritarita at Thaba Tšhweu. Seritarita departed with his group and settled at Maleoko, north of the present day town of Mokopane and west of the present day town of Polokwane. From Maleoko he moved to Moumong-wa-Motswake. He died there and was succeeded by Mapela, his son by his third-ranking wife.

In his old age, Mapela moved to Fothane Hill and died there. Mapela's rightful heir was Selaki, but he died before he could rule. Mapela's next-ranking, Masekamiša also died. His son, Mankopane was supposed to rule, but he was too young, and therefore, Maleya, the son of Mapela's minor wife, became regent. He appeared to have been unpopular and he was then ousted by Mankopane.

Mankopane bore a son, Masebe II. He was designated to be heir to the Langa throne. Mankopane and his son had conflicts and Mankopane decided to kill Masebe. Masebe fled to chief Makapan at Mosetlha.

After some years, Mankopane's prodigal son, Masebe returned. Masebe proved to his father that he has repented and he was forgiven because his father felt that Tokodi, who was an alternative heir, was not suitable to lead the Langa. Mankopane's problem with Tokodi was that Tokodi was a weakling while Masebe had a stronger personality. Mankopane died a natural death.

2.7 Chiefly succession

Like other tribes, the Northern Ndebele (Sindebele speaking) group have rules to regulate chiefly succession. The principal wife is an important link in the chain of succession. The principal wife is the one married by a chief with marriage cattle contributed by the chiefdom as a whole on a representative basis. She is the highest-ranking wife of a chief. Her function and duty is to give birth to the future chief. The chief cannot be succeeded by the son of a different wife. This is not tolerated by members of the chiefdom especially if the principal wife has a suitable son.

The principal wife is known to the people as mohumagadi (woman of status), or setimamollo (the fire extinguisher). This term (setimamollo) is usually used when the principal wife is newly wed. She can also be referred to as mmagosetšhaba (mother to the chieftainship) or mmabatho (mother of the people). Mmagosetšhaba and mmabatho express more clearly her very special meaning to the chieftainship as a whole. It is acceptable to marry the principal wife before or after her husband succeeds to the chieftainship.

2.7.1 Regencies and supporting wives

The Ndebele are also governed by certain rules. If the chief dies while the principal wife is still young, but before she has sons, the chief's brother or half-brother who is next in line of succession should enter into a levirate relationship with her. He should at the same time succeed to the chieftainship in the capacity of regent for the unborn son of the principal wife who is to be fathered by him. The eldest son of the principal wife should succeed to the chieftainship.

However, the group has remedies in case the principal wife is barren or has daughters only or the ruling chief fails to marry a principal wife.

The Ndebele of Langa and Mokopane will serve as examples:

If the eldest son of the principal wife is too young to succeed when the chief dies, they consider the chief's brother who is next in seniority or his half-brother who is next in rank. This person is then regent during the minority of the heir. This case happened when Chief Hans died. Alfred Sedibu, the elder son of his principal wife was too young to succeed. Marcus, Hans' uterine brother succeeded as regent for Alfred. On the other hand, when chief Mokopane died, Mokopane II was still young, then Magemi succeeded as regent for Mokopane II.

If the principal wife is unable to bear a son, her younger sister or another female relative will be attached to her household to bear the heir on her behalf. This woman is referred to as mmamolatelo (ancillary wife).

Seritarita's principal wife, ngwana Mabusela did not have a son and another ngwana Mabusela, probably her sister, was attached to her household. She bore a son by the name of Makgenene. Mokgeta Makgoba, the principal wife of Masebe III was unable to bear a son, her sister, Sešwatla Makgoba became the ancillary wife. She gave birth to Malesela Hans. In the case of Mokopane II, Vaaltyn, his son, but not from his principal wife was appointed to act because the principal wife had no son, she only had Ntjatji, the daughter.

If the chief dies before he marries a principal wife, his brother or half-brother who is next in line of succession succeeds and marries a principal wife on his behalf. The chief's brother is in the position of regent for the unborn son that he must father on behalf of his late brother.

Alfred Sedibu failed to marry a principal wife and he was therefore succeeded by his uterine brother Nkgalabe Johannes. Nkgalabe negotiated for the marriage of a principal wife on behalf of his brother Alfred. They selected Nana Langa who unfortunately died prematurely. Nkgalabe also died. Hendrik Madikwe, their half-brother succeeded to the chieftainship and married Atalia Thabantši Langa as principal wife for the late Alfred. He became regent for Atalia's son – the son that he fathered on behalf of Alfred.

If a principal wife was not obtained in the previous generation to bear an heir, a daughter-in-law is married as a principal wife to bear the imaginary son the chief who failed in this respect. The ruling chief who marries her in order to raise this high-ranking household is in the position of a regent who must father the heir for whom he is acting as regent.

Seritarita's principal wife failed to bear an heir, but her ancillary wife did have a son, Makgenene, unfortunately he left the chiefdom with his group. Selaki, Mapela's high-ranking son, died before marrying a principal wife. A generation later, chief Mankopane married a daughter-in-law for Selaki as principal wife for Selaki's imaginary son by his imaginary principal wife. The resultant heir was therefore, Tokodi.

The Mokopane issue is different from that of Langa in that chief Mokopane had killed all his two sons, then he was persuaded to sleep with his daughter-in-law in order to bear his successor. With his son's wife, chief Mokopane begot a son, Mokopane II.

2.8 War between the Voortrekkers and Matebele

There was a brewing tension between the Voortrekker and Matebele when Hermanus Potgieter, the younger brother to Andries Hendrik Potgieter (Commandant-General of Zoutpansberg Division of the ZAR), killed kgoši Mokopane's youngest brother for allegedly having killed a buffalo calf. It is also said that he angered the Langa when he killed a snake which the Matebele believed accommodated the spirit of their late chief.

The Matebele of Kekana of chief Mokopane, together with the Matebele of Langa of chief Mankopane, killed about twenty-eight Boers, including Hermanus Potgieter. About fourteen of those Boers were murdered by chief Mankopane's people at Fothane Hill, whereas the other fourteen were killed by the Matebele of chief Mokopane along the Mogalakwena River.

Hermanus Potgieter was well known as Nterekana among the Matebele. His brother was called Ntereke. Hermanus Potgieter was notorious among the Matebele for his short temper and violent slave raids in which he used to murder people in cold blood. The Matebele and the Boers could not avoid their conflicts because they were both interested in resources such as land, grazing, labour, ivory, game and skins. Another conflict was that of their technique to acquire much-needed Black labour.

2.8.1 Mankopane attacked Hermanus Potgieter

Hermanus and his group stopped at Mankopane's capital Fothane Hill to acquire ivory. Mankopane became wise, sent a party of men who were armed with assegais which they broke to make them shorter. They hid their assegais under their clothes so that their rivals could not see them. The other men carried a huge elephant tusk. When they were a distance shorter, they put the tusk down and called Potgieter and his group to inspect it. Potgieter and his men left their rifles at the wagons and went to inspect the tusk. Mankopane then attacked them and Potgieter was skinned alive and his skin was used for rituals.

2.8.2 The revenge of the Boers

Piet Potgieter succeeded his father Andries Hendrik Potgieter as a Commandant-General of Zoutpansberg. He gathered a commando in order to punish those who murdered Hermanus Potgieter and his party after hearing the massacres of his people by the Matebele. Commandant Pretorius also gathered a commando which joined that of Piet Potgieter.

After the Kekana of Mokopane were besieged in a cave, a commando was sent to attack Mankopane's Matebele of Langa. The commando found an empty hill as Mankopane had moved his people to a high flat-topped mountain with steep cliffs called Magagamatala.

Seeing that Mankopane, their opponent could not be defeated, the Boers withdrew. The Boers did not forget about the massacre, so they needed a revenge against the Matebele of Mankopane for what they did in 1854. Stephanus Schoeman who had succeeded Piet Potgieter as Commandant-General, led the attack against Mankopane at Magagamatala. Schoeman was accompanied by Paul Kruger and Barend Vorster. On their arrival at Magagamatala, they strategised the attack, with Schoeman attacking from the front with mounted forces, while Kruger and Vorster were attacking from other sides with foot soldiers. During that night of thunderstorm a violent war erupted and both parties lost life. This war is still known among the Matebele as the war of Nterekana because it resulted out of the massacre of Hermanus Potgieter and his party.

2.9 **The Cave**

Piet Potgieter, together with Pretorius gathered a commando about 500 men and they besieged chief Mokopane's people into a huge cave on the farm of Makapansgat. Many lives were lost during the siege. The Matebele lost 2000 members of their tribes. The Matebele shot Piet Potgieter and he fell from the roof of the cave while he was trying to position himself so as to shoot into the cave. He died at the spot and Paul Kruger recovered his body. Later the town of Potgietersrus (now Mokopane) was established and was named after him as it was where he was laid to rest. It was formerly called Piet Potgieter's rust – P.P. Rust.

While the Matebele were still trapped in the cave, chief Mokopane instructed that the children be taken out of the cave. Mokopane II was among those children who went out of the cave. Most of the Matebele went out through openings.

The Matebele's flight into the cave was not a new experience at all. They had been into the cave on at least three occasions before 1854. The reason being that Chief Mokopane's grandfather Kgaba, the younger brother to chief Kgomba of the Kekana of Moletlane (Zebediela) broke away to establish his own chiefdom. The Kekana rulers at Moletlane were jealous of his independence. They asked the Pedi to bring Kgaba's people back to the fold. This action took place after Kgaba had been succeeded by Tšhumana and Tšhumana by Mokopane.

Chief Mokopane refused to budge and fled time and again into the cave, where on each occasion many of his people died. It was because of this that the Pedi nicknamed him Setšwamadi (the one who bleeds). Mokopane did not die in the cave but he poisoned himself and died shortly afterwards.

2.10 CONCLUSION

There is evidence that the Ndebele of Langa and those of Mokopane lived side by side, but originally, they were not related. They speak the same language, that is, Sindebele; as opposed to other group of Ndebeles namely, Southern Ndebele whose language is isiNdebele.

According to history, Bulongo is said to be founder of the Northern Ndebele tribe. This tribe speaks its own language, Sindebele. They have their own linguistic peculiarities that belong to their origin in the north.

Like other languages, Sindebele has dialects. The Mashashane and MaWune speak the same dialect, at Mugombhane's the difference is unmistakable. The language spoken at Muledlane does not differ from that of Mugombhane. Basically, the Northern tribe speak Sindebele, the language whose people today (2010) want its recognition as an official language. It was evident that this variety is still heard in many parts of the country starting from Gauteng province until Limpopo province.

CHAPTER 3

SINDEBELE AS AN ENDANGERED LANGUAGE

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on Sindebele as an endangered language. An endangered language is “a language headed for extinction, a language without monolingual speakers, a language spoken by a majority of people in the nation and for that reason is held in low esteem, causing its speakers to avoid using it or passing it on their children. (Your Dictionary, com 2001).

Spolsky (1998:137) refers to an endangered language as a language that is no longer being passed on to children as a native language, but is spoken by a contracting and aging group of adults. Ziervogel (1959:7) supports Spolsky (1988) when he says the most that may be said is that the older generation still occasionally employ the language, namely, Northern Ndebele, now referred to as Sindebele.

Adelaar (in Spolsky 1998:138) states that other languages in Mexico which are in danger of dying out are Chocho and some of the Huave dialects which are no longer being learned by children. The children hear the language but they cannot speak it.

Sindebele, is a clear example of an endangered language because it is “no longer generally used” (Ziervogel, 1959:7). The fact that it is not recognised as a language or lifted to the status of being official, may cause its extinction. On the other hand, linguists and language planners seem not to pay any attention to it or to its speakers.

South Africa has non-official languages and/or dialects which are on the brink of extinction. These varieties need to be resuscitated otherwise they will be wiped away and cease to exist. Examples of these languages are the previously marginalized languages such as the Khoe, Nama, San and Indian minority languages.

The government has established a Pan South African Language Board that must “promote and create conditions for the development and use of languages, promote and ensure respect for them (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996:4).

“For a language to survive, it must be used in a wide range of functions otherwise it begins to wither and die. Should the government have allowed higher status functions to be limited to English and Afrikaans only, the other languages of the country eventually would begin to wither and die. When a language dies, very often a whole body of knowledge dies with it. It is of the utmost importance to encourage the use of the official languages as well as other languages in a country, in a wider range of contexts and for an increasing range of purposes” (Government Gazette vol. 407, no 20098:28 May 1999).

Below, the researcher shall explore the issues pertaining to endangered languages: factors that contribute to the endangerment of languages, some possibilities of Sindebele becoming endangered and views on how to prevent languages from becoming endangered: language shift, reviving endangered languages. The identification of endangered languages will be attended to first.

3.2 How endangered languages are identified

The following factors help to identify endangered languages:

3.3 Factors that contribute to a language becoming endangered:

- death of all speakers;
- number of languages in existence;
- speakers of the language grouped by age;
- upbringing of pre-school children
- location of the ethnic groups;
- teaching through the medium of instruction;
- whether or not children are using the language;
- differences between rural and urban settings;
- feeling of ethnic identify

(Your Dictionary, com: 1996-2001)

3.3.1 **Death of all speakers**

According to Dixon (1997), when the speakers of a language die, it may be due to “an epidemic or earthquake or by slaughter” (Dixon, 1997:231). Dixon (1997) gives an example of volcanic eruption on the island of Sumbawa in 1815 that caused the death of all speakers of the Tamboran language. Other disasters may be “violent acts such as warfare and genocide, natural catastrophes such as extreme droughts causing disastrous famines or heavy floods.” (Wurm in Robins and Uhlenbeck, 1991:1)

3.3.2 **Number of languages in existence**

According to Kibrik as quoted by Dixon (1997:232) no one knows exactly how many languages exist in the world today, but best estimates place the figure around six thousand eight hundred. The source further states that roughly one thousand languages are spoken in the America, (15%), two thousand four hundred in Africa (35%), two hundred in the Pacific (19%). As regards Sindebele, no exact figures are available of the number of the Sindebele speakers in all the areas where it is spoken since it is confused with isiNdebele. Some politically Sindebele individuals classify themselves as Sepedi or Tswana speakers.

This study has already indicated at the outset that all figures, including those given by M.L. Molomo, are therefore, approximative. Grenoble and Whaley (1998:3) suggest that it is not easy in most cases to count the actual number of languages.

Kibrik in Dixon (1997:237) says that for many languages and ethnic groups, reliable statistics are missing and one must be guided by the approximations of specialists. The source mentions that “one should bear in mind that in many cases no specific sociolinguistic surveys on language proficiency have been made and that this makes it hard to produce objective statistical data”. He further states that “the fewer people there are who speak a given language, the greater the threat to that language’s existence and vice versa” (Dixon, 1997:237).

Grenoble and Whaley (1998:237) point out that “the actual picture is obscured by the reality of people who can speak the language but who choose not to and by the often large category of people who understand the language but who cannot speak it.”

3.3.3 Speakers of the language grouped by age

Kibrik in Dixon (1997) emphasizes that it is extremely important to categorize speakers by age group: older generation (50 years and older), the middle generation (30-50 years), young adults (20-30 years), adolescents (10-20 years) and children (up to 10 years). The source indicates that this is “the best diagnostic tool for forecasting the viability of the language” (Dixon, 1997:238). He further asserts that if “there are speakers from every age group, then the language will not die out for another 40-50 years, but that if the children and adolescents do not speak the language of their parents then it is unrealistic to expect the language to survive into the near future without the intervention of extraordinary measures” (Dixon, 1997:238).

As regards Sindebele, it is mostly spoken by the older generation. Ndebele children are bilingual, they learn the ancestral language (Sindebele) from their parents and the dominant language (Sepedi) from the surrounding communities. In some areas, children cannot communicate with their grandparents because they only know English and Sepedi and their grandparents only Sindebele. It is also clear that if Sindebele is not given any recognition, then in all the likelihood it may die especially if the young generation resists to use it. It is generally accepted that if parents cease to transmit the ancestral language to their children, if they begin to re-learn it in adulthood, they will at best become second language speakers.

3.3.4 Upbringing of pre-school children

The place where children are raised plays a critical role. It is significant, however, for children to live together with their grandparents because these older generations are fluent speakers of these ethnic languages and they will easily pass them to their grandchildren. Such children will have a good command of their ethnic languages unlike those children who live in families where these ethnic languages are spoken.

Sindebele might be in danger of dying because of the fact that the new generation mostly speaks Sepedi as a first language. Some Ndebele children are fluent in both Sindebele and Sepedi, whereas others know only Sepedi and have difficulty in speaking their own variety. Some parents have a tendency to encourage their children to speak and learn Sepedi because they feel it will give them a better chance in the province. The children

themselves become conscious of the fact that Sepedi is more useful, that it is used by more people or they may prefer it for the mere fact that it is simple and easy to learn.

3.3.5 **Location of the ethnic groups**

According to Kibrik in Dixon (1997:259) living in the native homeland is important for preserving the languages of an ethnic group. In addition to that, where the population is dense, then there is a “a better chance of preserving its language than a group of the same size spread out over different territories and without regular language contact” (Kibrik in Dixon, 1997:259). The Sindebele speaking communities are not found in their native region only, they are scattered in different parts of the country, that is, Limpopo, North West, Mpumalanga and Gauteng Provinces.

3.3.6 **Teaching through the medium of instruction**

Teaching through the medium of instruction at school is of utmost importance because children become proficient in their own native language rather than learning other languages as their medium of education. For learning to be most efficient and effective depends on the mother tongue being used as a medium of instruction. Calteaux (1987) supports this idea when she says that continuing to teach Northern Ndebele-speaking children through a medium other than their mother tongue is discriminatory, promotes inequality and is therefore in direct opposition to the spirit of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. NANO, on the other hand, was striving to have Sindebele taught at foundation phase in schools in the Limpopo Province. Because Sindebele is not promoted today (2010), some Ndebele parents want their children to be taught through Sepedi or English.

3.3.7 **Whether or not children are using the language**

According to Dixon (1997:238), a language is abandoned by choice of its speakers - either choice of parents or choice of children. In many situations in Mokopane, for example, parents encourage their children to speak Sepedi instead of Sindebele. Some children, however, depending on the situation at home, use Sindebele on regular basis except at school. Dixon (1997:338)) also says that the speakers of a non-prestige language are likely always to use the prestige language in different situations than the non-prestige one.

3.3.8 **Differences between rural and urban settings**

According to Grenoble and Whaley (1998:163), rural communities are more likely than urban communities to show more language maintenance. They also indicate that most people report that in their home communities, the urban centers are undergoing shift, but that the outlying villages show few signs of shift yet. This might be true in the case of Sindebele in the sense that many Ndebele children in urban areas no longer speak Sindebele as their first language.

3.3.9 **Feeling of ethnic identity**

Grenoble and Whaley (1998:164) indicate that one of the common ways of identifying a person is by his or her language. The Ndebele communities have the right to be identified by their speech form like other communities whose languages are given official status. The Ndebele communities also need to be proud of their speech variety because it gives them a sense of identity. This is supported by Grenoble and Whaley (1998:164) when they say that the social group whose language you speak is an important identity group for you.

According to Grenoble and Whaley (1998:164) ethnic identity is marked, among other things, by food, clothing and religion, therefore, if Sindebele dies, the Ndebele communities will lose the most. They will be proud only if Sindebele, like other languages, can one day be used for national or international communication, government, trade, as well as education.

3.4 **The Language situation at Mokopane**

The most vital point is already mentioned in chapter 1 of this research that states that at Mokopane, Sindebele is used in the environment of Sepedi and therefore used for informal conversations and daily use. The speakers of this variety, therefore prefer to learn or speak Sepedi, one of the official languages of the country, which is used for formal and written purposes. Ndebele children learn Sepedi (the dominant language) both at school and in the community.

What prevails at Mokopane is that the communities have sound knowledge of both Sepedi and Sindebele. In class, for example, Ndebele teachers claim that they teach in Sepedi and explain in Sindebele to make sure that the learners understand the subject matter. Ndebele children learn Sepedi at school and speak Sindebele at home.

The whole situation shows that the two varieties are used interchangeably by the communities of Mokopane. Dixon (1997:251) explains this language situation as follows “if someone knows two languages they tend to use them in different circumstances.” He further mentions that “the local language will be employed in traditional activities - ceremonies, hunting trips and the like - and the prestige or contact language in wider circumstances - in the workplace, in church.”

In the light of the above view, Sindebele at Mokopane is used in different contexts such as church, social clubs and family gatherings, whereas in the offices, it is used casually. On the same note, when the locals go to the community hall, they speak Sindebele and when they go to church, the priest preaches in Sepedi. This is evident that they know both languages.

When one looks at the language situation of Mokopane, Dixon’s (1997:251) claims also apply to Sindebele, the non-official language used in domains such as in songs, at weddings and at cultural festivals or circumcision schools, whereas Sepedi is the language of the educational system and has become the home language of most of the families there including the Sindebele speaking families. Even if Sindebele is used by some families as their home language, the truth is that it has been replaced by Sepedi, the dominant language of the area. Traugott and Pratt, 1980:374) say that, “however extensive a person’s knowledge of both languages, very rarely will the person use both equally in all situations.”

This is true of how the two languages, Sepedi and Sindebele are used in the communities of Mokopane as a whole. Sepedi, for example, is used for writing whereas Sindebele is used at home. Sepedi is the official and most dominant language, Sindebele, the language of intimacy. Sindebele is also considered non-official and used in informal gatherings. As a tolerated language (not promoted and its existence is recognised but ignored), Sindebele can become extinct as its speakers are absorbed by another culture (Bapedi) that speaks a different language. Traugott and Pratt (1980:374) further say that

“the use of one language over another on a given occasion will depend on the topic and the context.”

With time Sindebele may be in danger of disappearing because children who speak it are taught in Sepedi, English and Afrikaans at school. These children are busy losing their identity and culture. This is unfair because “culture and identity are intimately tied to their variety” (Spolsky, 1998:105). The Ndebele children have the right to know their culture and where they come from rather than to give up their variety and switch to Sepedi which is not their home language. It is also unfair to deny Ndebele speakers their own heritage and cultural pride. Dixon (1997) claims that language is the most efficient means of transmitting a culture. Should Sindebele therefore lose its native speakers, it will become extinct or die out. In addition, its history will also go unrecorded and its songs; religion and poetry will also die.

3.5 How Sindebele can be endangered

More often than not Sindebele is associated with people of low-prestige who have socially disfavoured identities. Even some Sindebele speaking feel the same. The researcher had a personal communication with Shimane Khota (2006, pers. Comm., 14 Oct) who said that he distances himself from Sindebele and has adopted Sepedi as his home language because he sometimes feels inferior especially at his workplace. Grenoble and Whaley (1998:3) assert that “if the people who speak a language have power and prestige, the language they speak will enjoy high prestige as well”. The sources further state that “if the people who speak a language have little power and low prestige, their language is unlikely to be well thought of” (Grenoble and Whaley, 1998:3). This is the case with Sepedi (H variety) and Sindebele (L variety) which are not given the same power by other speakers and the government.

In the researcher’s personal communication with Joel Makgeta (GaMagongoa village), the researcher came to realize that a Sindebele speaker, Joel Makgeta was unaware that the community/his family/his children have adapted to an environment where the use of their speech form was no longer an advantage to them. On the other hand, Ramadimetja Kekana (Mosesetjana village), believed that their variety had no strong basis and that it is going nowhere when they compare it with other languages of the region.

If Sindebele is not considered, then there is this likelihood that it will disappear or face a threat of being out of use in the days to come.

Sindebele has become insignificant because it is politically marginalised. Such languages ought to be brought out of the periphery and be centralised to become known. These languages of the minority groups should be used. Sindebele has been marginalised by the missionaries in the past, the apartheid government and Bantustans and presently by the democratically elected government. It is alleged that it is facing extinction “in an era in which politicians speak glibly about the African Renaissance” (Fred Ledwaba personal conversation with the researcher). Sindebele has no official status. It is neither taught in the schools nor used in public and private offices and the media. Sebba (1997:81) describes marginal languages as “those that were often scarcely recognized as languages at all, being classified merely as broken or debased forms of proper languages.” On the other hand, a marginalized language is any official language that is excluded from official use or of which use is discouraged in formal settings (for example education, health care). ‘Marginalized’ implies the low status of the language and possibly the speakers, for example Xitsonga, Tshivenda, isiNdebele and Siswati were regarded as marginalized in South Africa (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/endangered_languages) 2006/09/26.

The last possibility is that Sindebele can simply disappear altogether. Here the researcher is not referring to the natural fading away of Sindebele, but rather to language. Aitchison (1995:204) states that “in language murder, a socially prestigious language gets used in more and more circumstances, so that previously bilingual speakers have little opportunity to practice the old language.” In the case of Sindebele, the murder will be committed by the dominant language Sepedi as one can see that it gradually suppresses and ousts Sindebele. Sindebele then, seems to commit suicide. Should its speakers continue to borrow words from Sepedi, then it will slowly be demolished when they bring more and more forms from Sepedi, until at the end, its own identity is destroyed. However, it is possible to revive endangered languages as will be seen below.

3.6 Reviving endangered languages

There are two basic steps that need to be considered in order to rescue the language that is in danger of dying:

- * Language documentation
- * Language revitalisation

The first step refers to “the process by which the language is documented in terms of its grammar, its lexicon and its oral traditions, for example stories, songs, religious texts” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/endangered language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/endangered_language)). According to Dixon (1997:252), “the work of documentation and that of language maintenance naturally go hand in hand”. Dixon (1997:252) further states that “most languages cannot be saved, but the fact that they have been recorded will assist the self-image of their communities and provide a welcome record of the past”. To add even further, Dixon (1997:252) emphasizes that “the work of documentation may help arrest or even reverse the process of language loss.” (Dixon, 1997:252).

With thoughtful and enlightened leadership among the Northern Amandebele National Organisation (NANO) academics like DR Shashi Ledwaba, Mr Fred Ledwaba, Mr Kolotsi, to mention only a few, there is hope for the development of Sindebele because these academics are dedicated to helping Amandebele all over the country to preserve and promote their variety and identities. Professor Wilkes and the Ndebele teachers, on the other hand, have done a lot by creating a Sindebele orthography, under the auspices of Pansalb and the University of Pretoria.

Since it has a tentative orthography; it has an alphabet and at some point in the future, it may have a body of literature and dynamic users who will read and write it. This is just a matter of time and as long as its speakers strive for a higher prestige and have a passionate support over it then the danger of extinction will be minimised. Even if Sindebele has not yet been described in grammar and dictionaries, there is hope that at a later stage, it may have its grammar and dictionaries and this will help it to survive. Skhosana (1998) as cited by Calteaux (1987) indicates that in order to attain regional recognition for Northern Ndebele (now Sindebele) and facilitate the teaching of the language, it is imperative that materials be developed. The communities speaking this variety should support NANO morally in order for them to succeed; otherwise it will face endangerment because it has never been taken seriously by the government.

The second step, language revitalisation, is “the process by which a language community through political, community and educational means attempts to increase the number of

active speakers of the endangered language” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/endangered language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/endangered_language)). The process is sometimes referred to as language revival or reversing language shift ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/endangered language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/endangered_language)). According to Comrie et. al. (2003:162), “just as plants and animal species can be preserved and recreated by preserving their DNA, the sounds, grammar and vocabulary of languages can be stored on tape and disk for posterity and even for later resuscitation.” The same sources say that “when a language ceases to be transmitted to children, it is considered moribund and on the way to extinction unless intervention can stop the decline in its use. This process can be reversed” (Comrie et.al. 2003:162). Webb and Kembo-Sure (2001:13) refer to this process of reversing language shift as efforts by a group to resist language loss.

Webb and Kembo-Sure (2001:13) state that language shift refers to “a process in which the speakers of one language begin to use a second language for more and more functions until they eventually use the second language in personal and intimate contexts. They further say that “language shift becomes total when the second language becomes a symbol of the socio-cultural identity of these speakers.” (Webb and Kembo-Sure, 2001:13).

NANO can support all those Ndebele communities who make an effort in becoming proactive in revitalising their variety. But the most crucial issue is the effort made by the leaders of this Organization to have interest, to participate and to make decisions on the development of this variety.

Like other communities, the Ndebele communities should be interested in the revitalisation or maintenance of their variety. Consequently, they should also interact with NANO members who are interested in the documentation of their speech variety. It is the responsibility of all the Sindebele speakers to see to it that their speech variety does not face extinction because once it ceases to be used, it will never be revived. NANO is applauded for being actively working to try to revive it. This Organization, after it became aware that Sindebele is gradually slipping from use and that it is not learnt at school, displayed “strenuous efforts to try to reverse this trend” (Grenoble and Whaley: 1998:4).

Now that Sindebele has a tentative orthography, people can put its writing to use by producing primers for use in schools by Sindebele speaking children. Members of the

NANO group strive for its use as a medium of writing in primary schools and this written form also be used to record traditional stories and songs.

If the revival of Sindebele is not taken into consideration, then its loss among the Ndebele communities will grow at an alarming rate. It is therefore of utmost importance for the NANO group to be concerned about the future viability of their variety. This will in turn help Sindebele not to be counted among the world's endangered languages especially if its indigenous people mobilize in defense of its revival.

3.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the researcher wants to point out that Sindebele is neglected as it does not enjoy official status like other official languages. Priority is given to isiNdebele and the two languages - though both of them are Nguni- differ greatly. Consequently, lack of promotion and constitutional protection might lead to the extinction of Sindebele. Attempts at harmonizing isiNdebele and Sindebele might be fruitless as these are two different languages. The socio-linguistic profile of Mokopane will be examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROFILE OF MOKOPANE

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter it was stated that other languages such as Sindebele, are endangered. This chapter focuses on the sociolinguistic profile of Mokopane. According to Ferguson as cited by Bright (1966:309), a sociolinguistic profile is defined as a special summary description of a language situation based in part on a series of indices and classifications, whereas Webb and Kembo-Sure (2001:43) use the term to refer to “a characterization of the language situation in a state, region, or community, or the language world of an individual.” The current study’s area of interest is mainly the language situation in the communities of Mokopane region in the Limpopo Province.

Ferguson as cited by Bright (1966:309) defines the term language situation as “the total configuration of language use at a given time and place, including such data as how many and what kind of languages are spoken in the area by how many people, under which circumstances, and what the attitudes and beliefs about languages held by the members of the communities are.”

MOKOPANE is located in the western region of the Limpopo Province. According to the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) of GaMokopane, it covers an area of more or less 268 071 square kilometers, divided as follows: Waterberg more or less 14 500 square kilometers, five areas totalling more or less 103 571 square kilometers and traditional zone areas more or less 150 000 square kilometers. The total population is estimated at about 298 440 with the growing population projected at 1,4% per annum.

About 90% of the inhabitants speak Sepedi. Sepedi is the official language used in formal situations, and it is taught as a subject in some primary and secondary schools. Sindebele on the other hand, is used primarily for communication only at social gatherings, local meetings and family gatherings. In offices and or churches, it is employed only in informal encounters, for example, if two or more Ndebele people communicate with one another, they use Sindebele, but when they read and write or answer telephones, they use either Sepedi or English.

4.2 Language profile of GaMokopane

Based on the 1999 census of Statistics South Africa, the language situation at Mokopane (that is, types of languages and number of languages) is explicated. Table 4.1 shows languages spoken, the number of speakers of each language and population group, whereas Table 4.2 shows demography by age group, population group and gender.

Table 4.1

Number of languages and speakers per language per population group

MOKOPANE				
	African	Coloured	Indian or Asian	White
Afrikaans	186	51	12	8866
English	243	36	813	539
Isindebele	9608	-	-	-
IsiXhosa	84	-	-	3
IsiZulu	269	3	-	-
Sepedi	27 867	3	-	21
Sesotho	1 128	-	-	-
Setswana	393	3	-	3
IsiSwati	24	-	-	-
Tshivenda	325	-	-	15
Xitsonga	12 771	-	-	3
Other	75	-	54	9

Statistics South Africa: 1999 census

The above data give a full description of the language situation at Mokopane.

Table 3.2**Demography by Age group, by Population group and gender**

Mokopane	African		Coloured		Indian or Asian		White	
Age(s)	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-4	2933	2931	6	6	32	40	319	326
5-9	3508	3563	6	6	63	49	334	343
10-14	3516	3566	9	6	49	39	377	394
15-19	3481	3401	-	9	45	38	387	422
20-24	2267	2546	3	6	21	20	280	298
25-29	1777	2328	3	6	33	39	294	360
30-34	1331	1771	6	3	41	39	386	383
35-39	1222	1743	6	3	25	33	357	395
40-44	1118	1343	3	3	36	24	346	331
45-49	848	1198	-	-	31	19	224	333
50-54	614	911	-	3	26	28	324	302
55-59	466	624	-	-	13	20	225	252
60-64	420	784	-	3	15	13	184	226
65-69	302	585	-	-	15	9	135	171
70-74	263	578	-	-	6	3	123	193
75-79	130	274	-	-	3	6	70	125
80-84	115	261	-	-	3	-	50	97
85+	69	188	-	-	3	-	31	64
Total	24379	28594	42	54	460	419	4446	5013

Statistics South Africa: 1999 census

The linguistic picture of the said area displays the following spoken languages: Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, isiSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga and others not specified. Of these, Afrikaans, English, Sepedi and Xitsonga are used extensively for written purposes. The Sindebele variety is not used for writing. It is non-official and mostly confined to villages such as Moshate, Masehlaneng,

GaMadiba, GaMagongoa, Mosesetjana, Malepetleke, Mapela, GaPila, Grasvlei, GaMokaba, GaMolekana, Malokong, Bakenburg, GaNkidikitlana, Motlhotlo.

Languages like isiXhosa, isiZulu, Setswana, isiSwati and others are spoken by smaller numbers of people.

According to Statistics South Africa census (1999), the isiNdebele language shows a large number of speakers in the area. The information about the exact number of speakers of Sindebele may not be accurate because of the perception that its speakers classify themselves as Sepedi or Setswana speakers in the areas where they are found.

4.3 **Profile of Sindebele and Sepedi**

4.3.1 **Names:**

The names of the speech forms under discussion are SiNdebele of Mokopane and Sepedi.

4.3.2 **Location:**

Sindebele is the secondary speech form spoken mainly around Mokopane and Polokwane in the Limpopo Province, in few places in Mpumalanga and North West Provinces and in some places in the Gauteng Province. It is often regarded as a variety of isiNdebele yet due to fundamental differences between the two varieties, it is considered to be a different language by its speakers (<http://salanguages.com>).

4.3.3 **Population**

Due to some gaps in the information available concerning the number of Sindebele speakers and the difficulty of conducting an accurate census at Mokopane and other areas where it is spoken, L.M. Molomo of the Northern Amandebele National Organisation (2000) claims that there are more than four million Sindebele speakers. He further states that no other official numbers could be found ([http://www.google.com/South African languages](http://www.google.com/South_African_languages)). Sepedi is used as a home language by 4,208,980 of South Africans (2001) Census data. Sepedi is one of the 11 official languages of South Africa.

4.4 **Domains**

According to Joshua Fishman (1965), the “domains” of a language are “socio-culturally recognized spheres of activity in which a language is used” (<http://salanguages.com>). To be more specific, a domain, he emphasizes is a “social nexus which brings people together primarily for a cluster of purposes ... and primarily for a certain set of role-relations” (<http://salanguages.com>).

The following therefore, are the ‘spheres of activity’ in which Sindebele is used:

4.4.1 **Home**

Sindebele is the home language which Sindebele speaking children learn from their parents and grandparents within the extended family and through which they receive their informal education in the customs, traditions, values and beliefs of the Amandebele society.

4.4.2 **Village**

Sindebele is spoken at most villages of GaMokopane. It is used as a means by which good-neighbourly relations are maintained. The leading men of the villages such as Chief Alfred B. Makapane Kekana as well as other indunas from different villages, use Sindebele to make decisions which affect the lives of their communities or for communicative purposes and when they settle their disputes locally.

4.4.3 **Recreation**

Sindebele is also used by its speakers in sporting events, matches, games or soccer and in social gatherings, for example, societies, weddings, parties (birthdays, graduations, thanksgiving, come together, that is, where families meet for the purpose of knowing one another, concerts etc.) for interactive and entertainment purposes.

For a sociolinguistic profile of Mokopane region, information on the following features will be presented: Language in Education Policy, Incidence of multilingualism, the role played by the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) in the promotion of

multilingualism , language functions (which languages are designated as official languages and national languages and which are used for low functions and high functions), language status, language growth and language shift, corpus development, and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis.

Language in Education will be attended to first:

4.5 **Language in Education Policy**

The Department's Language in Education Policy came into effect on 14 July 1997. The aims of the Department in implementing this policy are, inter alia, to establish additive multilingualism as an approach to language in education, support the teaching and learning of all the languages that are required by learners or used by communities in South Africa, develop programmes for the redress of previously disadvantaged languages, hence NANO has endeavoured to obtain permission for Sindebele to be taught in schools in three provinces i.e. Limpopo, North West and Mpumalanga and to prepare it for such teaching.

4.5.1 **The additive approach to multilingualism**

This additive approach to language means that “all learners learn their home language and at least one additional official language; all learners learn an African language for a minimum of three years by the end of the General Education and Training band” (Managing the Curriculum:107)

The School Governing Bodies (SGBs) are given the responsibility of selecting school language policies that are appropriate to their circumstances but in line with the Department's approach to this additive multilingualism.

4.5.2 **How the Language in Education Policy was implemented:**

Some of the points stipulated by the National Department of Education in the implementation of the Policy:

- schools will offer at least one approved language as a subject in Grade 2.

- From Grade 3 onwards, all learners shall offer their language of learning and teaching and at least one additional approved language as subjects (Language in Education Policy, 1997:108).

4.5.3 **The Language of Learning and Teaching Policy**

The National Department encourages this policy for the fact that it needs learners to use their home language for learning and teaching, especially in the Foundation Phase because it is in this phase where learners first learn to read and write.

The Northern Province Language in Education Policy (2000, 4) is in line with the National Department Policy when it states that:

Foundation phase learning will take place through the medium of an L1 chosen by the School Governing Body (SGB)

Being aware of both the National and Provincial Education Departments' policies, PanSALB (lobbied) sought to influence the Education Authorities on behalf of NANO to have Sindebele taught at Foundation Phase in certain schools of the Limpopo Province. PanSALB again influenced the National Department of Education and the Education Departments of the North West and Mpumalanga Provinces to urgently introduce Sindebele at Foundation Phase in schools.

On the other hand there is a contradiction in the Northern Province Language in Education Policy, passage (2000, 6) that states thus:

- schools can have more than one language of learning and teaching,
- The school should meet language requests for Grades 1-6 if 40 learners per Grade are presented, ... if not the Head of the Department can determine how to meet the needs of the learner as advised by the Constitution of the Republic of South.

In the light of the above, PanSALB and NANO had no choice but to undertake a preliminary action of investigating how many children in primary schools in the Limpopo Province require the teaching of Sindebele. They successfully collected the details of over 2000 parents who wish to have Sindebele taught to their children due to the fact that as parents, they must exercise their children's rights.

That "schools can have more than one language of learning and teaching" (Northern Province Language in Education Policy 2000, 6), gives rise to the fact that in Limpopo Province, English, Afrikaans, Sepedi, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, Setswana and IsiNdebele are taught in schools. This is evident that South Africa, and in particular, Mokopane region, is multilingual. The incidence of multilingualism will therefore, come to the fore.

4.6 Incidence of Multilingualism

Since multilingualism refers to a situation of at least more than two languages in an area, Mokopane is an example of such an area. As already stated in Chapter 1 of this research, the area has eleven official languages with Sepedi, Xitsonga, English, Afrikaans, and the dialect of the area, Sindebele, as having a significant number of speakers.

South Africa is in the unusual position in that it has more official languages at national level than any other country. It is multilingual, which means that many languages are used in the country in various contexts and for various purposes. In the light of the above statement, Van Wyk (1978:29) in Donaldson (1991) had the following to say: "Multilingualism is a reality which no South African can escape. Monolingualism is rare, being confined mostly to underdeveloped areas with homogeneous communities" (Donaldson, 1991:4). He further indicates that "the linguistic situation of the Republic of South Africa ... offers a context of languages, dialects, and linguistic communities which has no exact parallel elsewhere..." (Donaldson, 191:2). On the same token, the researcher feels that South Africa has displayed to the outside world how civilised it is, perhaps it may be a good lesson to other countries.

In addition, the Government Gazette (1999:6), states that many people are able to use more than one language, many people are able to use several languages.

In reality, each of South Africa's official languages is spoken or understood elsewhere in the Southern African region and hence functions as a regional lingua franca. The languages of learning and teaching are all of the official languages. English is given first choice in most primary and secondary schools. Literature is produced in the main languages, for example, Sepedi at Mokopane, though English has a large majority. Newspapers, radio and television are available in English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sepedi, Setswana and Sesotho. The scenario pictured above, beckons the researcher to examine the sociolinguistic profile of South Africa.

4.6.1 **The Sociolinguistic Profile of South Africa**

South Africa is a multilingual, multicultural, and multiracial country with a "population of 40 583 573" (Statistics South Africa, 1998:9). Van der Merwe (1990) as cited by Deprez and Du Plessis (2000:68) states that the population "speaks at least 24 sizeable home languages which belong to four language families: the Khoe and San languages, the African languages, the Germanic languages and the Indic languages".

Baily (1995) as cited by Deprez and Du Plessis (2000:72) indicates that "the African languages fall into a Nguni group comprising isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati and isiNdebele, a sotho group made up of Sepedi, Setswana and Sesotho and two languages that do not belong to these two groups, Xitsonga and Tshivenda" (Deprez and Du Plessis, 2000:72).

Grobler (1990) as quoted by Deprez and Du Pless (2000) mentions that the "Germanic groups comprises Afrikaans, English and several European immigrant languages such as Portuguese, German, Greek, Italian, Dutch and French" (Deprez and Du Plessis, 2000:75). Mesthrie (1995) as quoted by Deprez and Du Pleassis (2000) further indicates that the "Indic group is represented by Gujarati, Hindi, Tamil, Telegu, Urdu, and Konkani" (Deprez and Du Plessis, 2000:76).

For languages to grow and develop properly, there has to be a body which promotes their use. This is where the Pan South African Language board (PanSALB) comes into the picture, and the role it played in the promotion of multilingualism will be visited:

4.7 **Multilingualism and the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB)**

This section of study deals with multilingualism and PanSALB, the role it plays with regard to the promotion of multilingualism and the development of the disadvantaged languages. The section also concentrates on multilingualism at Mokopane in the Limpopo Province.

“Section 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, recognizes the principle of multilingualism...” (South African Languages Bill: Revised final draft, 24 April 2003). South Africans are proud because the use of more than one language gives them “the opportunity of participating more fully in the international or global community, since the spin off would lead to learning languages of wider communication for purposes of trade and international communication” (government Gazette vol 407 no. 20098:1999)

The dominant languages in public life around Mokopane are Sepedi, Xitsonga Tshivenda, English and Afrikaans. Deprez and Du Plessis, (2000:102) regard Sepedi (52,7%), Xitsonga (22,6%) and Tshivenda (15,2%) as “the principal languages” of the country.

Even though GaMokopane is home to the Sindebele speaking community, the speech form in question, Sindebele, is not included among other languages of the area since it was never taken seriously as a separate language. The researcher is positive that if a proper counting of each individual speaker can be done, the results will reveal that Sindebele has a considerable number of mother-tongue speakers given the fact that it is employed in four chieftaincies, namely, Langa at Mapela, Langa at Bakenburg, Kekana at Moshate, and Lebelo at Grasvlei.

This is an indication that Sindebele is widely spoken, it therefore qualifies to be elevated to the status of an official language, but it must first have to be codified with dictionaries, have normative grammar and books and thereafter be turned into a subject of academic study especially in the Limpopo Province.

Other languages spoken at Mokopane such as isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Siswati, Setswana, and Sesotho, have fewer than 1% of mother-tongue speakers. The table below shows their percentages.

Table 4.1: Language spread in the province (percentages)

LANGUAGE	LIMPOPO
isiZulu	0,7
isiXhosa	0,2
Afrikaans	2,2
Sepedi	52,7
English	0,4
Setswana	1,4
Sesotho	1,1
Xitsonga	22,6
siSwati	1,2
Tshivenda	15,5
isiNdebele	1,5
Total	100

Source: South African Yearbook 1998 (GCIS:1998) in Deprez and Du Plessis (2000:102)

Sindebele is not reflected in the above table because it is not promoted and granted official status like other indigenous languages. It is the responsibility of the Limpopo Provincial government in collaboration with the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) to promote Sindebele. Its speakers should continue to strive for the recognition of their speech form.

PanSALB is bound to take on the responsibility because it is “a statutory body that is primarily responsible for the promotion of multilingualism and for language development, particularly concerning the languages that were previously marginalized” (Deprez and Du Plessis, 2000:9).

If indeed PanSALB gives special attention to the previously marginalized languages, then there might be a possibility that Sindebele can one day be given special attention from the Board.

Like other linguistic communities, Sindebele community has also sent several requests to PanSALB, seeking a change of status for its speech form and its recognition as a subject in schools. Since 1994 the Sindebele speakers like Dr R.D.M. Kekana and Mr Obed Ledwaba have made submissions to the Department of Education to introduce Sindebele as a language of teaching and learning in the schools. Unfortunately its orthography is inadequate for the needs of its users. Given a mandate to protect the rights of languages, promote and develop languages, PanSALB should also find a way to “resolve the dilemma of recognizing some dialects as official languages” and refrain from overlooking and or underestimating others (Alexander in Deprez and Du Plessis, 2000:173).

When officialization occurred, the Board was not only supposed to give preference to the nine indigenous languages in existence, but also recognize other speech forms and give them equal status. The Constitution states proceedings in the court of law that should be conducted or interpreted into the language of an individual’s choice. If this is the case, then it is frustrating to those individuals whose languages have disappeared or that have not been given official status because being arrested, detained and accused they will have no choice but to use only a recognized language, a language in which they may not feel at home. Chinweizu (1994) in Deprez and Du Plessis, (2000) clearly points out that a person usually feels most at home in his mother-tongue, and functions best in it. How language functions also plays an important role.

4.8 Language Functions

Though Mokopane is multilingual, the inhabitants use mostly Sepedi and Sindebele, the two divergent languages existing at the same speech community but serving different functions.

Diglossia was originally defined by Ferguson (1959), to refer to two varieties of a language - a higher and lower variants where the lower is not written but is used side by side, for example the case of High German and Swiss German in Switzerland. Timm (1980:33) as quoted by Donaldson (1991) is of the same opinion with Fishman (1967) when he indicates that the definition of diglossia was somewhat expanded “to cover situations where two separate languages, as opposed to variants of the same language, compete with each other for a function in the social spectrum of a bilingual community”

(Donaldson, 1991:37). This revised definition can now be applied to the relationship between Sepedi and Sindebele at Mokopane.

When looking at the linguistic situation at Mokopane, Sepedi is the high-function language used in formal situations such as in class, for broadcasting the news on radio and television, for writing poetry, in church and at formal meetings; whereas Sindebele is designated as non-official used for low functions such as at home, on the street, at initiation schools, at the chief's kraal and at informal gatherings like birthday parties, weddings and funerals. When the Ndebele people are in offices, they use it only for communication among themselves.

The linguistic situation at Mokopane has an advantage in the sense that it offers the inhabitants a wide choice among languages. According to Wardhaugh (1998), "people are usually required to select a particular code whenever they choose to speak" (Wardhaugh,1998:100). In the case of Mokopane, when the Sindebele speakers choose to use Sindebele, they assert some kind of right.

The communities of Mokopane not only use Sindebele in ordinary conversations like during meetings at the local chief's kraal and Sepedi in formal situations, but they also use English, Afrikaans and Xitsonga for high functions, that is, for governance, parliamentary debate, legislation, administration (record keeping purposes, internal communication), the courts of law, education (as subjects at schools and for certification requirements). English and Afrikaans are still regarded as national languages used for science and technology, the media, trade and industry, by implication, this elevates the status of English above the eleven official languages.

4.9 Language Status

Spolsky (1998) asserts that status decisions determine which language or languages are to be used in various public functions, by government, the legal system, the media and the educational system. The South African constitution accords eleven languages official status and has dictated their use for educational purpose too. The official status of nine languages was extended to national level adding them to English and Afrikaans. Spolsky (1998:156) says that "while the term official language suggests governmental

recognition, it is worth determining what precisely this status implies” (Spolsky, 1998:156).

The Gazette (1999) states that under the previous dispensation recognition was given to Sindebele and isiNdebele only whereas under the current constitution this distinction has not been made, instead isiNdebele has been given official status. It is, therefore, more difficult for Sindebele to grow than isiNdebele. The arrangement hampers the growth of Sindebele.

4.10 **Language growth and language shift**

Any language needs to be developed and enjoy official recognition for it to grow, otherwise, it faces the danger of extinction. When speakers of some languages come into contact with speakers of other languages, such contact can have consequences, especially when one language is perceived by its speakers as being less prestigious than its counterpart. In some extreme cases, a language may be entirely abandoned by its speakers in favour of another and become a dead language.

In this study, Sindebele is an example of such a language. Some of its communities employ Sepedi in all domains of communication. This means that the Sindebele speakers have shifted to Sepedi. The inhabitants of Mokopane are able to shift from Sepedi to Sindebele and vice versa. Because they are used to do this, they consider shifting as quite normal.

Language shift occurs only when speakers of a particular language come to speak another over the course of several generations or where these speakers adopt the language of the majority. According to Webb and Kembo-Sure (2001) language shift is “a process whereby members of a speech community abandon the use of one language for certain functions and adopt another, the former is often a native or home language.” (Webb and Kembo-Sure, 2001:113). In the case of this research, speakers of Sindebele adopted Sepedi, the language of the majority. Thus Sindebele is gradually being replaced by Sepedi. For a language to develop, its corpus is of utmost importance.

4.11 **Corpus development**

Webb and Kembo-Sure (2001) refer to corpus development as “the development of technical terms required by the speakers of a language to give adequate expression to their communicative needs” (Webb and Kembo-Sure, 2001:53). Haugen as quoted by Auer (1998:106), indicates that if the language is unwritten, there is the problem of developing an orthography. The source further says that if it has an orthography, it may be or may become inadequate for the needs of its users.

Sindebele, the speech form in question, has an inadequate orthography, for example, Prof Ziervogel’s Grammar of Northern Ndebele and Prof Wilkes’s Ndebele Speech Sounds and Grammar Rules. Sindebele is not properly codified, that is, it does not have a writing system and it hasn’t been elaborated. As a result, it cannot be used in all formal domains of communication. In order for Sindebele to gain regional recognition, it is necessary that materials be developed. In addition, educational materials such as teacher’s manual, a workbook and resource book need to be compiled, printed, published and distributed. On the other hand, experts having relevant skills and experience need to be identified and contacted to compile these materials. The compilation of Sindebele dictionary is also important. Not only should materials be developed to facilitate the teaching of Sindebele, but teachers should also be trained to teach the language. Training and orientation, of such teachers should also receive high priority. Lacking a writing system, Sindebele has considerable difficulty in surviving, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis also merits attention.

4.12 **SWOT analysis**

The researcher did a SWOT analysis of three languages spoken at Mokopane.

4.12.1 **Sepedi**

Strengths:

It has first language speakers. It also has second language speakers like Ndebeles, Tsongas, Vendas and Whites. Because it is written, it is taught as a subject from grade R to university level. It has a sufficient literature, including monolingual dictionaries.

Language implementation structures like Provincial Language Committees (PLC), National Lexicographic Units (NLU), strengthen Sepedi and promote its growth. Sepedi also has weaknesses.

Weaknesses:

Sepedi lacks learners' dictionary. The interest of non-speakers has been served but not that of Sepedi speakers. Some learners refuse to use it at a higher level precisely because they feel that if they are proficient in an international language, they are far better prepared for life. There is shortage of technical vocabulary, therefore, it is not fully developed. There are only a few language practitioners. Relevant computer programs are not yet available or are under development. Despite the above, opportunities for Sepedi exist.

Opportunities:

The National Language Policy framework speaks of developed languages in the country, and Sepedi is included in this group. The constitution recognizes eleven official languages one of which is Sepedi. The Department of Education encourages teaching in the mother tongue of the child from primary level. Sepedi is thus used as a medium of instruction and it is also taught at schools.

Threats:

There is a predominance of English usage in all spheres of life and thus also in all the important domains of public life. For example, some Sepedi learners are so determined to learn English that they neglect their own home language at their own peril.

4.12.2 English

Strengths:

English has first language speakers and also second and third language speakers around the world. English is taught as a subject at all levels of education. The English language is regarded as a prestige language. English has a well developed orthography. A range

of dictionaries for various purposes and ages written for other countries is available. The English language is well developed and is still growing. English is comparatively well catered for because it has an established dictionary office with full-time lexicographers, computers and electronic connections for contact with other centers here and abroad. English is well established throughout the world.

Weaknesses:

Today it shares the stage with other indigenous languages and this has the effect of denting its purity.

Opportunities:

English is recognized in the constitution as an official language. The English language is also recognized as a language of wider communication (LWC) or as a lingua franca.

Threats:

English is not the only language employed in courts or elsewhere, that is, in other formal or official domains. Moreover, PanSALB also insists that other official languages be used in public contexts for high level functions in order to increase their profiles. Sepedi and English have been discussed briefly, Sindebele will be attended to next.

4.12.3 Sindebele

Strengths:

Sindebele has mother tongue speakers. Sindebele has a tentative orthography. Something is being done to develop this variety, for example, Rev. Molomo and Dr Makxare have unpublished materials and Prof Msimang's Tekela Family of Nguni languages.

Weaknesses:

First language speakers are few compared to those of English and Sepedi. Sindebele does not appear in a written form, therefore it is not possible to teach it in school.

Opportunities:

There are continuing discussions between its speakers and other language planners about its recognition in the constitution. In the House of Traditional Leaders of the Limpopo Province, Sindebele is allowed as a medium of communication. Those individuals who employ it during discussions are provided with interpreters. Such institutions recognize the variety though, but the government does not recognize it as a language. The Sindebele committees can form relationships with isiNdebele committees so as to share the allocated budget with them for the purpose of having funds to develop their variety. Sharing a budget, inevitably, constitutes a threat.

Threats:

The isiNdebele speakers will not like the idea of sharing a budget with the Sindebele speakers. IsiNdebele is also in its embryonic stage of development. The speakers of isiNdebele were coerced to use isiZulu as a medium of instruction in the past.

Because Sindebele is neither taught nor written, it is threatened by Sepedi and English in the areas where it is employed. It is not learned, but acquired compared to Sepedi and English.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to trace in broad detail the sociolinguistic profile of Mokopane, the language situation in the area, a profile of the Sindebele speech form as well as the profile of South Africa.

There are ongoing debates about the harmonization of isiNdebele and Sindebele, giving the reason that they are varieties of the same language. In the next chapter, the researcher will contest this claim and show that the two varieties are totally different from each other.

CHAPTER 5

isiNDEBELE versus SINDEBELE

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher carries out a comparative study of isiNdebele and Sindebele. Their backgrounds, phonological differences and morphological differences will be subjected to rigorous examination. The influence of Sepedi on Sindebele will also be attended to. As Sindebele is the main focus of this study, the researcher will conclude by giving (offering) practical suggestions regarding the future survival of Sindebele. The backgrounds of isiNdebele and Sindebele will be examined first.

5.2 Background of isiNdebele and Sindebele

5.2.1 isiNdebele

“It was previously known as Southern Ndebele, or even Southern Transvaal Ndebele. It is a Nguni language with two dialects, that is, isiNala and isiNzuza. The speakers of this language are located in an area previously known as KwaNdebele, the so-called Ndebele homeland, situated in the North-Western part of Mpumalanga and next to the borders of Limpopo Province in areas such as Marble Hall, Groblersdal and North-west province respectively.” ([Http://www.amandebelekamusi.com/inforel.html](http://www.amandebelekamusi.com/inforel.html)).

Even though isiNdebele is a small language, it was declared as an official language at the national level. That is why today it is one of the eleven official languages in South Africa. When South Africa became a democracy in 1994, languages were equal but unequally developed and were accorded the same status. Being the youngest of them all, isiNdebele was also not advanced like others. Unlike other advanced languages, Skhosana (1996:78) indicates that it was formally written and introduced in schools for the first time in 1985.” The source further states that its first matriculants wrote it for the first time in November 1996. It has been marginalized over the past years, but today it is “legitimate and constitutionally on a par with other languages and properly documented” (Skhosana, 1996:78). It is purported that 586 961 people use isiNdebele as their home language in South Africa (<http://www.amandebelekamusi.com/inforel.html>).

5.2.2 Sindebele

Formerly, it was known as Northern Ndebele or Northern Transvaal Ndebele. Unlike isiNdebele, it is described as a “regional language without any official status” (SA Journal of African Languages vol 21 no 3 & 4 2001:310 Wilkes). Its speakers are found in the Limpopo Province around the towns of Polokwane and Mokopane, in a few places in Mpumalanga, Hammanskraal in the North-west, Makapanskrans and in some places in Gauteng.

It is claimed to have a population of “more than 4000 000 people in South Africa” (L.M. Molomo.<http://www.google.com/South African Languages>). It is widely spoken in Polokwane and Mokopane, a home to the Sindebele speaking tribes who have an interest in reviving their language.

There is some controversy about this speech form. Some linguists regard it as a variety of isiNdebele whereas others group it under the Sepedi group of dialects and yet its speakers regard it as a different speech form. These linguists claim that it has been replaced by Sepedi, the language of the educational system in the area. Even today (2010) it has not been accorded the status it deserves and that is why it is in danger of dying. The following table shows the position of both isiNdebele and Sindebele:

Zunda sub-group	Tekela sub-group
isiNdebele	Sindebele
Manala	Maraba (Lidwaba)
Ndzundza	Mugombhane
	Muledlane
	Gegana

It is of great importance that the differences between isiNdebele and Sindebele be scrutinized:

5.3 **The differences between isiNdebele and Sindebele**

Wilkes in SA Journal of African Languages vol. 21 no. 3 and 4 (2001:310) rightly points out that “isiNdebele and Sindebele are not variants of the same language, that they are, in fact, two independent languages.” The source further indicates that “the harmonization of both speech forms is bound to fail as it inevitably will lead to the creation of an artificial speech form that the Ndebele people are certain to reject” (Wilkes in SA Journal of African Languages vol. 21 no 3 & 4, 2001:310).

The Sindebele speaking tribes are aware that their speech form is regarded as a variant of isiNdebele that is why NANO fights for the rights of their speech form. NANO’s aim is to eradicate the misconception that Sindebele is a dialect of isiNdebele as they are convinced that isiNdebele is a totally “different language spoken by people with a different culture” (Wilkes, in South African Journal of African Languages vol. 21 no 3 & 4, 2001:312). The Sindebele speakers claim that the Sindebele spoken at Mokopane, Mashashane, Zebediela, Hammanskraal and other areas where it is spoken, is different from isiNdebele spoken in Mpumalanga and other parts of Gauteng. Being totally different implies that the two languages cannot be harmonized or they cannot be married together.

On the other hand, people who claim that Sindebele is a dialect of isiNdebele “are clearly not familiar with these two speech forms, otherwise they would have been aware of the many striking differences that distinguish them from one another and that these differences occur on all linguistic levels, including their lexicons” (Wilkes, 2001:312). The following examples illustrate the differences:

5.3.1 **Lexical differences**

isiNdebele and Sindebele use different words. The examples below can be regarded as basic vocabulary:

Sindebele

isiNdebele

nkxomo	(cattle)	inkomo
sumayela	(speak)	khuluma
thobala	(sleep)	lala
butisa	(ask)	buza

The above lexical items show diverse phonological forms which makes it obvious that the two speech forms should be recognized as two different languages. Not only does Sindebele and isiNdebele differ lexically, phonological differences also exist.

5.3.2 Differences in the sound system

5.3.2.1 Differences in the phonemic inventories

Sindebele has twelve phonemes that do not occur in isiNdebele whereas isiNdebele has fourteen phonemes that do not occur in Sindebele.

According to Wilkes (2001:315), in South African Journal of African Languages, the following are a few of the many phonemes that Sindebele and isiNdebele do not have in common.

5.3.2.1.1 Sindebele has interdental sounds and isiNdebele has none.

5.3.2.1.2 Sindebele and isiNdebele both have implosive phonemes but different ones.

5.3.2.1.3 isiNdebele has click phonemes and Sindebele has none.

5.4 Interdental ejective explosives

Sindebele is the only Nguni variety that has interdental sounds because the speakers of this language have acquired them from Venda during their contact with the Venda people. The following are interdental phonemes that were acquired:

two interdental ejective explosives, for example /t/ and /d/ which superseded the original two Nguni alveolar plosive phonemes /t/ and /d/; and an interdental nasal /n/ which occurs in combination with /t/ and /d/, for example:

Sindebele

isiNdebele

ntile [nt'ile]	(I have come)	ngizile [gizile]
mmanti [m:ant'i]	(water)	amanzi [amanzi]
timbuti [t'imbuti'i]	(goats)	iimbuzi [i:mbuzi]

The three interdental phonemes in Sindebele have alveolar counterparts in isiNdebele.

5.5 Clicks

Sindebele has no click sounds, this may be due to the influence of Sepedi. Below are the Nguni words in isiNdebele with their Sindebele counterparts in which the palato-alveolar click q and the dental click ch found in isiNdebele have been replaced by the ejective velar affricative kx [kx'] which is a typical Sepedi sound:

Sindebele

isiNdebele

likxanda	(egg)	iqanda
kxeja	(finish)	qeda
bukxopho	(brain)	ubuchopho

On the other hand, isiNdebele has words with clicks which have counterparts with totally different forms in Sindebele, for example:

Sindebele**isiNdebele**

mpuku	(book)	incwadi
mkhumbhulo	(thought)	umcabango
tlhalusela	(explain)	chaza

5.6 Zunda /z/ versus Thekela /t'/

Sindebele is a so-called Thekela language, whereas isiNdebele is a Zunda language. Phonologically speaking, this means that where isiNdebele uses the fricative phoneme /z/, Sindebele uses the interdental ejective explosive /t'/, for example:

Sindebele**isiNdebele**

yenta [jɛnt'a]	(do)	enza
mmanti [m:anti'i]	(water)	amanzi
litinyo [lit'i]	(tooth)	izinyo

5.7 The implosive phonemes

Two different implosive phonemes occur in Sindebele and isiNdebele:

- (i) The bilabial implosive phonemes /[/ which is a Nguni sound but does not occur in Sindebele where it has been superseded by the Sepedi bilabial fricative /β/ for example:

Sindebele**isiNdebele**

(+ fricative)		(+ implosive)
[(βu]ja]	(return)	- buya [[u]ja]
[βa,βa]	(be bitter)	- baba [[a]a]

- (ii) The voiced velar implosive phoneme /ɓ/ (written as k in the normal orthography).

This sound occurs in no Nguni language other than Sindebele. It is not known when and where Sindebele has acquired this sound which occurs as a velar implosive before the back vowels /u/, /o/ and /a/ respectively and as a pre-velar implosive /ɓy/ written gy before front vowels. In isiNdebele the radical velar plosive /k/ is used in the class prefix of all class 15 nouns in Sindebele, for example:

Sindebele

isiNdebele

(+ voiced, + velar)

(+ radical, + velar)

kuhlala [ɓu ala] (to sit)

[uku ala]

kubonakala [ɓuβ]naɓala] (to be visible)

[uku][nakala]

Pre-velar

sisibekelo [sisiβεɓyɛl](lid)

[isisi[ɛkɛl]]

5.8 Other salient phonological differences

5.8.1 Denasalisation

Denasalisation occurs in several environments in these two Ndebele languages of which the following are among the most important ones:

- (i) Denasalisation in the prefixes of classes 9 and 10 nouns.

This process occurs in both Sindebele and isiNdebele. According to Wilkes (in S.A Journal of African Languages 2001:315) what makes this difference remarkable is the fact that the situation in Sindebele is the direct opposite to what it is in isiNdebele. Whereas all class 9 nouns in Sindebele have a nasal in their class prefix, only class 9 nouns with monosyllabic stems or stems with an initial voiced consonant have one in isiNdebele, for example:

Class 9

Sindebele

(nasal retained)

nkxukxu

(fowl)

nkoloyi

(car)

nnja

(dog)

mmvu

(sheep)

isiNdebele

(nasal dropped)

ikukhu

ikoloyi

(nasal retained)

inja

imvu

Class 10

In Sindebele, only class 10 nouns with monosyllabic stem/stems with an initial voiced consonant have a nasal in their prefix. On the other hand, in isiNdebele, all Class 10 nouns have a nasal in their prefix; for example:

Sindebele

(nasal dropped)

tihloko

(heads)

tefene

(baboons)

(nasal retained)

tinja

(dogs)

timvu

(sheep)

isiNdebele

(nasal retained)

iinhloko

iimfene

izinja

izimvu

5.8.2 Denasalisation in other environments

According to Wilkes (2001:316) in South African Journal of African Languages, denasalisation in Sindebele and isiNdebele is not confined to noun class prefixes only. There is general acknowledgement that changes have a tendency to spread from one linguistic environment to the other. The source further says that the denasalisation rule in

both these languages started in a high profile environment such as the noun class prefixes of Classes 9 and 10 and then later spread by analogy to other (mostly phonologically identical) grammatical environments. Denasalisation in isiNdebele has spread to both the adjective concord of Class 9 and the inclusive quantitative pronouns, for example:

IsiNdebele

Sindebele

(i) Adjective concord

(a)	ikoloyi etja (<entja)	(a new car)	nkoloyi yetjha
	indlu ehle (<enhle)	(a beautiful house)	ndlu yehle

(ii) Inclusive quantitative pronouns

(b)	woke (<wonke) amadoda	(all the men)	madoda wokxe
	zoke (<zonke) iinkomo	(all the cattle)	tikxomo tokxe

In Sindebele, denasalisation has spread not only to the environments referred to in (10) above, but also to other environments, that is, to all monosyllabic formatives that have the nasal compound ng as part of their basic structure, for example:

(i) **The instrumental formative**, for example

gaphandle (<ngaphandle) (outside)

(ii) **The locative formative**, for example

gellanga (<nga-lilanga) (on the day)

(iii) **The non-indicative negative morpheme**, for example

sahlala gaphandle sagageni (<sangageni) (we sat outside and did not go in)

(iv) **The potential morpheme**, for example

Likxhuwa lari ligabapha (<lingabapha) nkxabi (The European said that he could give them the ox)

(v) **The copulative prefix**, for example

githi (<ngithi) (it is us)

(vi) **The comparative prefix**, for example

njegaye (<njengaye) (Just like him/her)

According to Wilkes (2001:317), the fact that in a small number of verbs and nouns in Northern Ndebele (now Sindebele), the primary nasal compound *ng* appears without its nasal is perhaps an indication that this denasalisation rule is starting to spread to these two work categories as well, for example:

-gena (<-ngena) (enter)

mbugane/mbungane (fly)

5.9 The ukudrondroza nasal compounds

The current isiNdebele spelling rules (1995) indicate the two ndrondroza nasal compounds as **nd** and **nt** in the normal orthography, but are rendered as [ndr] and [ndr] respectively, for example:

IsiNdebele

SiNdebele

/nd/: umundru is written as umuntu	(person)	munru
indrana is written as induna	(headman)	nduna
/nt/: into [indr]	(thing)	nro

On the other hand, Sindebele differs from isiNdebele “in that, only the Ur-Bantu nasal compound /**nt**/ is ndrondrozised in this speech form, giving rise to the compound /**nr**/ which does not occur in Southern Ndebele (now isiNdebele) (SA Journal of African Languages, 2001:317: Wilkes), for example:

banru	(people)
nraba	(mountain)
nrethe	(locust)
tinro	(things)

5.10 The devoicing of plosive phonemes in nasal compounds

This feature does not occur in isiNdebele as well as other Nguni languages. It occurs only in Sindebele. A comparison is given in the examples below in which the second member in the nasal compound is a devoiced plosive sound:

Sindebele		isiNdebele
-khambha	[walk]	-khamba
-thenga	[buy]	-thenga
-phendula	[answer]	-phendula

5.11 Consonant assimilation

According to Wilkes (2001:317) in the South African Journal of African Languages vol 21 no 3 & 4, Sindebele has acquired its consonant assimilation rules from Sepedi that is why it differs from isiNdebele. One such rule is the “*assimilation of b*” rule whereby the bilabial consonant *b* is assimilated to the preceding *m* of the syllable **mu-**, giving rise to the sequence **mm**, for example:

- nt**am**mona (<n-ta-m(u)-**b**ona) (I shall see him)
- ntabe ndi**mm**ambhe (<ndi-m(u)-**b**ambhe) (I shall catch him)
- mm**uso (<**m**ubuso) (government)

Another assimilation rule is the one whereby the consonant *l* is assimilated to a preceding nasal *n* or *m* in disyllabic stems, for example:

kxhonne (<kxhon-(i)le) (have been able)

-nonne (<-non-(i)le) (be fat)

IsiNdebele does not have any of the above consonant assimilation rules. There are also differences in the area of morphology.

5.12 Morphological differences

According to Wilkes (2001:318) “many of the morphological differences that distinguish Sindebele from isiNdebele are the result of what seem to be borrowings from other languages, notably from Tshivenda that the Sindebele people had been in prolonged contact with during earlier times, while others seem to have originated from Sepedi, the language of the neighbouring tribes and others from unknown sources” (Wilkes, 2001:318, the South African Journal of African Languages.

5.12.1 From Tshivenda

a. **The subject and object concord of the first person singular:**

Ziervogel (1959:87) as quoted by Wilkes (2001:318) in the South African Journal of African Languages indicates that the variant form **N** has a much wider distribution than the concord **ndi-** and occurs everywhere except before vowels, semi-vowels and (inexplicably) object concords where the variant **ndi-** is found, for example:

The variant **ndi-**: **Ndiyakhambha** (I am going)

Tikxhomo **nditifumene** kuMunini

“The cattle I have received (them) from Munini”

The variant **N –**:

Nkhumbhela nkxosi imphe batlhangana bebathatho

(I request that the chief give me three boys)

Mina mbe (<**ndibe**) nri umunganami

(I thought you were of my age/my friend)

5.12.2 Formation of copulatives from possessive pronouns

According to Wilkes (2001:310), in the South African Journal of African Languages in Sindebele, these words are formed by prefixing the syllabic nasal **n** to possessive concords commencing on a consonant to which it also assimilates and the vowels **i** and **u** to possessive concords beginning respectively on a **y** or a **w**. On the other hand, isiNdebele only uses the copulative prefix **nge-** for this purpose, for example:

Sindebele

isiNdebele

Class 1: uwami (he/she is mine)	ngewami
2: mbami (<n-bami) (they are mine)	ngebami
4: iyami (it is mine)	ngeyami
5: nlami (it is mine)	ngelami
10: ntami (they are mine)	ngezami
15: nkwami (it is mine)	ngekwami

5.12.3 Negative of the potential mood

This feature, Jiyani et. al. (1993:98) in Wilkes (2001:319) claims that it differs completely in the two varieties. IsiNdebele uses an auxiliary verb with the stem **-ngeze** or **-ngekhe** followed by the main verb in the subjunctive mood whereas Sindebele uses the negative formative **-gasi-** as part of the main verb which appears in the subjunctive mood, for example:

Sindebele

isiNdebele

Agasikhambhi (he may not go)	Angekhe akhambe
Ngasikhambhi (I may not go)	Ngingeze ngikhambe

Nga si is the potential negative form of Tshivenda which, phonologically speaking, is closely related to the Sindebele negative form **-gasi-**.

5.13 From Sepedi

5.13.1 Formation of the relative construction

According to Ziervogel (1959:72) in Wilkes (2001:319) in the South African Journal of African Languages, Northern Ndebele (now Sindebele) has two verbal relative constructions, a Sotho type of relative and a Nguni type which is less frequently used. The source further states that the former is reminiscent of the direct relative construction in Sepedi and consists of a demonstrative pronoun followed by a verb, for example:

Sepedi : motho yo a sepelago
(a person who walks)

Sindebele: munru lo akhambhako

The source further mentions that isiNdebele, on the other hand, uses the normal Nguni type of relative construction which entails the prefixing of a relative concord to the verbal stem, for example:

isiNdebele : umuntu okhambako
(a person who walks)

5.14 From unknown source(s)

Two morphological features of unknown origin that differentiate Sindebele from isiNdebele:

5.14.1 Formation of the future tense negative

According to Wilkes (2001:320) in the South African Journal of African Languages, Northern Ndebele (now Sindebele) employs a non-verbal formative **na** (be with) followed by an infinitive noun without its class prefix for this tense form while Southern

Ndebele (now isiNdebele) uses the verbal stem **-za** (come) (which becomes **-zi** in the negative) plus an infinitive verb for the same purpose, for example:

isiNdebele: Asizukukhamba (<a-si-**z(i)** ukukhamba)
(We will not come to leave) = (We will not leave)

Sindebele: Asinakhambha (<a-si-na-(ku)khambha)
(We will not be leaving) = (We will not leave)

5.14.2 The possessive concord

Wilkes (2001:320) in the South African Journal of African Languages, indicates that in Sindebele the form of this concord is **ya** while it is **wa** in isiNdebele, for example:

Sindebele		isiNdebele
Mabito yakhe	(his/her names)	amabizo wakhe
Malanga yembeke	(days of the week)	amalanga weveke
Majamo yebanru	(titles of people)	amathayitili wabantu

According to Ziervogel (1959:93) in Wilkes (2001:321) in the South African Journal of African Languages, the “**substitution of e**” rule that causes the **a** of the possessive concord to change to **e** when prefixed to a noun, applies only in Sindebele. IsiNdebele has no “substitution of e” rule.

In conclusion, the researcher would like to indicate that this comparative study of isiNdebele and Sindebele shows clear differences and some similarities here and there. The differences far outnumber and outweigh the similarities. They are therefore not variants of the same language, but two separate languages that is why Wilkes (2001) says that “the only possibility is to either recognize both speech forms or to select one as the standard form” (Wilkes, 2001:313, South African Journal of African Languages).

Sepedi, on the other hand had a great impact on Sindebele, due to contact between the two groups:

5.16 **Matebele in contact with Bapedi**

Some different accounts will be given that show contacts between Matebele and Bapedi, hence Sindebele is used in the environment of Sepedi.

Ndebele language got influence from Sepedi because the Ndebele people have always been in contact with Bapedi. One situation is that of Chief Muši, a great diplomat who led his people to settle among the Tswana and Pedi. They intermarried and pursued cultural exchange with them.

On the other hand, when one looks at Ndebele house-paint strategies, one comes to realise that they were of Pedi origin, whereas the Ndebele resident lands were situated in the former Sotho-speakers homeland, Lebowa (now the Limpopo Province).

When the Kekana people settled at Sefakaola Hills, they found the Sotho speaking communities that belong to Mashishi clan. Contact with Bapedi people has led the Ndebele to borrow some of Sepedi words even though some linguistic peculiarities belong to them.

5.17 **Influence of Sepedi on Sindebele**

One should take cognisance of the fact that Sindebele has long been influenced by Sepedi, hence the Ndebele people allow a spelling which is based on that of Sepedi, their written medium.

Three elements in the composition of Ndebele can be distinguished:

- * Sotho
- * Nguni
- * One of unknown origin.

5.17.1.1 The Sotho Element

This consists of the lexical material and is also felt in both the sound system and the grammatical set-up, for example:

- (i) Lexicology : tshetlha (yellow)
 - thobala (sleep)
 - butisa (ask)
 - ribha (cut)

- (ii) Sounds : - gϕga (pick up)
 - marixa (winter)
 - k*ok*o (small)

- (iii) Morphology and grammar: the following are found here: the negative of the potential mood, the indirect relative construction, certain copulative prefixes, etc

Sindebele is influenced by the Sotho of its neighbours (Langa, Matlala and Moletjie), the following examples are evident:

Sotho	Sindebele
gosasa	kusasa (tomorrow)
kôba	-goba (bend)
rotha	-thonda (drip)

5.17.1.2 The Nguni Element

The following are Nguni elements:

- (i) the tendency of Ndebele to vocalize rather than to devocalize. Ndebele retains its vocalization even where Sotho influence cannot be denied, for example.

Ndebele	Sotho	Nguni
dl (plosive)	tl	dl (fricative)
dz	ts*	z

(ii) Palatalization also occur, for example:

Ndebele	Sotho	Nguni
yw	bj	tsw/tyw
□w	□w	□w

5.17.1.3 The Unknown Element

The following belong to the unknown element:

- (i) the first person singular concord -n in both subjectival and objectival positions
- (ii) the copulative prefix n-
- (iii) the locative prefix τ- and ττα-
- (iv) an assimilated type of concord for the adjective

In the light of the above features, Ndebele is therefore typified as being different from Sotho and Nguni. This leads us to the fact that Ndebele retains laterals which do not become dentals or tlh. On the other hand, the neighbouring Sotho languages use laterals that is, (Langa and Moletjie) use tlh only for Pedi hl. Ndebele also has hl but it is a Nguni sound.

According to Ziervogel (1959) “the influence one language has on another is, of course, not always logical and according to rule” (Ziervogel, 1959:13).

5.18 Borrowed Sounds

One cannot mistaken the influence of Sotho and Ndebele because many sounds have been borrowed from Sotho. Sotho sounds are, therefore, made to fit into the Ndebele sound pattern, for example:

Ndebele	Sotho
gφga	kuka (pick up)
baba	papa (my father)

In the following word -ripa (cut), the one sound is Ndebele -ized while the other remains, that is, r is retained and it is much less a Nguni sound than Sotho p which is changed to b. The following are Sotho sounds that are found in Ndebele:

- d as in mudimu (spirit) should have changed to t;
- x as in marixa (winter) should have been kh or g
- kxh as in kxhγtha (choose) should have been kh or g
- as in τwedzi (bride) should have been τ

The following sounds are found in words which conform to the Sotho sound pattern, that is, which are not Ndebele-ized:

- tsh as in tshγtlha (yellow)
- tI as in mutIγkγlo (bridal dress)
- psh as in -pshadla (smash)

5.19 Sepedi and Sindebele forms

Sepedi has also inspired the following forms:

Sindebele	Sepedi
nth: nthabγl]	thapγl] (prayer)
τg: τgeled∞]	keletI] (advice)

The Sepedi type of construction is a Ndebele transposition of the Sepedi construction which consists of a demonstrative and a subjectival concord, for example:

Sepedi	siNdebele
motho yo a sepelago	munru lo akhambha-ko (a person who walks)
mosadi yo a jago	mufati lo adla-ko (a woman who eats)

Much Sepedi influence is superficially examined in the following forms:

Sindebele	Sepedi
i-	e -le
asi	ga se
gi	ke

Some of the Sepedi dialects of those regions where the Ndebele were in contact with the Pedi speaking, do not employ laterals, instead, they employ interdentalals.

nt > is normally alveolar th in Sepedi and is post-alveolar th in these dialects; for example, Sepedi -hlano /-tlhano
 -thano in the Polokwane Sepedi dialects, but
 -tharo is normal -tharo, with postalveolar th.

The following conclusion is drawn from Sindebele as opposed to isiNdebele:

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the researcher would like to suggest that Sindebele be identified for development, accepted by its community, codified and finally, elaborated or expanded so as to be elevated to the status of being official so that it can also be taught at schools. The researcher's view is that such a step would contribute to the social, economic and political upliftment of the Ndebele community and would guarantee the future of Sindebele. Unfortunately this is not going to receive immediate attention in the light of

the fact that Sindebele is regarded as a Sepedi dialect. People will have to be trained and be encouraged to write more books and thereafter Sindebele should become a medium of instruction for learners because in the new dispensation learners at primary schools are encouraged to learn in their own mother-tongue.

In the light of the above, summary and recommendations should shed light to the reader.

CHAPTER 6

6.1 Summary and Recommendations

6.1.1 Summary

This study began with the orientation to the use of Sindebele in the midst of Sepedi at GaMokopane in the Limpopo Province. The study put more emphasis on the case for Sindebele, the speech variety spoken at GaMokopane.

As the study progressed it looked at how Sindebele was employed in the environment of Sepedi which gave rise to the fact that Sindebele is compared to a low variety in a diglossic situation; whereas Sepedi is compared to a high variety employed in formal situations.

Chapter 2 presented the historical background of the Ndebele people and in particular, the Ndebele of GaMokopane who form the subject of this study.

Chapter 3 addressed Sindebele as an endangered language. The researcher discussed the fears that the Sindebele speakers have about their variety, that it could ultimately be assimilated by Sepedi and cease to exist, especially, if it is not used in all domains. In addition a definition of marginalised languages was given. The concern of the researcher is that marginalised languages must be brought out of the periphery and be centralised so that they become known.

In Chapter 4 an overview of the sociolinguistic profile of Mokopane as well as that of the country was presented. Emphasis was on language situations, that is, how many and what kinds of languages are spoken and by how many speakers. The research indicated that Limpopo Province, as compared to other provinces where Sindebele speakers are found, has the overwhelming majority of the Ndebele population.

In Chapter 5, the researcher gave the background of isiNdebele and Sindebele. The researcher shows the reader that the two varieties are completely different, and they do not share structural characteristics. Also in this chapter, an interesting comparison is made between Sepedi, isiNdebele and Sindebele.

The researcher shows a small glimpse of the kinds of differences found among Sepedi, isiNdebele and Sindebele in the example below:

Sepedi

Ditiro tša Baapostola 6:6

“Ba ba emiša pele ga baapostola,
mme bona ba ba rapelela ba ba bea
matsogo”.

Acts of the Apostles 6:6

“The groups presented them to the apostles
who prayed and placed their hands on
them.”

isiNdebele

Izenzo zaBapostoli 6:6

“Isiquthubuthu sa ba letha phambi
kwabapostoli, abathandaza ba ba
beka izandla.”

Sindebele

Tiyento teBapostola 6:6

Titlhopha tabaveta embhili gabapostola, bona baarabhelela bababeka tandla.

The examples cited here come primarily from Fred Ledwaba’s paper dated 12 January 2006 on the differences between isiNdebele and Sindebele.

These examples show the reader that most people who know all these three languages, realise that all words in one language do not have perfect equivalents in the next. One could therefore conclude that people who say isiNdebele and Sindebele are variants of the same language are those who are not conversant with the two languages.

6.1.2 Recommendations

After a careful investigation of a case for Sindebele spoken at Mokopane, the researcher found that:

- There is a need in the country to look closely at endangered languages and to give them room to be used in a wider range of contexts to avoid extinction.
- There is a need also for more language awareness campaigns to raise the status of Sindebele and to make people aware of the position of their own languages so as to engage themselves in the elaboration or development of their languages. These campaigns must also raise awareness of the public on the role of their languages.
- People on the ground must be made aware of language rights and individual rights. This is supported by section (30) of the constitution which states that “everyone has the right to use the language ... of their choice.” Section 31(1)(a). It further states that “persons belonging to a ... linguistic community may not be denied the right with other members of that community to ... use their language.” (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa: 1996)

People must know that one of the rights of a language is a right to survive. Like all other endangered species which have the right to survive, languages have that right too. For example, the loss of Sindebele should be seen as the loss of a particular linguistic species.

On the other hand, people must know that the individuals have the right to be exposed to their languages. The authorities must allow these individuals’ languages to survive.

- Speech communities need workshops or language awareness campaigns so that they know how to preserve or maintain their own languages. They must have positive self-esteem, that is, they must not look down upon themselves even if they have been afforded lower status. They must not allow speakers of other languages to discriminate against them.

- Sindebele speaking communities must be educated to know the rules of their own variety.
- The following institutions around speech communities can help in the promotion and support of languages:

- * The Department of Education can empower teachers of Sindebele at schools, train them in their own variety like educators of other recognised languages, introduce Sindebele at schools since the Limpopo Department of Education strongly encourages learners to use their primary languages as their main languages of learning and teaching at all levels of schooling.

The department must also work with language planners and linguists to compile grammars and dictionaries and to develop educational material.

- * The Local Governments around Mokopane, Zebediela, Mapela Mashashane and other areas where Sindebele is spoken, can promote the use of Sindebele by using it at their meetings and or conferences especially when those meetings involve matters concerning the communities of such areas. They can also consult with these communities to develop and implement a multilingual language policy which includes Sindebele.
- * The Language Units in Government Departments can also make a contribution. The Limpopo Department of Arts and Culture has a language unit which deals with matters pertaining to languages. It can work hand in glove with the National Amandebele Organisation Group to articulate a program for the reinforcement of Sindebele. This program must involve the standardisation of Sindebele so that it can be accepted as a language by the central government, be used in a wider range of contexts and be part of the linguistic scene in the country.

- Ndebele parents must remind and encourage the young generations to use Sindebele for an increasing range of purposes and not only English and or Sepedi.

They are responsible to preserve and maintain their variety because many parents have a tendency to let their children learn English by sending them to English medium schools. They must see to it that their children are proficient in their own mother tongue - Sindebele and be proud of using it.

Only if all of these elements are brought together can we hope for change in the position of Sindebele in future and the Ndebele children can, therefore, receive their education in their mother tongue.

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8. **ADDENDUM (INTERVIEW QUESTIONS)**

1. *U Mopedi gabho u Mondrebele?*
Are you a Pedi or Ndebele speaker?
2. *Nkhaya u sumayela musumayelo uphi?*
Which language do you speak at home? Sepedi
 Sindebele
3. *U tifunde musumayelo uphi mbili?*
What is the first language you learned?
4. *Uwati mesumayelo iphi ghahle?*
What languages are you fluent in?
5. *U ne muhlangano loo u wo yetagho?*
Are you a member of a club?
6. *Lokhwa le se nkxondleni gabho e muhlanganoni le berengisa musumayelo uphi?*
Phana ghe lebanga.
If you are in a community gathering or club, which language would you use?
Why?
7. *Banrwana ba greiti wane ba ba funra ghe mesumayelo iphi?*
What languages are taught at initial phase?
8. *Matitjhere, kxulukxulu e Mandrebele a berengisa musumayelo uphi lokhwa ba fundra?*
Which language do the Ndebele teachers use when they teach?
9. *U wate ghu sumayela Sindrebele njane?* *ghahle-ghahle*
 ghahle
 ghakoko
How competent are you in Sindebele? very well
 well
 poor

10. *U gha thandra lokhwa Sindebele se gha fundrwa ghe sekoloni? Phana ghe lebanga.*

Would you like Sindebele to be taught at school? Why?