READING THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE: WOMEN, LITERACY AND CITIZENSHIP IN ONE SOUTH AFRICAN TOWNSHIP

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was two-fold: firstly, to do a multimodal analysis of the multilingual signage, advertisements and graffiti present on different surfaces in the main business hub of a multicultural community called Wesbank, situated in the Eastern Metropole of the city of Cape Town. Signage of this nature, taken together, constitute the 'linguistic landscape' (Gorter, 2006) of a particular space. My analysis of the signage included interviews with a number of the producers of these signs which reveal why their signs are constructed in particular ways with particular languages. Secondly, I interviewed 20 mature women from the community in order to determine their level of understanding of these signs as well as whether the linguistic landscape of the township had an impact on their levels of literacy. The existing literacy levels of the women being surveyed as well as those of the producers of the signs were also taken into account.

My main analytical tools were Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress, 2003), applied to the signage, and a Critical Discourse style of Analysis (Willig, 1999; Pienaar and Becker, 2007), applied to the focus group and individual analysis. Basic quantitative analysis was also applied to the quantifiable questionnaire data. The overriding motivation for the study was to determine the strategies used by the women to make sense of their linguistic landscape and to examine whether there was any transportation of literacy from the signage to these women so that they could function more effectively and agentively in their own environment. This

study formed part of a larger NRF-funded research project entitled *Township women's discourses and literacy resources*, led by my supervisor, Prof. C. Dyers.

The study revealed the interesting finding that the majority of the vendors in Wesbank, especially in terms of house shops, hairdressers and fruit and vegetable stalls, are foreigners from other parts of Africa, who rely on English as a lingua franca to advertise their wares. The signage makers had clearly put some thought into the language skills of their multilingual target market in this township, and did their best to communicate with their potential customers through the complete visual image of their signs. The overall quality of the codes displayed on the signage also revealed much about the literacy levels in the township as well as language as a *local* practice (Pennycook 2010). While English predominated on the signs, at times one also found the addition of Afrikaans (especially in the case of religious signage) and isiXhosa (as in one very prominent advertisement by a dentist).

The study further established that the female respondents in my study, as a result of their different literacy levels, made use of both images and codes on an item of signage to interpret the message conveyed successfully. Signage without accompanying images were often ignored, or interpreted with the help of others or by using one comprehensible word to work out the rest of the sign. As has been shown by another study in the larger research project, these women displayed creativity in making sense of their linguistic landscape. The study further revealed that, as a result of frequent exposure to some words and expressions in the linguistic landscape, some of the women had become familiar with these terms and had

thereby expanded their degree of text literacy. In this way, the study has contributed to our understanding of the notion of *portable literacy* as explored by Dyers and Slemming (2011, forthcoming).

KEYWORDS

Linguistic landscape

Literacy as a social practice

Language as a local practice

Women

Space

Multimodality

Multilingualism

Wesbank

Mobility

Critical Discourse Analysis

DECLARATION

I declare that *Reading the linguistic landscape: women, literacy and citizenship in one South African township* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Meggan Serena Williams

Signed: ....

Supervisor: Professor Charlyn Dyers

Signed: ....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction of Topic

This thesis is a study of how a particular group of women in a Cape Town township read and make sense of the signage in their community and the ways in which this signage contributes to the growth of their literacies. The study is informed by the theory of literacy as a social practice, linked with power, identity, ideology and social practice (Street, 1982), as well as the notion of multimodality (Kress, 2003), which refers to other connected channels of communication (visual, auditory and electronic) which go beyond the printed word. Signage is a major part in communication in a community; without the appropriate method, technique and language, the message would be lost in translation. Taken together, all the signs in a particular space constitute its 'linguistic landscape' (Gorter 2006). The way a service, community message or product is promoted is vitally important and depends on one's ability to communicate with the community.

Various problems could arise in this type of communication in a multicultural community – the signage could, for example, be too complex or in a language many community members either do not understand or have limited proficiency in, resulting in the message not being communicated fully or at all. The notion of

language power – where one language is ideologically in a more powerful position than others in particular communities (Dyers and Abongdia, 2010) - also comes into play when discussing the connection between community and signage. To what extent is the signage either promoting or hampering people's ability to negotiate their environment via language as competent 'linguistic citizens' (Stroud 2009)? According to Stroud (2001:353), linguistic citizenship is "the situation where speakers themselves exercise control over their language, deciding what languages are, what they may mean and where language issues (especially in educational sites) are discursively tied to a range of social issues, policy issues and questions of equity".

1.2 Background on the site of the research

The purpose of this study is firstly to critically assess the multilingual signage, advertisements and graffiti present on different surfaces in a multicultural working class South African community called Wesbank, situated on the periphery of Cape Town. The study restricts itself to the signage in the main business hub of Wesbank in the centre of its Main Street. Secondly, working from a theoretical perspective of literacy as a *mobile* resource (Brandt and Clinton, 2002), it will determine whether there is any transportation of literacy from the linguistic landscape to the existing literacies of a group of township women as they negotiate the space created by the signage.

Wesbank is a low income housing initiative on the periphery of Cape Town, South Africa, established in 1999. It is situated in the Eastern Metropole of the city, in the

vicinity of the areas known as Blue Downs and Delft. The township consists of small housing units, a high school, three primary schools and a business area. The inhabitants of Wesbank come from many different areas in and around Cape Town as well as the rest of the country. Most of the women in our study had moved to be near family members. One study on the area has shown that "The current population of the area amounts to approximately 25000 people and it is estimated that over 70% are currently unemployed and high poverty levels are evident in the area" (Achmat and Losch, 2002:15).

Wesbank is relatively cut off from the more thriving parts of the city. Its population consists of migrants who share minimal, if at all, background commonality with each other; and each and every individual is still in the process of trying to develop a mutual and collective joint identity in relation to the novel space they find themselves in. Approximately 73% of the population are, according to South African racial classification, mainly Afrikaans-speaking Coloured people, while 25% are Xhosa people. A further 2% are White, Asian or foreigners from other parts of Africa like Somalia, Nigeria and The Congo (Havenga: Metropole East Education Provision Plan, 2006).

The multipurpose centre in Wesbank, where my female research respondents meet regularly, is used for a number of purposes: as a centre where community members can get more information on government support structures such as social welfare, as a space for training and recreation where members of the community can come together and take part in an array of activities, one of them being needlework, and even as a space for church services and community meetings. The training and

recreational activities serve the community members in two ways: firstly, for pure enjoyment to pass the time away in the company of others; and secondly, as a means of improving on existing skills or learning new ones that could lead to making a little money. For example, those members participating in the needlework project can sell their products, which include items such as cushions, sweaters and ornaments. The multipurpose centre is a great way for the community members, especially the elderly, to break away from their normal lives and to find different forms of assistance and advice.

This centre was chosen as the ideal place to conduct interviews because it seemed to be an open and relaxed environment for the women in my study. It was also a convenient way to get the groups together at one time to conduct the focus group interviews. In addition, my supervisor and other members of our research team had a longstanding research relationship with some of the women at the multipurpose centre which made it easier to arrange the actual interviews.

The main business hub of Wesbank which served as the sampling area for the signage collection, starts from the first point of entry into Wesbank off Hindle Road and stretches right through the centre of Wesbank, ending close to the Stellenbosch Arterial Road. This main business hub is made up of many vendors differing in race, gender, age and nationality and selling many different products and services. There are many hairdressers and barbershops, a butchery, one small supermarket, a few fruit and vegetable stalls as well as small ouse shops on the periphery of the main shopping area. In addition, there is also signage denoting the presence of a dentist, day hospital and doctor in Wesbank, as well as more formal government signage.

Wesbank is an important site of research in post-apartheid South Africa, due to the fact that it is the first township built in Cape Town after the advent of democracy in 1994, thereby making it open to all races. With migrants from various parts of the Western Province, Eastern Province, other parts of South Africa and even the rest of Africa, the diversity of its population alone and the various resources they bring with them from their places of origin make this an interesting site for research on language and literacy patterns. The following two photographs reveal some of the linguistic diversity of the township, as well as the diversity of its inhabitants.

Fig. 1.1: The Butchery in Wesbank (Signage mainly in English, but with a prominent sign for 'meat' in Afrikaans – *Vleis*).
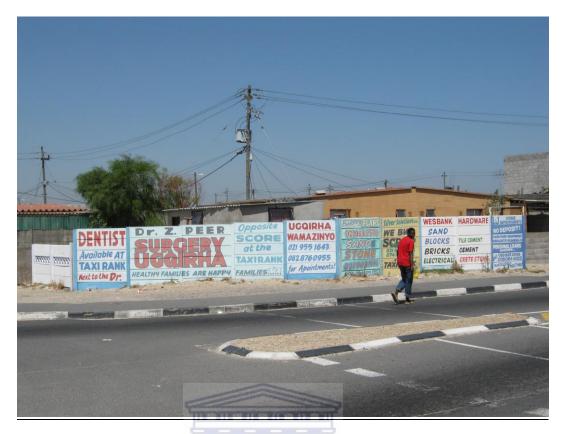
Fig. 1.2: Signage in isiXhosa and English on the Main Road, near the supermarket and taxi rank. The Xhosa signage informs the reader that there is a dentist's surgery close by (*Ugqirha Wamazinyo* – Dentist).

1.3 Rationale for the study

The principal rationale for this study was to show that impoverished, poorly educated women employ a range of strategies in order to make sense of their linguistic landscape, thereby reducing the perceived helplessness with which such women are often viewed. This study forms part of larger NRF-funded project entitled *Township women's discourses and literacies*, led by my supervisor, Prof. C. Dyers. The project focuses on the transportability of linguistic and literacy resources in a conception of literacy as a mobile resource in 'a township of migrants'. It also

examines how these linguistic resources can be used as tools of empowerment in relation to all the societal structures (family, community, local government, etc) people need to negotiate in order to become more powerful agents of their own transformation into full *participatory citizenship*, as described by Stroud (2007).

In order to situate my study within the larger project, I present the major research questions of the larger project in italics and link my study to these questions as follows:

How do these literacy resources actually transfer to new shared spaces? In my study, the 'transferred literacy resources' included signage brought into the township by the producers of the signs;

How do people make use of these literacy resources? In my study, the question was how the women I surveyed reported making use of signage in the township;

Are there forms of mediation where practices are passed on to novices that can be mined for participatory citizenship? In my study, I examined whether some of the women make use of 'literacy mediators' (Baynham, 1995) in order to make sense of the linguistic landscape of the township.

1.4 Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

- Why are the signage in Wesbank constructed in particular ways, using particular languages, by the signage producers in this particular space, and how does the signage help to construct this space?

- To what extent can the women of Wesbank understand and productively make use of, this signage?

- Is there any evidence that the signage is another form of literacy extension for these women, i.e. have they learned new words and expressions from these signs?

1.5 Research Assumptions

- I expected to find that the literacy levels of the community members I surveyed played a vital role in the process of them understanding the signage in the environment, leaving some of them at a disadvantage when trying to make sense of this linguistic landscape.

- I expected that the dominant language/s used in the signage is/are, for the signage makers if not for the actual consumers, associated with power and prestige.

This expectation arises from the fact that the Wesbank community used to predominantly Afrikaans-speaking but it was observed during the fieldwork and gathering of data for this research that there has been a shift in terms of

language dominance. English, which is known as the international lingua franca in business and trade seemed to be outranking Afrikaans and isiXhosa in the linguistic landscape. Language attitude and preference are closely tied to language dominance and will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

- I expected to find that my research participants did indeed make use of the signage, but more specifically, the multimodal ones; signage with both text and images.

This expectation arose from the fact that previous studies in the area indicated low levels of education and literacy (Blommaert, Muyllaert, Huysmans and Dyers, 2005).

- However, I also expected to find that there had been some degree of literacy transportation between my research participants and the signage because once the sign reader becomes familiar with a word and its associations, they would most likely use it more frequently in their daily lives thereby adopting literacy from signage in the area and expanding their vocabulary.

1.6 Methodology

This study made use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. For the quantitative data, I made use of a questionnaire that helped me to assess the levels of literacy in the two groups of women who formed my main respondents. I analysed the data according to the frequency and number of similar answers. For the

qualitative data, I did a multimodal analysis of the photographs taken in Wesbank. In addition, I conducted individual and focus group interviews with selected members of the community including the vendors/ sign makers.

The following data collection methods were used:

- A community literacy questionnaire (adapted from Banda, 2009): This was used during my initial visit to the Wesbank Multipurpose Centre in order to assess the literacy levels of the two groups of women (Afrikaans and Xhosa-speakers respectively). This questionnaire can be found in Appendix II.

- Photographs: The signage in the main business hub of Wesbank were photographed and analysed, as a representative sample of signage in Wesbank as a whole.

- Focus group interviews: Interviews with questionnaires were conducted with two groups of women, firstly to gain insight into their literacy levels, and secondly to investigate the extent of their comprehension when reading the signage in their community.

- Individual Interviews: These were conducted with vendors/ sign makers who were accessible and available, with aim of trying to understand the linguistic and technical choices they made when constructing the particular signage.

1.7 Organisation of the Thesis

This study is made up of six chapters, the contents of which are as follows:

Chapter 1 introduces the topic and provides the background on the research area, Wesbank, and its community. It contextualizes my motivation for carrying out the research and its contribution to the larger research project *Township women's discourses and literacies.* This chapter also includes the research questions and assumptions pertaining to the study.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study. It will give a critical overview of concepts such as linguistic landscape, space, literacy/mobile literacies, multimodality, discourse and critical discourse analysis.

Chapter 3 deals with the qualitative and quantitative methods used in this study. The research population, instruments used and procedure used in this research is explained in full detail. An ethics statement pertaining to the research is also provided.

Chapter 4 is a critical discourse analysis of the linguistic landscape of Wesbank. This chapter critically evaluates the signage collected in Wesbank in terms of the visual

messages, language use, shape and form of the signs. It also includes the findings of the interviews with the vendors/ signage makers.

Chapter 5 presents the community responses to the linguistic landscape of Wesbank and probes the data for evidence of linguistic transportation. This chapter reports on the findings from the interviews conducted with 20 women on their levels of literacy and how these enabled/disabled them in reading the linguistic landscape of their township.

Chapter 6 provides a summary of the main findings in relation to the research questions, and offers suggestions for further research.

1.8 Conclusion

To conclude, what this opening sector has indicated is that there is a real need for this research in order to understand the connection between community and signage. It poses the question whether the sign-makers' efforts are going unnoticed due to the incomprehension of the respondents in relation to the sign thereby creating a barrier for the respondents as well as stunting business growth and success for these vendors. Wesbank, with its linguistically and culturally diverse community was an ideal area for this research, taking into consideration the education levels, living conditions and wide variety of signage available.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

I situate this study within the paradigm of a sociolinguistics of *mobility* (Blommaert, 2010), which provides an appropriate framework for the study of late-modern language and migration patterns, accompanied by the transportation of literacy resources. Wesbank Township, as a township of migrants typified by a constant movement of people into and out of the township, definitely fits this paradigm, which also demands a re-conceptualization of the concept of *space*. According to Blommaert (2010:5), space "…is metaphorically seen as *vertical* space, as layered and stratified space. Every horizontal space (e.g. a neighborhood, a region, or a country) is also a vertical space, in which all sorts of socially, culturally and politically salient distinctions occur. Such distinctions are *indexical* distinctions, which project minute linguistic differences onto stratified patterns of social, cultural and political value-attribution. They convert linguistic and semiotic differences into social inequalities and thus represent the 'normative' dimensions of situated language use".

However, Scollon and Scollon argue that idexicality helps us to understand the meaning of any sign in the world. "Indexicality is the product of the context-dependency of signs, especially language, hence the study of those aspects of meaning which depend on the placement of the sign in the material world" (2003:3). In other words, through indexicality, signs are bound together in a semiotic system.

Within the layered and stratified space of Wesbank, my study draws on the theoretical concepts of linguistic landscape, semiotics and literacy as a social practice (Street, 1985). Another significant concept drawn on in this study is that of multimodality (Kress, 2003) which draws on channels of communication beyond the printed word, and was my principal analytical tool used to interpret the different types of signage in my study. While I did not do a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the rest of my data to the full extent of what such analysis entails, the analysis of the focus group responses and individual interviews nevertheless contains elements of CDA. I commence with a discussion of the principal concept of linguistic landscape.

2.2 Linguistic Landscape

Shohamy and Gorter (2009:1) define *linguistic landscape* in terms as plain and simple as "language in the environment". Stroud and Mpendukana (2009:364) support this notion when they state that "…one way in which place is constituted is through the language used in signage and in speakers' public displays, performances

and interaction – so called linguistic landscapes." According to Landry and Bourhis (1997:25), linguistic landscape encompasses all the evidence of language in the surrounding areas such as those on billboards and shops signs, government issued signs and graffiti on walls etc. These are the exact items that this study analysed in order to gain better insight into the linguistic landscape of Wesbank.

Ben-Rafael (2006:8) offers limited support to Landry and Bourhis (1997) as well as Spolsky and Cooper's (1991) arguments that, "LL [Linguistic Landscaping] functions as an informational marker on the one hand, and as a symbolic marker communicating the relative power and status of linguistic communities in a given territory." In relation to this study, my analysis of the Linguistic Landscape of Wesbank helped me to identify the 'relative power and status' of this linguistic community, which, according to Ben-Rafael, "unavoidably imprint themselves" in the LL of any community. My study therefore includes a consideration of whether particular languages dominate the LL of Wesbank, which languages may or may not have been replaced, and what evidence there still may remain of former signage indicative of a shift in language power.

2.2.1 Linguistic Landscape, Semiotics and Multimodality

In Linguistics, the study of signs/signage is referred to as *semiotics* (Eco, 1976), but this study is informed much more by Scollon and Scollon's (2003) *social semiotics*. Of particular relevance to this study, given its focus on a particular space, is Scollon

and Scollon's (2003:2) concept of geosemiotics - "the study of the social meaning of the material placement of signs and discourses and of our actions in the material world." They discuss code preference in space and time (Scollon and Scollon 2003:124), in which they state that signage can cross over from placement 'within a frame' to placement 'in the world'. For them '...code preferences indexes sociocultural or socio-political processes'. This relates to an aspect of my study which looks at how particular languages are used in particular signs in relation to where they are positioned, which may indicate the particular status of that language either within the community or the world.

Scollon and Scollon (2003:22) state that "signs in which multiple languages are used index the social worlds in which they are placed." The way the linguistic codes are arranged on a sign reflects the legal and social associations surrounded by the variety of languages practiced in the speech community. Fig. 2.1 below is a representative diagram of Scollon and Scollon's (2003:129) Theory of Place Semiotics regarding inscription. Scollon and Scollon describe inscription simply as the technique we use to "cover all the meaning systems that are based on the physical materiality of language (but also other code systems) in the world."

Place semiotics
Semiotic spaces
Pictures
Inscription
Fonts, letterform
Material qualities
Permanence or durability

Temporarily or newness
Quality
Layering; add-ons or extensions
State changes

Fig. 2.1

Place semiotics basically refers to bringing out the meaning of a place by means of a non-theoretical set of semiotic systems which is made of code preference, inscription and emplacement accompanied by factors such as the weather which is part of the environment. It includes the following components:

- Semiotic spaces, which refer to the erecting of signage or putting up of advertisements in a space that usually allows it;

- Pictures - the components which make up a logical single-framed sign such as an image or text or the two combined; this is with reference to visual semiotics;

- Inscription – all of the meaning systems that are based on the physical materiality of language (signs and pictures) in the world – which includes at least fonts, materials, add-ons or extensions, and state changes;

- Fonts and letterforms refer to the size, shape and colour of letters or other codes on a piece of signage. These differ with each item of signage encountered, as each sign has its own intentions and message to bring across;

- Lastly, Material, which basically refers to the surface on which the message is displayed, be it granite monuments or sand writing, conveys a sense of the type of meaning the signage is trying to bring across. For example, a meaning

that would seem more permanent would be presented on a more heavy-duty material.

Closely related to place semiotics is the concept of *multimodality*, which concerns practices and abilities to work with a variety of media or modes (i.e. visual, oral, written in the form of photographs, radio, cell phone and other print or technological media). It is a branch of discourse analysis in the New Literacy Studies (NLS) that has been extensively researched by scholars such as Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2001) as well as Kress (2003), who see multimodality as the multiplicities of modes on signs. Iedema (2003) argues that multimodal analysis should include a dynamic view on semiosis, which refers, according to Bains (2006) to any action or influence for communicating meaning by establishing relationships between signs which are to be interpreted by an audience. Iedema (2003:30) argues that

Multimodal analysis considers the complexity of texts or representations as they are, and less frequently how it is that such constructs come about, or how it is that they transmogrify as (part of larger) dynamic processes [and] ... underscores the importance of a multimodal approach to the analysis of interaction, film, sound, computational 'texts', museum displays and the like.

Multimodal discourse analysis was therefore the most appropriate way of analysing the signage in this study.

2.2.2 Linguistic Landscape and Language Choice

Spolsky and Cooper (1991:74 – 94) formulated three rules to explain what factors make some languages but not others appear on signs. The first point is to write signs in a language known to the sign-makers; the second is whether they prefer to write signs in the language that intended readers are assumed to read; and the final point

given is whether they prefer to write signs in their own language or in a language with which they would like to be identified. The first two rules refer to the linguistic proficiency of the sign writers and the sign readers and the third rule is called 'symbolic value condition'. Shohamy (2009) argues that greater visibility of a language enables it to have more power in particular spaces. Space is an arena of propaganda, negotiation and contestation. Free space is used by the powerful in order to redefine cities, nations and other entities.

Poiklik (2010:1) states that "Blommaert stresses 'the importance of space and spatial references as organising motifs in narratives, emphasising how space provides a framework in which meaningful social relationships and events can be anchored and against which a sense of community can be developed' (2005:221)" This can be related to this research in that these respondents were all moved from surrounding areas to this peripheral area, Wesbank, and forced to build a sense of community and togetherness with each other, practically strangers. The signage in Wesbank acts as a middle ground for consumer and vendor to socialise and communicate. It is therefore vitally important that both participants understands the code and images chosen in order to have a successful transaction, and it is common in such situations to rely on a common language or lingua franca.

The concept *lingua franca* commonly refers to a common language understood by all participants in a conversation, which is used for the purpose of ease of communication. This common language need not be their first or even second language, but the participants should have some proficiency in the chosen language.

A language which most commonly is termed as a *lingua franca* is English, especially in South Africa where there are 11 official languages. This may to some extent, and coupled with people's attitudes towards it as the prestige language in South Africa, explain its dominance in the linguistic landscape of South African towns and cities. According to Bruye'l-Olmedoa and Juan-Garau (2009:386), "Among the number of languages featured on signs, shop fronts, billboards and the like, English enjoys a privileged position when it comes to addressing a multilingual heterogeneous readership..." The predominance of English in the township in question could be the result of many different factors, and this study hopes to offer some clarity on this predominance. Bar graph 4.1 in Chapter 4 of this thesis provides a breakdown of the language frequency in the area.

"English has played the role of linguistic vehicle of globalisation, often to the disadvantage of other languages forced to suffer the consequences of its advance" (Bruye'l-Olmedoa and Juan-Garau, 2009:387). The interaction during the focus group interviews as well as analysis of the surveys shed light on the role of English in relation to other languages in the township and the attitudes of my respondents to this language.

At the same time, one has to bear in mind the arguments of Pennycook (2010), who contends that language is created rather than predetermined, and evolves from the contexts created by particular interactional environments, like the township in my study. My examples of the signage in Wesbank are therefore integral to the form or languages of which they are a part to avoid reducing their meaning-making potential

in the contexts from which they evolved. They are also wonderful examples of Bakhtin's notion of *mutivocality*, which Gribriel (2008:1) defines as "the practice of incorporating many voices, an approach stressing the integration of diverse individual and cultural viewpoints in the formation of interpretations and decisions." This was particularly apparent in the different fonts, styles and languages often used on the same sign. In addition, the signs are examples of the type of *peripheral normativity* existing in spaces such as Wesbank (Blommaert, Muyllaert, Huysmans and Dyers, 2005), where there appears to be a decentering away from standard forms and an almost uncritical acceptance, owing to constant exposure, of non-standard spelling and grammar.

2.3 Literacy as a Social Practice

The New Literacy Studies explore what it means to think of literacy as a social practice rather than the mere acquisition of reading and writing skills (Gee 1990; Street 1985, 1995; Cameron-Smith 2004). These studies recognise the existence of multiple literacies that vary and are contested according to time and space and in relations of power. Such studies typically problematize what counts as literacy at any time and place and question whose literacies are dominant, marginalized or resistant (Street 2003: 77). According to Quinn (1999:22), "…this approach to literacy shows an understanding of the nature of knowledge, reality, language and texts not as something "out there" but rather as constructed or created socially". As a social practice, literacy is mediated by language and other cultural tools and artefacts when social actors both position and are positioned by sign-based exchanges (Prinsloo and

Stein, 2004:69). In general, then, literacies can be understood as "social action through language use that develops us as agents inside a larger culture" (Shor 1999). An important aspect of this study is the notion that linguistic and literacy resources are *mobile*, i.e. transportable, resources. For late-modern society generally, Appadurai (1996) has noted that:

> It has become something of a truism that we are functioning in a world fundamentally characterized by objects in motion…This is a world of flows…It is also a world of structures, organizations and other stable social forms. But the apparent stabilities that we see, under close examination, are usually our devices for handling objects characterized by motion.

This is in line with the sociolinguistics of mobility, which focuses not on language-in-place but on language-in-motion, with various spatiotemporal frames (also called 'scales') interacting with one another. To quote Blommaert (2010:14): "…in an age of globalization, language patterns must be understood as patterns that are organized on different, layered (i.e. vertical rather than horizontal) scale-levels".

Dyers (2010) contends that this paradigm captures the ways in which literacy practices in Wesbank township is typified by constant migration, mobility and the transportation of literacy resources. Brandt and Clinton (2002:343), while acknowledging (in line with the New Literacy Study theorists Street, 1993, and Gee, 1996) that literacy '…arises out of local, particular, situated human interactions…' also remind us that it '…*regularly arrives from other places* (my italics) – infiltrating, disjointing and displacing local life'. This surely implies that people at local level constantly have to negotiate these new 'literacy arrivals' to varying degrees of success as they encounter them.

These facts suggest a material approach to multilingualism and multiliteracies where, according to Stroud (2009):

- Multilingualism is variously defined as a resource across different technologies/modalities (as with multilingual signage);

- Multilingual practices circulate across semiotic artifacts (books, media, classrooms, signage) in different ways; and

- Different multilingual practices give different *indexical* values to language.

As can be seen from the foregoing, the linguistic landscape of a particular space therefore ties in directly to the sociolinguistics of mobility, where literacy becomes a mobile resource. "Seen through this dynamic perspective, all the spaces and places in which we live, from the home and the schoolroom to the city and the global economy, are socially constructed; and as real and imagined geographies they shape our lives in various ways, at times enabling and enhancing, at other times constraining and oppressing" (Leander and Sheehy, 2004:). In other words, the linguistic landscape forms part of the social construction of the space that is Wesbank, and has particular effects on its population.

2.4 Language Attitudes

As part of my survey questionnaire focused on my female respondents' attitudes towards English, and as particular language attitudes also surfaced in the interviews with shop owners and assistants, I include a discussion of this concept.

Language attitudes are unconscious, subjective and *personal* responses to languages in individual encounters. Baker (1992:12-13) proposes a multi-componential model of language attitudes, consisting of '…cognitive, affective and readiness for action' components. In other words, Baker's model involves what an individual **thinks** about a language, how a language makes him/her **feel**, and what s/he is prepared to **do** about that language, e.g. decide to attend classes in order to learn it. Despite Baker's multi-componential model, many researchers emphasize the affective component of language attitudes over the other two components. For example, Webb and Kembo-sure (1999:131) regard attitudes as 'deep-seated emotional entities' which are '…generally associated with two human desires: the desire for personal gain, and the desire to be accepted by others' (1999: 120).

Attitudes cannot be directly observed, although those holding particular attitudes may express them either **overtly**, by making value statements like "I like the sound of that language" or **covertly**, for example when a non-standard variety, slang or secret code carries particular identity values for certain groups. Personal circumstances can have a lot to do with the shaping of individual attitudes. Dyers (1998:29) explains the experiences felt in forming language attitudes as the 'strong positive or negative emotions experienced by people when they are forced to make a choice between languages in a variety of situations or are learning a language'. Such

experiences may therefore lead to **positive, negative** or **neutral** language attitudes. For example, a person who is part of a community that holds strong negative attitudes towards a particular language may share these attitudes, or may develop a liking for it as a result of positive contact with the language, e.g. finding a job because of competence in that language, marrying a speaker of that language, etc.

2.5 Critical Discourse Analysis

Although it would be more accurate to say that basic Discourse Analysis was applied to many of the responses of my research population, it is also true that elements of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) were also applied to these responses. This was particularly the case when the women interacted with the signage and gave their critical responses to it. For Willig (1999) CDA allows the analyst to problematize categories used in mainstream psychology, such as notions of empowerment and disempowerment that are likely to emerge from the discourses of the participants in this study. Another key aspect of critical discourse analysis is its attention to discourse as a site of social struggle (Pienaar and Becker, 2007). All the definitions of CDA emphasize that in analyses the relationships between various forms of discourses are both abstract and concrete structures of power.

Van Dijk (2001:352) contends that it "is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context". Chilton

(2005:54) agrees, and points out how particular social actors with varying degrees of power "establish exclusionary attitudes and maybe practices by recurrently and selectively asserting certain attributes (i.e. social roles, behavioural characteristics, physical appearance, etc.) of social and ethnic groups". For Wodak (2001:2), CDA is particularly concerned with the relations between language and power. The primary concern of any CDA endeavour may thus be to analyse obvious as well as tacit "structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language". Martin and Rose (2007: 315) emphasize that practitioners of CDA focus on hegemony "as it naturalizes itself in discourse" and that these practitioners therefore feel part of the struggle against hegemony.

CDA is therefore a very useful tool for exploring power relations both *in* and *over* discourse (Titscher *et al*, 2000). This study specifically investigated the relationship between the discourses of the women in my study and the power inherent in the signs and the discourses of the signage makers. Of course, the signage makers themselves are also affected by the power structures in the space of Cape Town and South Africa which tend to determine how especially official signage is structured. In analysing the signs in Wesbank, I also make use of a model proposed by Dyer (1982:94-5), who contends that: '…analysis must contemplate constituent parts of the image (objects, people, social class, colour and so forth) – the denotative – and their relevance to the social ('how these objects relate to our culture') – the connotative – and the complete package of meaning ('underlying principles and attitudes') – the ideological'. This perspective by Dyer is slightly different to social semiotics, which might argue that denotations are nothing but certain naturalised meanings, validated as self-evident in a particular social context.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter surveyed the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study. It offered a critical discussion of the concepts of linguistic landscape, multimodality, multilingualism, multivocality and space, language as a local practice, language attitudes, literacy as a social practice, critical discourse analysis, and, with reference to the role of English, the concept lingua franca. All of these concepts are situated within the paradigm of a sociolinguistics of mobility which captures the dynamic nature of this multilingual and multicultural community where the study took place.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Paradigms

In this chapter, I present my research methodology. This study made use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Dornyeï (2007:26) explains that when using a quantitative research method the researcher has predetermined tables and statistics for the research; however, a qualitative research method is not numerically based but rather functions on a verbal level, as there are no set expectations so that the research can be flexible enough to capture the "subtle nuances" that may occur during the investigation.

This study is *quantitative* in the sense that I quantified the frequency of certain languages in the signage in Wesbank township in order to determine which languages have the most power in the township – at least in the minds of the signage makers. Parts of the community literacy questionnaire also lend themselves to quantitative analysis, e.g. how many respondents had completed primary school, their age range and how long they had lived in the township.

However, the study is also *qualitative* as I conducted surveys with the community members, in which I hoped to find the "subtle nuances" embedded in their attitudes and in the ways they answered the open-ended questions. Multimodal analysis was applied to the different forms of signage encountered in the main business hub, and critical discourse analysis was used to interpret the responses to the questionnaires, the comments made by the women while responding to the questionnaires and signage and the interviews with vendors and shop assistants.

3.2 Research Methods

3.2.1 Selection of signage for the study

The signage I photographed in the main business hub (how many 30) of the township needed to reflect the various types of signage evident in Wesbank. Factors that influenced this selection were language used, size of signage, size of font and colours used. In addition to the above, elements such as the use of code-mixing (English and Afrikaans, or English and isiXhosa) on signage were also a factor in the selection of signs. Basically the signs that appeared to be fully loaded with information were chosen for analysis.

Gorter (2006) has developed a useful coding scheme in order to place public signs into certain categories. This scheme includes: how language appears on the sign; the location of the sign; the size of the font used; the number of languages on the sign; the order of languages on multilingual signs; the relative importance of language; whether a text be translated (fully or partially), etc. These are the aspects

that were focussed on when analysing the photographs taken of the signage in the main business hub of Wesbank which helped me gain insight into the linguistic choices and literacy levels of the artists and vendors who made the signs.

3.2.2   Research Tools

Apart from the photographed signage, I also made use of questionnaires, focus group and individual interviews. The three questionnaires I made use of (see Appendix II) were aimed at three specific groups of respondents:

- An initial questionnaire, a blend of closed and open-ended questions, was used to determine the literacy levels of the 20 women participating in my study as well as the strategies they use when encountering texts they cannot fully comprehend. This questionnaire was completed in writing, with some women being assisted by those with better reading and writing skills.

- A second questionnaire with a similar mix of questions to the first one was used with the focus group and individual interviews. **Define**. This was to determine how these focus groups actually perceive the signs and if they could make sense of the whole sign or relied on part of the sign to represent a fuller picture or message.

- A third, largely open-ended questionnaire was intended for use in my interviews with the producers of the signs. I wanted to find out why each particular sign was constructed in a particular way and to gain some insight into the sign-makers' literacy levels.

Individual and focus group interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated. See Appendix IV for some of the sample transcriptions. I also kept notes of the women's comments while they were answering the questionnaires.

3.2.3 Research Population

A group of 20 mature adult women, aged between 45 and 76, were interviewed about the signage in their township. These unemployed women met regularly at the Wesbank Multi-purpose Centre to do Arts and Crafts and learn a range of skills, and were therefore in a very convenient space for me to access. I relied on *convenience sampling* in order to gain much of my questionnaire and interview data, and the study can therefore in no way be said to be representative of the Wesbank population as a whole. This also applies to the vendors and shop assistants interviewed – in a setting like Wesbank it would have been practically impossible to interview the producers of all the signs, as many of them lived outside the township.

It should be pointed out that the women in my study came from two speech communities – one predominantly Afrikaans-speaking, and one where a range of other indigenous languages like isiXhosa was spoken. Ethnically, the women in the two groups defined themselves as 'Coloured' and 'African' respectively. Several members of the 'African' group displayed fairly good literacy levels in English, whereas most of the 'Coloured' group appeared to struggle with this language. As they tended to work with other members of their speech community at the centre, I interviewed ten women from each group, using Afrikaans and English

questionnaires. A Xhosa-speaking key informant (Ms S), who was a member of the Wesbank community, assisted me by interpreting some of the questions to her group. As I am a bilingual speaker of Afrikaans and English, I was able to work with the Afrikaans group on my own.

3.3 Procedure:

3.3.1 Data Collection

Practical fieldwork was part of the data collection in this research. My supervisor and I paid several visits to this multicultural community to collect the data pertaining to this research. Firstly photographs were taken of the signage in the main business hub. The signage mentioned included displays of formally and informally produced advertisements, posters, names of houses and graffiti that is found in the Wesbank area (see Appendix III). Multimodal analysis, combined with Gorter's coding scheme (Gorter, 2006) was applied to these photographs to investigate the techniques used to promote various products or services and to see how successfully these signs were interpreted by my principal respondents, the two groups of women. Secondly, the two groups of women at the multipurpose centre completed Questionnaire 1 - the literacy survey.

The next step in this procedure was to interview the women at the Multipurpose Centre in their two focus groups, using the second questionnaire. A tape recorder was used for this step, and the recorded interviews were transcribed. During these interviews, I showed the subjects my pictures of different types of signage and

asked them what they thought about the different signs, how well they made sense of them and whether they could use them effectively to access goods or services. This provided me with an accurate indication of the practical effects of the signage on these two groups of respondents.

The third questionnaire was intended for use with the sign makers during individual interviews with them in order to determine their reasons for constructing their signs in particular ways and also to get some idea of their individual levels of literacy.

3.3.2 Data Analysis

A multimodal discourse analysis was done on the signage of Wesbank in order to evaluate the effectiveness of signage in a multicultural community as well as the selected women's responses to it. The responses of the two focus groups and those interviewed individually (the vendors or shop assistants) were examined through simple Discourse Analysis blended with aspects of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) where issues of power and dominance, and 'talking back to power' emerged.

Coffin, Lillis and O'Halloran (2010:3) describe CDA as "another method in applied linguistics which engages with language-related real-world problems." Its focal point is on the connection involving power, language and ideology. Ideology here refers to the facets of the world which play a part in creating and sustaining social relations of supremacy, discrimination and exploitation.

CDA usually encompasses two notions when considering the concept of discourse. Coffin, Lillis and O'Halloran (2010:4) express the first notion as "language in use"; which "includes the analysis of the meaning/ understandings/ interpretations that readers/listeners make" by looking at the entire context of the interaction. The second notion of CDA is based on Michel Foucault's (1972) theory characterising discourse "...as ways of talking about the world which are intricately bound up with ways of seeing and understanding."

I analysed the type and form of writing used in the signage in order to learn more about the sign-maker, his/her literacy level and the intention of effect s/he had when producing that particular sign. In addition, I analysed the signs that blended visual images with language in order to determine how the women in my study responded to such advertising. As Goddard (1998:16) notes:

"...readers do not simply read images in isolation from the verbal text that accompanies them; nor do they read the verbal text without reference to accompanying images."

As I made use of interviews, it was vitally important to have knowledge of the notion of 'appraisal' when analysing the interview transcripts. Appraisal theory was used in conjunction with CDA to analyse the interviews. By identifying the attitudes that the participants had towards the signage, I gained a clearer insight on the effects particular signs had on them.

3.4 Ethics Statement

The research study was explained in very clear and simple terms to the research participants. They were then provided with letters of consent (see Appendix I) which they had to sign once the purpose of the study and their role in it had been clearly understood.

This letter of consent granted me permission to interview them as well as to use the data gathered from the interview for research purposes. Two conditions in the ethical statement were that I would not reveal any of the women's names and personal details and that they could withdraw from the research process at any time, in which case their data had to be destroyed.

3.5 Fieldwork Procedure

Fieldwork 1

On the first trip to Wesbank, I concentrated on the main business hub of the township. The first data collection procedure was to photograph the different signage displayed in this target area. I tried to capture every type, from the most simplistic sign to the signage that was fully loaded with information. (classify and add numbers) It was better to take the maximum number of photos so that there would be a large variety of signage to choose from when it came to data analysis.

<u>Fieldwork 2</u>

The second trip to Wesbank was dedicated to conducting the focus group interviews in two parts at the Multipurpose Centre. I took platters of sandwiches along, realising that these women were doing me a favour by giving up their time for this research and providing me with much needed information.

The first part of the focus group interviews was to guide the women through the questionnaires prepared – making sure they understand all that was being asked. The aim of these questionnaires was to gain insight into the literacy levels of these women – their highest school grade passed, the language most used by them, how they felt about the most commonly used language, their methods of reading and writing and whether or not they needed help with any of these activities.

The second part of the focus group interviews – carried out after a short break - was to determine the women's responses to the photographs I had taken of their township's linguistic landscape. These photographs were displayed through a power-point presentation, and I recorded their responses in my notes and on a voice recorder.

<u>Fieldwork 3</u>

The next part of the practical work to be done in Wesbank was to interview the vendors about the signs displayed. I went from shop to shop, explaining my reason

for the interview and after receiving their permission to conduct the interview, I recorded their responses with a voice recorder. These responses were then transcribed.

In addition, I felt it was necessary to take more photographs of the signs seeing as some of the locally made signs were often changed. An example was the sign in front of the 'Fruit and Vegetable' stall, which changed according to available produce and prices. I also took note of any new local businesses that had started up since my first fieldwork trip, and photographed their signage.

3.6 Limitations of the Research

3.6.1 Conducting Focus Group Interviews

When conducting the focus group interviews with the 'African' group, the language barrier seemed to be a major factor affecting the validity of the responses. Even though English was their second or third language, it would have been much better to use an interpreter. However, I noticed during the focus group interviews that the African women appeared to have a higher proficiency in English than the Coloured women. The Coloured women strongly preferred to communicate in their mother tongue, Afrikaans, whereas the African women, aside from being obliged to speak English due to the interview, had less of a problem dealing with English.

3.6.2 Interviews with Vendors and Sign makers

70% of the vendors that took part in this study are of foreign origin; therefore some of the vendors could not participate in the individual interviews due to their limited understanding of, and proficiency in, the English language. A simple question, such as "Why did you choose this picture?", appeared to be too difficult for them to understand or answer. Some of these vendors were also quite suspicious of my reasons for interviewing them. After a brief explanation that it was solely for academic purposes, they proceeded to answer the questions to the best of their ability.

3.6.3 Other Limitations

Obviously, the findings from the 20 women I interviewed cannot be generalized to the entire female population of Wesbank, but it still provides us with an interesting perspective on literacy practices in this environment. Another problem was that I could not always get hold of the owners/ sign makers of the shop signage and often found myself talking to their shop assistants instead. With vendors who sold their produce on the streets, there were also problems in getting clear recordings on windy days.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodology of the study, which makes use of both quantitative as well as qualitative research methods. I examined both the frequency of languages used in the signage as well as the reasons for the language choices

made by the signage producers. As far as the selection of the signage is concerned, it was beneficial to make the main business hub of the township the focus of this task, given the large variety of signage displayed here. My research tools consisted of various questionnaires to gather my data as well as photographs of the signage in the main business hub of Wesbank. I ensured that I followed the correct ethical procedures in carrying out my research during the fieldwork procedures.

Along with the observations and fieldwork, this chapter also includes some of the limitations of this research project. It is clear that all interviews should have been conducted in an enclosed space so that no natural interferences could occur such as the wind in this case which muffled the recording of one of the interviews. The sources I interacted with regarding the making of the signs were the most reliable I could find and even though I couldn't investigate in detail with all the owners of the shops where signage was captured; the respondents chosen gave a general overview of the reasons for specific choices appearing on the sign.

In the following Chapter, I present a multimodal discourse analysis of the linguistic landscape of Wesbank.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS I:

A MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF WESBANK

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the data which makes up part of the linguistic landscape of Wesbank will be presented and analysed. The aim of the chapter is to present a discussion on the main trends, patterns and connections in the data. A focal point on observations and frequency of items making up the linguistic landscape is central to this discourse analysis and the attempt to understand the public space of Wesbank and its residents in more depth. In addition, this presentation of data will reveal the relationship between the language displayed in the signage and the language spoken among the community members, as well as the reasoning behind the linguistic choices made by the vendors in the community. The chapter is organized as follows: firstly, the signage is presented together with an analysis of each item of signage chosen. This is followed by an analysis of the interviews with the vendors.

4.2 A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the Photographed Signage

The signage referred to and analysed in this chapter can be seen in Appendix III. I have grouped the signage photographed into the following categories:

Group I: Professionally produced signage

Group 2: A mixture of professionally produced and more amateur attempts

Group 3: Handwritten signs.

I include a picture of an example from each group in this section.

Group I: Professionally produced signage

These are signs that have been produced with due attention to size, spacing, colour and the physical location of the signs.

Fig. 4.1

Fig. 4.1 shows a hair-dressing salon. Elements of its signage indicate a Rastafarian theme; this can be deduced from the green, yellow, red colours used to write the sign which usually is associated with the Rastafarians. "One love" is typical of a phrase a Rastafarian would use and is also the title of a Bob Marley song. Marley was the most famous reggae musician of recent times, and a leading Rastafarian. Rastafarianism is a religion which originated in the West Indies, based on the ideas of Marcus Garvey, who called on black people to return to Africa. The late Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia is believed by Rastafarians to be the incarnation of God, and the use of marijuana is a sacrament (Webster's Encyclopedia, 1990).

It is evident that the sign writer put a lot of effort into displaying the sign and making it appealing to the public, as can be seen by the neat way it is written and the graphic organisation of the letters (ie. Size, colours, font, rounded way of presenting the text.) The word "powerfull" is a common misspelling of 'powerful' and does not detract from the effectiveness of the sign, given that this salon appears, according to my interview with the barber himself, to be quite popular with male clients. Indeed, it may very well be an indication of the kind of peripheral normativity in existence in spaces such as Wesbank (Blommaert *et al*., 2005).

The service provided is clearly stated by the phrase "Hair Salon" and is repeated in the wording "Barber shop". It could be argued that the sign maker is sending out the message that this is a unisex salon, however, it is unlikely to attract many women apart from those of the Rastafarian faith – there are simply too many masculine elements in the signage – the colours, the size of the lettering and the construction of the building. The masculine elements referred to here can be seen in the words 'barber shop' and 'powerfull cuts' as well as the very basic construction of the building.

The next set of professionally produced signs (figures 4.2-4.4) all advertise the services of the sole dentist in Wesbank.

<u>Fig. 4.2</u>

This large and quite eye-catching sign on a wall in the centre of Wesbank appears to be aimed at attracting as many people as possible to this particular dentist's surgery.

It uses isiXhosa as well as English in an attempt to use languages other than English to attract a target clientele. We once again notice a fairly common spelling mistake in 'apointments', indicative of the peripheral normativity referred to above. It is worth remembering that in urban spaces marked by poverty and poorer access to education, standard forms are often de-centred in favour of more local forms and codes (Banda, 2011), and this includes more informal kinds of spelling.

Fig. 4.3

A particular literacy level is displayed here through the graphic organisation of the words, which is part of the same sign as Figure 4.2. Each word or phrase is situated within one square, making the sign very neat and structured.

This particular sign also points to the economic situation of the vendor (the local dentist). It has evidently been produced professionally by someone hired to produce the sign. This quite likely indicates that the dentist does not come from the township, but from a more prosperous part of the city. The stretch of advertising, extending over three sections of wall and occupying more space than other signage may also be indicative of the dentist's economic status.

Fig. 4.4

With reference to Scollon and Scollon's point of view on the placement of languages on signage; it can definitely be seen in this sign that the sign makers deem English as

a more important or powerful language than Xhosa due to the English display being placed at the top. According to Scollon and Scollon (2003:120) "the preferred code is on top, on the left, or in the centre and the marginalised code is on the bottom, on the right, or in the margins". We also note the informal abbreviation of 'opp' on the left sign of the signage, which could be deliberately informal to reduce the formality of the sign and thereby make it less intimidating to readers, or could simply be due to limited space.

The yellow shadow effect on red writing shows creativity and professionalism. This can also be seen in the linear writing and more formal presentation.

Group II: A mixture of professionally produced and more amateur attempts

In such signage, we find that part of the signs on a structure or building is professionally produced, with other, later additions added possibly by the owners themselves or their employees owing to a lack of finance to pay for professional sign-writers. These signs are very interesting examples of Bakhtin's concept of *multivocality,* through which texts are 'understood through a finely-tuned cultural and situated sense of its history of production and its anticipated forms of reception' (Irvine 1996; Prior and Hengst, 2010).

Fig. 4.5 and Fig. 4.6

Figs. 4.5 and 4.6, which represent two doors of the same container shop housing another hairdressing salon, appear to be the product of very professional sign writing, with consistency in font and style. Creativity and skill is evident through

lining the ridges on the door with the words; writing the words diagonally in a stylish way to fit and look presentable. The sign writer shows that he is using space and all resources at his disposal.

This item of signage shows creativity because it makes use of visual elements as well; for example, the picture of the man painted on the door. There appears to be more than one author's work on this particular sign, as evidenced by the differences apparent in the writing styles. Even though the colours of "thug life" are identical to those of "Leonard's hair salon", the two fonts are not the same. Does this in fact imply that this hair salon was originally intended to attract a particular clientele, but that later it was trying to attract young men for whom the "thug life" label, popularized by American rappers like Tupac Shakur, had a particular appeal? Or does it simply indicate a change of ownership?
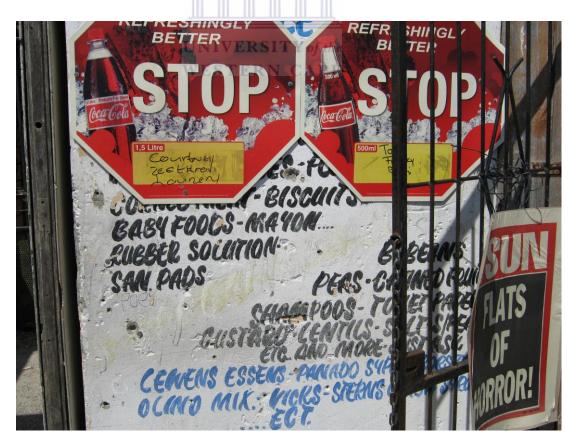
The word "baby" seems to be a late addition to the sign, with no apparent relevance to the service provided. One could argue, however, that it provides identity to the space and owner. It could also be the form of literacy called graffiti which is purely for the individual author's understanding.

Fig. 4.7

Fig 4.7 shows the eye-catching, quite attractive shop-front of a local house shop with a variety of signs, shapes and fonts. The two items on the display of signage, "Coke" and "Coca Cola" are indexical to one product and therefore should be indexical to

one meaning, however in this instance it is not the case. With reference to the significance of letterform in the construction of a sign, even though the two words make use of the same colour scheme, due to "Coke" not being written in the font and lettering as the original "Coca Cola" sign, it does not point to the same meaning and trademark as the sign maker intended. Scollon and Scollon (2003:130) state that "a change in font, even when the colour scheme and the words are the same, brings about a significant change in meaning." The signage on this shop is a very good example of the multivocality referred to earlier, with its blend of formal and informal styles, local words and spellings, e.g. Biesmilah instead of the more correct 'Bismillah' and "Spigety" instead of 'spaghetti'.

Fig. 4.8

Although fig. 4.8 also shows a shop-front like figure 4.7, it is less striking, rather untidy and the signage space is overloaded with too many messages, some already fading and some over-written. Some consistency is apparent through the use of upper case letters and professional advertisements (for Coke) as well as the poster of a popular local newspaper, *The Sun*. One might pose the question what owners of such house-shops have in mind by overloading their available space with too many signs, when many customers would simply ask for a particular product like lentils if they wanted to buy it instead of struggling to read badly-written signs. Perhaps it is simply to stay competitive with other house shops, by displaying products other shops might not have.

Fig. 4.9

Although the signage of this store is a blend of professional and amateur sign-writing, its overall appearance is very neat, and eye-catching. This is a hardware store, and the presence of the South African flag could be a strong indicator that the owner is South African, in contrast to the owners of many of the small businesses in Wesbank owned by foreigners. The name of the store 'Happy Boys' is accompanied by a picture of what appears to be a local Cape minstrel (local musicians traditionally associated with Cape Town's history) which is another indication of a South African identity. The store even confidently signals its year of opening - "est 2002" – and this imitates many of the older businesses in Cape Town which prominently display their year of establishment.

The sign is further marked by good graphic organisation. It makes use of separate individual spaces with clear boundaries, with each item having its own space. The one item that is atypical for such a shop, viz. 'spices', is advertised in a different colour (red) and a larger font.

Group III: Handmade, handwritten signs

As can be expected in an economically deprived area like Wesbank, some vendors simply make their own signs, and these are very interesting examples of localized language practices, where it is unlikely that anyone would complain about misspellings or the blending of languages. Some of these signs also reveal quite a high level of creativity.

Fig. 4.10

Fig. 4.10 is an advertisement for a fruit and vegetable stall. It shows a good attempt at creativity through using colours (the orange outlining the white chalk) thereby making the sign more attractive.

I would say that the sign writer makes an attempt at writing neatly: all numbers are large and clear. There is a consistency with the letters, most of them being in upper case. The exception to this observation is the word "sweet" in "sweet melons"; there is however an indication that something has been erased and that that particular word has replaced it. All words are written on an invisible straight line.

The fact that each fruit has its own designated space on the sign shows the organisational skills of the sign writer – this is indexical to the ability of the sign maker's practice of graphic organisation.

In the "Mix Fruit" section it is evident that there is limited space between "3p.t.k" and "R8" but there was still the need to insert the word "for"; the way in which the sign writer does this is still very creative, evident in the way it is diagonally written. Initially I thought the letters "p.t.k". was an incorrect abbreviation for 'packet' but if one looks at the rest of the sign, the sign writer clearly knows how to spell packet.

There can be many explanations as to why the entire sign is written in English but the word "pruime" (plums) is written in the Afrikaans language.

1) This could be the only word the vendor can identify for this type of fruit (indexical of his proficiency in English)

2) This could be the only word the community members can identify for this fruit (indexical either of the community members' proficiency in the English language or of their practice of mixing and blending the languages in their environment). This may indicate that the identity of the sign writer is that of a 'Cape Coloured', comfortable with blending and mixing the Afrikaans and English languages (McCormick, 2000).

Fig. 4.11

The signage in Fig. 4.11, which appears on an electrical repair shop, does not appear to have been well thought out and prepared. The sign writer misjudged the space s/he had to utilize. This can be seen in the spacing of the words on the sign; towards the end the sign writer begins to see that s/he is running out of space so s/he decides to reduce the size of the letters and spacing. Once the end of the paper is reached, the words are squeezed in diagonally wherever s/he can. This sign was clearly written purely to convey a message; presentation seems to have been of very little importance.

This is a very informal sign indicating the influence of local language practices: the word "fones" is spelt phonetically, and there is no space between "TV" and "DVD". In addition, the "'s" of 'fones' seems to have been squeezed in and added as an afterthought – possibly as a form of correction, and the sign writer also uses numbers as a representation of words (eg. The number '4' replaces the word 'for'). This of course is quite a common practice resulting from mobile texting practices, and adds to the informality of the sign.

Fig. 4.12

This sign appears on an informal cellular telephone repair shop. One might argue that the misspellings of words like "bettery" (battery) and "airphone's" (earphones) are indicative of the sign-writer's level of literacy, but they still convey some meaning to a reader. Meaning, as Williams (2010:134) reminds us "only exists in practice", and if local people already know what this shop offers, then misspellings would be unlikely to bother them.

It is evident that the word "now" on the right was inserted at the last minute (due to the size of the word and the amount of space assigned to it) but the message does not

make sense. The only deduction I can make is that the sign writer extended the sign to the left to rewrite the message in order for it to make sense.

All letters are in upper case so there is some consistency, however, the words are still scattered randomly with little apparent organisation, which could also be indicative of the writer's spatial and visual literacy. However, the use of a red marker to write the message is quite eye-catching.

Summary

To sum up this section, it appears that many of the more interesting forms of signage in Wesbank (e.g. figs.4.11, 4.12 and 4.1) adopt a multimodal approach to advertising, using pictures, different colours and fonts and good organization of the signage to attract customers. Signs of a poorer quality (e.g. figs. 4.3 and 4.4) often rely only on text, which may render them meaningless to some customers with little text literacy or understanding of the particular code/s in use. Language use is another central feature of the different signs, and in the following section, I offer an analysis of the language frequency in the signage.

4.3 An analysis of the language frequency in the signage

The frequency of language use in the linguistic landscape of Wesbank tends to support the argument by Bruye'l-Olmedoa and Juan-Garau, 2009:386 that "English

enjoys the privileged position" on signage and billboards etc. Bar graph 4.1 indicates the ratio in percentage of how often languages appear on the signage, which confirms the dominance of English as the lingua franca in this area. One can go even further by surmising that the reason a *lingua franca* is used to such a great extent is due to the fact that there is such a diverse group of cultures and nationalities that make up the community of Wesbank. The 'community of Wesbank' mentioned refers to residents as well as vendors who spend most of their time in the area.

Language Occurrence on Signage in Wesbank

Fig. 4.13
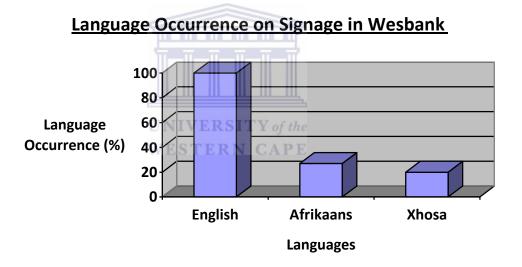
To explain Bar Graph 4.1 in more detail, English has a 100% frequency rate because it appeared on every piece of signage analysed in the chosen area; the ratios of Afrikaans and Xhosa are equally low with percentages of 27 and 20 respectively. There are two ways of looking at these results. Afrikaans and/or Xhosa may gradually be used more in the signage, or English has maintained its dominant

position and in the process tended to replace the other languages practiced in the community. However, Pennycook (2010:86-7) contends that, if we orientate our thinking towards language as a local practice, we should not be thinking about English as 'a describable entity' which replaces or oppresses other local languages. Instead, English should be seen as '...embedded in local practices' and he further suggests that 'English has always been local' in post-colonial, post-modern Africa.

In order to find explanations for the ways in which the different forms of signage in my study were created, as well as the language choices made, I interviewed a number of vendors, and the following section offers an analysis of these interviews.

4.4 A (Critical) Discourse Analysis of Vendor Interviews

Although I approached a number of vendors for interviews, I only managed to do four interviews, owing to the fact that the owners were not in the store at that time or they did not have a high level of understanding of English in order to participate in an interactive conversation or interview with me. This will explain why interviews 1 and 2 below feature two businesses that do not form part of the multimodal analysis in section 4.2 above. However, there is a good deal of similarity between these two businesses and others analysed above.

I also noted that many of the sales assistants or owners of the various shops were of a foreign nationality, and some came from other areas to work in Wesbank. The majority of the interviewees had completed grade 12 or had at least made it to the first year of high school (Grade 8). In other words, their schooled literacy was quite good.

The transcripts of the interviews with the vendors can be found in Appendix IV. As was noted in Chapter Three, I relied on convenience sampling, and interviewed only those people I could locate and who were willing to be interviewed. While on the whole what follows now is a straightforward discourse analysis, there are also elements of CDA in this analysis. If CDA explores power relations both *in* and *over* discourse (Titscher *et al*, 2000), then my experiences in this township revealed that it was difficult to ascertain who exactly were 'the powerful' in Wesbank. My approaches were guided by the fact that in many cases the vendors could not really be said to be in any position of power and able to dictate what appeared on their signage. I have already pointed out that many of those I found managing the shops and stalls were foreigners from other parts of Africa, with absentee owners who lived outside the township. They therefore had very little say in the design and wording of the signage.

Interview 1:
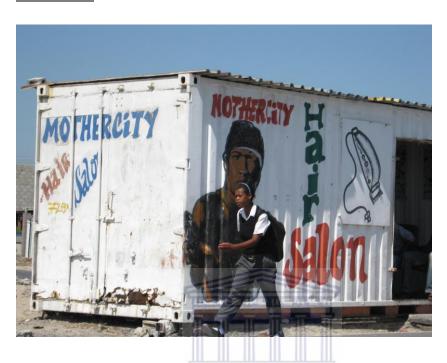
Fig. 4.13

This interview was conducted with an employee in the "Mother City" hair salon (fig. 4.13). In lines 8 to 12 of the transcribed interview, I initially thought that the signage showed that the vendor chose the graphics and colours accompanying the text on the sign on the basis of personal preference. However as the interview progressed it was clear to see that there was a clear miscommunication and the barber/hairdresser, a Congolese man, turned out not to be the owner of the store. He kept emphasizing the words 'the owner of the salon' and his lack of input in the signage of the salon, as can be seen from this interview extract:

M: So you basically just chose what you like. And then the colours, green and red? Does that mean anything specific?

V #1: green and red? No I didn't choose these colours, he the one that choose it.

M: okay and then Mother City? Why did you write Mother City there?

V #1:   It's the owner of the salon.

M: Oh the owner of the salon. So do you think it refers to Cape Town?

V #1:   I think so.

Interview 2:

Fig 4.14

Interview 2, in contrast with Interview 1, was actually conducted with a shop owner - the owner of John's Cellular Services (fig. 4.14), a man from Burundi. It was evident that he regarded English as the lingua franca in Wesbank: "It's the only language I can explain to the people..." This also reveals the language practices within the community from a social perspective, which is that the community members bridge their linguistic divides by communicating in English for ease of communication and comprehension. As John comes from Burundi, he may have

very limited knowledge of languages other than English, and so it cannot be said that he shows disregard for other languages in Wesbank.

John's competency and skills are revealed by the fact that he "wrote" the sign himself and also understands the purpose of branding and trademarks to a certain extent, when he states: "No I don't think I will change it because this is the one that people knows me because if I am changing they might think that this John is not here, that I am not working here anymore.". In line 10, when the vendor says "I don't have pictures" it shows that the absence of multimodal features in his signage (with the expection of the MTN sign, which is the brand of a leading cellular phone company) may be due to a lack of resources.

Interview 3:

This interview was conducted with the owner of the butchery featured in Chapter One (fig. 1.1). It is clear to see that this vendor has a high proficiency in the English language through the use of a fairly advanced word, "accommodate". This vendor is yet another example of the pattern that most vendors who work in Wesbank do not reside in the area, as this particular vendor lives in Pinelands.

The vendor clearly shows an understanding of the use of graphics and multimodal signage, He observes in line 9 of the transcribed interview, "I think it is eye-catching – and that is obviously the reason for people to see. They must give it a look and a second look, you what I mean?...attract attention."

The owner of this shop clearly understands the ways of reaching his customers through two useful methods of business, which is making his signage eye-catching (line 9) and using two languages in order to reach a bigger market of people (line 18).

Interview 4:

On the third visit to Wesbank for fieldwork purposes, I conducted an unrecorded interview with the dentist, whose advertisements are so clearly visible in the area (figs.4.2, 4.3 and 4.4). The dentist was not willing to be recorded, and so what follows here is based on my fieldwork notes.

The dentist resides in Rondebosch, a middle class southern suburb of Cape Town, and has a main practice in Delft, one of Wesbank's neighbouring areas. He is the only dentist in Wesbank, and opened this practice due to the great demand for his services. It can therefore be understood why there are so many professional signs promoting him in the area, done by a professional sign-writer. The dentist also displayed a strong awareness of the Wesbank community as a multilingual one, and his use of isiXhosa in his advertisements was in order to attract speakers of these languages to his surgery. When asked about the absence of Afrikaans in his advertisement, he answered that most Afrikaans-speaking people in the area used the word 'dentist' rather than the Afrikaans word *tandarts*. He was therefore aware of

the ways in which the local community mixed and blended languages, and did not feel that he caused offence by only using English and isiXhosa.

Summary

To sum up this section, while the first interview produced no significant results, the other three showed a high degree of awareness among the vendors of the importance of good, clear and eye-catching advertising and branding as a way of attracting customers. It also revealed much about the respective vendors good literacy levels. The interviews also confirmed their understanding of English as the lingua franca of this community.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter analysed the various types of signage found in the business hub of Wesbank. The principal findings are that, despite the dominance of English in these signs, there is much evidence of local language practices, multivocality and peripheral normativity in the language use in the signs. The signs themselves could also be categorized as professionally produced, a mixture of professional and amateur production and finally local, handwritten signs. Interviews with some of the vendors indicated a high degree of awareness in some of them of the importance of multimodal advertising in order to attract more clients to their businesses.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS II:
SELECTED COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO THE LINGUISTIC
LANDSCAPE OF WESBANK

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the findings from the interviews conducted with the 20 women at the Wesbank Multipurpose Centre on their levels of literacy and how these enabled/disabled them in reading the linguistic landscape of their township. The chapter also provides evidence that the women use the linguistic landscape of their township to extend their levels of literacy.

The literacy levels of these women have a great deal to do with economy and migration to their place of residence (Wesbank), all stemming from South Africa's *apartheid* era. The majority of women in South Africa have been doubly disadvantaged, both by the apartheid system, which severely damaged both the physical and emotional security of these women, as well as by a paternalistic society which tried to keep women in perpetual subjugation to men. In a paternalistic society like South Africa, men are traditionally the heads of families

and women must obey them in every respect. In the new South Africa, despite all the constitutional imperatives which guarantee freedom and equality for all, women continue to battle many obstacles of which poverty if a central component. Weiss (2004:49) captures the essence of the condition of Black and Coloured women in post-apartheid South Africa which "include the trauma of the colonial past and apartheid with its aftermath; lack of education and vast poverty; (and) traditional customs such as female circumcision".

5.2 Survey Analysis

This section focuses on the analysis of the surveys which were completed by the 20 women in my study. The results and data extracted from the surveys are presented in tables, graphs as well as through critical analysis of these findings. For ease of assessment and comparison, the results of the two groups of women who engaged with the same factors dealt with in each survey are reflected separately, i.e. separate graph or table for each group. Apart from the survey questionnaire, the women were also shown the photographs of the different types of signage in Wesbank which were analysed in Chapter Four in order for me to gauge their responses to these different elements of their linguistic landscape.

The key assigned to identify the two groups in this research are as follows: Group 1 represents the women who classify themselves as 'Coloured', while Group 2 represents the women who classify themselves as 'African'.

5.2.1 Language Preferences

Languages:	Reading Preferences:	Writing Preferences:	Frequency of Language Preferred:	Notes:
English	0	0	0	
Afrikaans	5	3	8	Whichever language they read in, they also prefer to write in.
English and Afrikaans	3	3	6	They spell Afrikaans as in "African"
Xhosa	0	0	0	
No Response	1	3	4	Some answered the "read" question but not the "write" – could this mean that they do not practice writing at all?

Table 1

According to the table representing Group 1's language preference data, English is not the preferred language in either the 'reading' or 'writing' category. As most signage in the township makes use of English as a mode of communication, this points to the fact that this group may possibly use alternative methods of

interpretation when attempting to comprehend such signage. Their proficiency in English is also a determining factor in how they interpret predominantly English signage.

When analysing the ratios of reading preferences to writing preferences, it is clear to see that whichever language they read in, they most likely also prefer to write in. This is evident in that Afrikaans has a high number of 5 as a reading preference and is accompanied by a high number of 3 as a writing preference. English, on the other hand, gets a 0 rating in both categories.

According to the 'No Response' row in the table, some respondents answered the "read" question but not the "write" question. This could indicate that they do not practice writing at all or very little. During the analysis of the text, I also noticed that they spelled Afrikaans as in "African". This observation sheds light on the fact that their oral proficiency in Afrikaans is stronger than their written proficiency.

<u>FREQUENCY OF LANGUAGE PREFERRED (GROUP 1)</u>
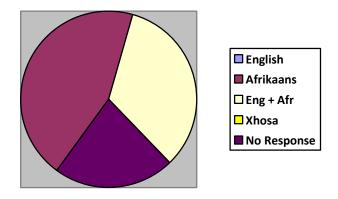
Fig 5.1

GROUP 2 (WOMEN WHO CLASSIFY THEMSELVES AS AFRICAN) N:10

Languages:	Reading Preferences:	Writing Preferences:	Frequency of Language Preferred:	Notes:
English	7	7	14	
Afrikaans	0	0	0	
English and Afrikaans	1	0	1	It is evident that the "African women" will venture into the Afrikaans language (most likely 3rd language) in the practices.
Xhosa	2	2	4	
No Response	0	1	1	This is in the same instance as the previous group.

Table 2

In group 2, there is not much difference if any regarding the reading preference to writing preference ratio. This could mean that the respondents are equally proficient in the reading and writing of specific languages. Vastly different from Group 1, English has the highest rating (7) in reading and writing preferences in Group 2. This

tends to confirm earlier studies in Wesbank (Dyers 2004) which showed that people who classified themselves as African in Wesbank had far higher levels of literacy than those who classified themselves as Coloured.

On the other hand, Afrikaans has no rating in Group 2. This is understandable for this group seeing as Afrikaans would be categorised as a third language for most in this group; therefore it wouldn't make it as a preferred language.

FREQUENCY OF LANGUAGE PREFERRED (GROUP 2)
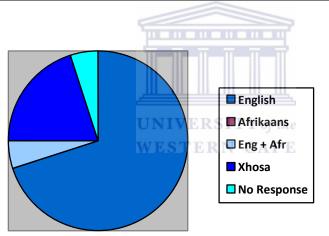
Fig. 5.2

When comparing the language preferences of Group 1 and Group 2 language, Pie Charts 5.1 and 5.2 reveal that Group 2, the group identified as 'African' is more likely to engage in multilingual language practices. Taking their ages into account, this could be a result of apartheid era language policies when everyone had to learn both English and Afrikaans at school, as these were the only official languages. Black people therefore also learned Afrikaans and English as well as their home languages. English and Afrikaans were however, in most cases the home languages

of the Coloured community and there was no pressure on this community to learn other indigenous languages. Despite state language policies designed to promote greater multilingualism, these apartheid language practices have continued in the post-apartheid era, where migration to cities has further entrenched the power of dominant languages like English and (especially in the Western Cape) Afrikaans.

According to Van Rensburg (1975:77), "Although the home language is given its rightful place in the early education the Black child, this does not mean that English and Afrikaans are neglected. It is fully realised that these are imperative as tools of communication in the wider community of South Africa as 'bread and butter' languages and as windows on the outside world." This appears to be supported by the views of the African women who took part in the interviews, which can be seen below in table 5.5 as well as through the discussion during the interview where they agreed that English would be more beneficial than their home language for their children, as far as employment is concerned.

It is evident from the English + Afrikaans category displayed on the table that Group 2, the "African" women, can use the Afrikaans language (as previously mentioned, most likely their 3rd language) in some contexts. This is in complete contrast to Group 1 whose members do not use isiXhosa at all.

English appears to play a dominant role for Group 2, ranking even higher than the respondents' home languages. This is evident in the pie graph from the small portion of isiXhosa occupied with a frequency rating of 4.

5.2.2 English Language Proficiency

As all the signage photographed contained some English, I thought it would be beneficial to find out the level of proficiency in reading this language among my respondents. The results of the two groups were as follows:

Reading skills in English	Excellent	Good	Moderate	Poor	Don't know	Notes:
GROUP 1	1	-	3	5	-	From the observation during the survey, it appears that the group of Afrikaans women were more accurate in their proficiency.
GROUP 2	2	5	-	1	-	One woman indicated "poor" and "good" as a skill. – could this be indecisiveness or incomprehension of the question.

Table 3

Group 1's account of their proficiency in English is accurate and runs in conjunction with what was observed during the process of answering the questionnaires. The women struggled to communicate in English and the questionnaires had to be translated in order for the questions to be successfully answered.

With regard to the accuracy and truthfulness in answering the English language proficiency question, it can be said that Group 1's rating of their proficiency is most accurate.

Group 2 was more proficient in English that Group 1, however, one woman indicated both "poor" and "good" as a skill rating. This could either be due to indecisiveness or incomprehension of the question. But clearly, in the context of responding to this questionnaire, the Coloured women struggled more than the African women in terms of English language proficiency.

5.2.3 Attitudes toward English

Language Attitude is an important component affecting how people perceive the signage in their community. The table below is a representation of the type of attitudes the two groups of respondents have towards English.

	Positive	Negative	Did not	Comments:

			answer	
GROUP 1	2	6	1	- Positive because it's easy to learn, read and write. - two women said "negative" but commented "not sure" - "yes but don't always understand"
GROUP 2	9	1		- Positive because I communicate with other people - Positive "because English is high" - Positive "...because easier to communicate with others" - Positive "...because easier to communicate with alot of people/ main language."

Table 4

From the results illustrated in table 5.5 above regarding attitude, it appears that the women who classify themselves as African reveal a more positive attitude toward the English language than the women who classify themselves as Coloured. This is seen when comparing the 2:6 ratio of Group 1 to the 9:1 ratio of Group 2, reflecting a 22 and 90 positivity percentages respectively.

When analysing the comments made by Group 1, it shows that their negativity could stem from only having the ability to partially understand the language; this is evident in the statement, "yes but don't always understand". This basic level of

comprehension of English is also indicative of this group of women's literacy and education levels. It can therefore further be summarised that most of the women in this group only achieved a primary level of education.

Group 2's comments, on the other hand, shows more of an understanding of the importance of English as the world sees it today as these women provide perfectly logical justifications for using English. The comment, "because English is high" shows that they understand that English is used in professional domains or domains dealing with power. There seems to be a consensus that they use English as a lingua franca to communicate with most other South Africans.

5.2.4 Starting Language regarding Reading and Writing

This question referred to the first language in which my respondents were taught to read and write. It provides insights into the exposure to certain languages when they were growing up and adds to our understanding of their present language proficiency.

Group 1:

Starting language regarding Reading and Writing	English + Afrikaans simultaneously	Afrikaans 1st	English 2nd
GROUP 1	1	8	8

Table 5

The above table shows the typical pattern of language education for many Coloured people: Afrikaans as the first language, and English as the second language in which they learned to read and write.

Group 2:

RANK	FIRST			SECOND			THIRD
Languages:	English	Xhosa	Tsonga	English	Xhosa	Afrikaans	Zulu
GROUP 2	4	3	3	3	1	1	1

Table 6

The tables of Group 1 and Group 2 reveal that the majority of the respondents have some proficiency in English seeing as it appears in more than one ranking in both cases. Group 1's results, however, show that they have a lower proficiency level in English than Group 2.

According to the above table, it appears that Group 1 only consists of bilingual respondents seeing as they have the ability to communicate in only two languages (that is, English and Afrikaans). Group 2 has no monolingual individuals. This could be due to their background (patterns of migration, growing up in multilingual families or having certain languages imposed on them in their earlier years) as well as their ranking of other languages such as English as the international language of trade and industry.

English is one of two languages that appears in two ranking categories which points to the fact that each individual has some proficiency, for various purposes, in English. In addition, English has the most selection in both categories, thereby showing its power and widespread usage.

English never appears in the first position for Group 1 and this could contribute to their difficulty in reading the linguistic landscape. While the township may have previously used Afrikaans as the main language of power, its increasingly diverse population has led to a shift towards English as *lingua franca*, as is evident from the signage examined in the previous chapter.

An additional question in my survey was:

How old were you when you started reading and writing in English?

Years	GROUP 1	GROUP 2
Up to 3 years	1	0
4 - 6 years	2	1
7 - 10 years	5	4
Over 10 years	1	4
Don't know	0	1

Table 7

It is evident through the numbers presented in the 7-10 years category that the majority of both groups started reading and writing in English when they entered primary school. This also points to the fact that English was mandatory in schools.

The results also show that the acquisition of English began in the early stages (up to 3 years) in group 1, when compared to the latter stages (over 10 years) of Group 2's acquisition. It shows that Group 2 relied mainly on school for the acquisition of English with little or no exposure at home.

5.3 Linking Literacy Levels with Reading the Linguistic Landscape

In this section, I offer an analysis of the responses of the two groups of women to the selected signage I showed them. This analysis is presented in the form of tables and a discourse analysis of their additional comments.

The women's familiarity with some of the signage was evident, especially with regards to the signage of the butchery, the dentist and small businesses that were located close to their homes. They responded positively to the more multimodal signs, saying that the accompanying images helped them to interpret the signs. They also felt that such signs added colour and life to otherwise monotonous township streets. On the other hand, they were quite critical of signs that relied on text only, given that some of them had limited levels of schooled literacy and (in the case of Group 1 especially) a poor command of English. A very interesting criticism regarding 'overloaded' signs at house shops (e.g. fig. 4.8) was that many

of the women didn't even bother to read advertisements for individual items. A woman in Group 1 said:

"*As ek iets soek, dan vra ek die vrou agter die* counter. *Ek gannie nog lees om te sien of hulle* lentils *het nie*" [If I am looking for something, I ask the woman behind the counter. I'm not going to read (the sign) to see if they have lentils or not].

5.3.1 Assistance needed in understanding the signage

An aspect probed by the survey was the level of assistance needed by the women in reading the linguistic landscape of their township. This is represented in the table below:

	Most of the time	Some of the time	Only now and then	Hardly at all	Notes:
GROUP 1	3	2	1	3	
GROUP 2	-	1	3	4	2 did not answer.

Table 8

Group 2 in this table showed that they were more competent than Group 1, when it comes to interpreting the signage. This is evident through their highest portion of 40% indicating that they hardly ever need assistance. Group 1 seemed to have a balance of respondents who desperately needed assistance from literacy mediators and those who could cope with interpreting the signage.

5.3.2 Difficulties Encountered in relation to reading the Signage

This aspect of the survey gives us insight into the relationship between the vendor and the community, as represented by these women, as well as literacy levels and the community. It also reveals the alternative methods the women use in reading the signage. Such alternative methods include making use of the image on the signage to assist one in extracting the message given by the text if the language used is incomprehensible.

Difficulties in reading the signage	With image, no problem	No problem at all	No answer/ misunderstood
GROUP 1	5	1	2

Table 9

In group 1, more than 50% of the participants stated that should there be an accompanying image to the text on the sign they will have no problem in understanding it. This shows that these respondents make use of all resources possible to extract the meaning of the sign, such as analysing neighbouring images.

Two respondents in this group did not answer the question, which may indicate that that they did not understand the question. Only one participant in this group confidently answered that she had no difficulties and therefore no problem understanding the signage whether there are accompanying images present or not.

Difficulties in reading the signage	Difficulty	No problem
GROUP 2	8	2

Table 10

In Group 2 the majority of the respondents admitted that they have great difficulty when encountering and interpreting particular signage. Only two respondents indicated that they had no difficulty with the comprehension of signage. Does this mean that, despite this group's better text literacy (especially in English), they could not cope with the linguistic landscape of Wesbank? A probable explanation is that most of these women were recent migrants to the area from the rural parts of the Eastern Cape and other parts of South Africa. They may still have been in the process of adapting to city life and particular forms of advertising outside of their rural cultures. Therefore, an understanding of urban culture, its images and products, may have been necessary to help them 'read' the linguistic landscape.

5.4 Conclusions

The above findings appear indicate a mismatch between the levels of literacy of my respondents and their ability to read the linguistic landscape. In addition, as 70% of the vendors or sign-writers interviewed were of foreign origin, English could not have been their home language either. Nevertheless, these locally made signs included several English texts which at least the vendors could read and understand,

but which my respondents in most cases needed accompanying images to interpret owing to their text literacy levels.

Although Group 2 displayed or reported better literacy levels and understanding of English than Group 1, they reported struggling more with their reading of much of the signage in the township than the members of Group 1. I have explained above that this may be due to a lack of understanding of, and familiarity with, urban culture and its signage. The women in Group 1 may have lived in the township much longer than the women in Group 2 and also relied on different strategies to negotiate the linguistic landscape, like using literacy mediators or making use of the full image of the sign. In other words, they relied on their multiliteracies – a combination of visual literacy, text literacy and personal literacy - to read the signage, instead of only text literacy.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Chapter presents the general conclusion of this thesis and offers a few recommendations for further studies. I commence by addressing my three main research questions in order to determine how well this study has answered them.

6.1 A Summary of the Main Findings of this Study

My first research question was:

Why are the signage in Wesbank constructed in particular ways, using particular languages, by the signage producers in this particular space, and how does the signage help to construct this space?

The study has shown that the construction of the signage is related to the income level of the vendors. Some are able to afford professional sign-writers, some combine professional sign-writing with their own hand-made signs or additions and there is a final group that only produce hand-made signs. The language mainly used on the signage in this area is English, the *lingua franca* of the area. As many of the

vendors come from other parts of Africa they may be less familiar with other local languages like Afrikaans and isiXhosa. The dentist and owner of the butchery showed some sensitivity to the multilingual reality of the township by incorporating isiXhosa and Afrikaans in their predominantly English signage, and an awareness that this would attract clients. This also shows that some thought has been put in regarding the vendors' consumer market and their needs. The sign maker constructs a sign in the way that s/he would like to be recognised by and accepted by the community. English was also very positively rated by the women I surveyed, who saw it as a gateway for greater things to come because people can travel and communicate with almost anyone anywhere in the world once they have a good understanding of English. At the same time, many of the signs exhibited the peripheral normativity identified by Blommaert *et al.* (2005), with spelling mistakes that did not seem to offend anyone in this space.

The second part of the first research question asks how the signage constructs the space. Shohamy's (2009) point on 'free space' being dominated by the powerful can be illustrated in Wesbank especially through the very large advertisements for the dentist, who does not live in the township. Some of the signage on the hairdressing salons/barber shops may also indicate the presence of particular powerful gangs in the area, e.g. the sign 'Thug Life' in Figure 4.5. The signage also makes one aware that there is economic activity in Wesbank, which is always an encouraging sign in economically deprived areas. In addition, the women in the study commented on the fact that the signs added colour and interest to the main street, and helped them to locate particular businesses.

The signage in the area can also tell us about the literacy levels in the space. As soon as one enters an area, the general literacy levels are revealed through the quality of codes displayed. Ultimately, space can be said to have indexical qualities and that is the way in which the signage can construct the space. Identifying which languages are used for which purposes is vital in this process; for example, in this study business-like signage will mostly use English to convey the message with possibly a minor addition of a local language whereas the religious signage mainly makes use of Afrikaans. Therefore, it shows that different languages are used for different genres and hold different levels of importance.

My second research question was:

To what extent can the women of Wesbank understand and productively make use of, this signage?

It has been established that the respondents make use of both images and codes on an item of signage to enhance and successfully understand the message conveyed. It can therefore be said that if a vendor would like a sign to reach its optimum level of comprehension then it should be a multimodal sign, with images accompanying the codes. This is in order to expand the number of consumers, whether they have basic or advanced literacy. Even those with advanced literacy, such as the women in Group 2, could still struggle with reading the linguistic landscape if there are cultural barriers that people with rural backgrounds may not be able to break through.

It has further been established that the women do not always understand the entire sign with regard to the code used due to their literacy levels and therefore they make use of accompanying images to extract the meaning. Another technique used to interpret the sign is to locate at least one word that would make sense to them and then proceed from there. And a final technique is to make use of literacy mediators with good text literacy to explain text-laden signs to them. This shows that there are ways of getting around their basic literacy levels so that it does not hinder their daily activities such as buying groceries and also does not disempower them as alert, aware consumers of the goods advertised.

My final research question was:

Is there any evidence that the signage is another form of literacy extension for these women, i.e. have they learned new words and expressions from these signs?

This research question also produced a positive result, but not as strongly as I initially expected. Of course the goal for these women respondents is not to acquire new words and expand their vocabulary but simply to access goods and services. However, if a word or phrase in a particular sign stunts the respondents' understanding of the message on the sign they tend to ask others like the literacy mediators referred to above. This helps them to acquire that particular word or phrase, expanding their knowledge for future encounters with the same word or phrase. In addition, constant exposure to the same words, phrases and slogans may,

as Pennycook (2010) puts it, become '…sedimented through repeated acts of sameness'.

6.2 The Main Conclusions to be drawn from this study

Despite the dominance of English in the linguistic landscape of Wesbank, there is much evidence of local language practices, multivocality and peripheral normativity in the language used in the signs. This helps to create a bridge between the vendors' intentions and the community's ability to read the linguistic landscape. Indeed some vendors revealed a strong awareness of the need to communicate clearly with their diverse customers. However, those who rely on texts only to advertise their goods may find it difficult to attract customers and should switch to more multimodal ways of doing so.

Ultimately, the positive feedback to research questions two and three shows that progress is definitely being made as far as the expectation of empowerment of these women as participatory citizens in their particular township is concerned. They have shown that one does not have to feel completely crippled and disempowered by the inadequate text literacy levels but instead can use other forms of literacy to acquire knowledge, and at the same time expand one's text literacy.

6.3 Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on only 20 women in the township, and it would be very useful to do a similar study with larger groups of women as well as men in the township. It would also be interesting to find out how the non-South Africans in the township read the linguistic landscape of Wesbank, and how this helps them to access goods and services. The signage could also be tested on young people, like high school learners to see whether they approach problematic signage in ways that are different to the women in my study. Another issue that the thesis has not addressed is whether the women's effective use of multimodal strategies to read particular signs would help them in interpreting other forms of signage (e.g. government, health and education). It is possible that people in such situations seek help from officials or make use of more literate people to guide them.

It is also important to take the research findings back to the community. Effective community-based research, as argued by Elsa Auerbach (2011, personal interview, 7 February 2011), means taking the findings of one's research back to the community and to evaluate their responses to the initial findings. This I intend to do at a later stage in my research journey.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I – Consent Forms

Letter of informed consent (these were translated into Afrikaans):

Linguistics Department, University of the Western Cape 2010.

RESEARCH PROJECT: NEGOTIATING THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE: WOMEN, LITERACY AND CITIZENSHIP IN ONE SOUTH AFRICAN TOWNSHIP.

Dear Participant,

We would like to invite you to participate in an important research project on literacy which seeks answers to the following questions:

1. How do women in Wesbank make use of the signs and advertisements in their township?
2. What can we learn about the kinds of languages used in these signs?
3. Do women learn new words and expressions from these signs or are they too difficult to understand without accompanying pictures?

The project will be explained to you in detail by the researcher, <u>Ms Meggan Williams, student no. 2604383.</u>

Your part in this project is to permit the researcher to interview you using a questionnaire. Your identity will of course not be revealed, and you have the right to

withdraw your data at any time. Please sign the letter below if you agree to assist us with our research, and many thanks for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Prof Charlyn Dyers (co-researcher and supervisor)

I, ... (NAME), hereby give the Linguistic Department of the Western Cape permission to analyze and use other elements of my participation in the above-mentioned research project.

The project and its intentions were fully explained to me and I accept the agreement and terms.

I am aware that I have the right to withdraw my data from the project at any time. I am also aware all my data will be used strictly anonymously, using a system of coding instead of real names for identification. I am also aware that I can have access to any reports using my data once the research project has been concluded.

Signed: ....

Date: ....

Appendix II - Questionnaires

Questionnaire I: Literacy Survey (adapted from Banda, 2004)

Please note that this is <u>not</u> a test. The information obtained will remain confidential. Answer all questions. But you don't have to give your name or contact details (Q1-2). Only those that would want to be involved in follow up interviews to this research need give their names and possible contact details. In most cases just tick (✔) or cross (✘) applicable response.

Personal and Demographic Data

Q1. Surname: .... Name: ....

Q2. Contact Details (phone number/ address): ....

....

Q3. Age: .... Gender: M .... F ......

Q4. Demographic Group*

Coloured ..... African ..... White ..... Indian ..... Other ....

(*Not these labels are being used for convenience only)

Q5. Which languages do you speak in your home? List them starting from most frequently spoken.

....

....

....

....

....

Q6. Which languages would you prefer to read and write in?

Read: ....

Write: ....

Literacy Practices at Home

Q7. How would describe the place where you grew up?

Rural	Urban

Q8. Name area/town/city/village where you grew up
:………………………………………….

Reading in Daily Life

These questions deal with reading and writing in daily your life.

Q9. How often do you do each of the following, if at all? How often, if

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Several times a year	Never	Don't know
Use a public library						
Write a letter or anything else that is more 1 page in length						
Read newspapers/ magazines						
Read books						
Watch recreational programmes on TV (e.g., soapies or football)						
Watch news in English on TV						

Q10. How would you rate your reading skills in English needed in daily life?

Excellent	Good	Moderate	Poor	Don't know

Frequency of Assistance Required with Skills from Friends/Family

Q11. Do you ever need help when filling in any of the following, if the language used is English?

	Sometimes	Often	Rarely/Never
Reading information from government departments, businesses or other institutions			
Filling in forms such as job applications			
Writing notes to friends and family			
Writing (job) application letters			
Reading magazines			
Reading newspaper articles			
Reading posters, advertisements, notices etc.			

Literacy Practices at Primary School

Q13. In which language did you start reading and writing in? (list order if applicable)

1.…………………………………….

2.…………………………………….

3.…………………………………….

Q14. How old were you when you started reading and writing in English?

Up to 3 years	4-6 Years	7-10	Over 10	Don't know

Questionnaire 2: Focus Group Interviews

Q1. Do you ever need help in reading the signage in your area when it is in English? If so, how frequently would you make use of help from others?

	Most of the time	Some of the time	Only now and then	Hardly at all
Ask for help with signs				

EXERCISE: The researcher will now show you a number of signs and advertisements in the main business area of Wesbank, and will record your responses to these signs – how well you understand them, how you make use of them, and how you think these signs could be improved.

DISCUSSION

Q2. Do you think Xhosa possesses a high degree of power in your community?

Q3. How important is Afrikaans in your community?

Q4. What is the role of English in your community?

Q5. Think about the signs you were shown during the exercise. Approximately how many articles of signage were in your home language (HL)?

	0-20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-100%
Signage in HL					

Q6. Do you think more signage should be in your home language? Why?

Questionnaire 3: Interviews with Signage Makers

Note: the signage makers will firstly be shown photographs of the signs they have created.

Q1. Please explain the processes involved in creating your signs.

Q2. How do you select the images/pictures you use?

Q3. How do you decide on which language/s to use? Are you familiar with the languages spoken in Wesbank?

Q4. Do you test your signs on the community to see if they are effective or not? Do you ever get feedback on the signs?

Q5. Would you be interested in the findings of this study in order to help you improve your signage?

Q6. What is the highest grade you passed at school, and where did you attend school?

Appendix III – Signage Photographed

Fig 4.1

Fig 4.2

Fig 4.3

Fig. 4.4

Fig 4.5   Fig 4.6

Fig. 4.7

Fig 4.8

Fig 4.9

Fig 4.10

Fig 4.11

Fig 4.12

Appendix IV – Vendor Interviews

VENDOR/ SIGN MAKER INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION:

<u>Key</u>:   M – Meggan (Interviewer)

         V – Vendor/ Sign maker

<u>Interview 1:</u>

M: At the hair salon sign, who wrote your sign?

V #1: He's not here.

M: Is here not here? Was he the owner of the business?

V #1: This other guy come here and he draw it.

M: O okay so he drew it for you, you wanted it like this. So did you choose the sign to be like this?

V #1:   Yes

M: Okay so why did you choose that picture?

V #1: that picture, I like that picture.

M: Who is that?

V #1: It's Usher.

M: It's usher, so you like Usher?

V #1: (nods)

M: So you basically just chose what you like. And then the colours, green and red? Does that mean anything specific?

V #1: green and red? No I didn't choose these colours, he the one that choose it.

M: okay and then Mother City? Why did you write Mother City there?

V #1: It's the owner of the salon.

M: Oh the owner of the salon. So do you think it refers to Cape Town?

V #1: I think so.

M: Okay, do you own this business or are you just working here?

V #1:   No I'm just working here.

M: And do you live in Wesbank?

V #1:   Me, I live in Kuilsriver.

M: Kuilsriver okay, and where did you go to school?

V #1:   Me?

M: Yes.

V #1:   Ahhh long time, I go to school in Congolia.

M: O okay and what was your highest grade?

V #1:   Maybe grade ten.

M: mmm grade ten that's standard eight right?

V #1:   Ya.

M: Oh okay, thank you for your time.

V #1:   Okay.

M: Enjoy your day.

Interview 2:

M: Okay so this is your business, right? The cellular service, is your name John?

V #2:   (nods)

M: Who wrote your sign for you? Who wrote this?

V#2:   Who? I write it myself.

M: You wrote it yourself. Okay so why did you decide to write it like that?

V#2:   silence

M: Okay, why didn't you use any pictures?

V#2:   Pictures? Why I don't use pictures? No I don't have pictures.

M: Sorry?

V#2:   I don't have pictures.

M: You don't have pictures okay. Why did you decide to write in English?

V#2:   It's the only language I can explain to the people...* fades away *

M: English okay and what is your home language?

V#2:   French.

M: French. Do you speak Afrikaans?

V#2: Not really, I can understand but I can't speak.

M: Okay. So this is the language that you and the people of Wesbank also understand.

V#2: Yes.

M: And where did you go to school?

V#2: not here, in my country, in Burundi.

M: Okay and what was your highest grade?

V#2: Twelve.

M: Grade 12, oh nice you have your matric certificate. Would you be interested in the findings of our study... I'm here to look at the signage and see if the people of Wesbank understand it, right? So if I go do my research would you like me to tell you look here they didn't understand this and that, would you change your signage maybe? Would you change your sign?

V#2: if you explain to me, if I can change it?

M: yes

V#2: no I don't think I will change it because this is the one that people knows me because if I am changing they might think that this John is not here, that I am not working here anymore.

M: Oh okay no I see. Thank you very much.

Interview 3:

M: Okay so this is the Halaal "meat vleis" shop right. Who did your signs for you?

V#3:   A guy, (name) did the signs for me.

M: Okay why did you decide to use him?

V#3:   He is doing our work all the years, that is why.

M: You gave him the idea?

V#3:   yes

M: why this idea?

V#3:   I think it is eye-catching – and that is obviously the reason for people to see. They must give it a look and a second look you know what I mean?

M: okay...

V#3:   ...attract attention...

M: Attract attention. Okay another thing is why did you use meat vleis meat? Why did you choose to use both translations?

V#3:   Because there is English speaking people and Afrikaans speaking people and some people don't really know the difference. Afrikaans people, some of them don't understand what 'meat' is and some English people don't know what "vleis" is. So we try and accommodate everybody.

M: okay, accommodation. Okay what is your home language?

V#3:   English.

M: English. (customer walks in) Okay I can wait its fine.

(busy with customer)

M: Okay have you ever tried to see if your signs were effective in the community?

V#3: Well obviously because I mean business is good...

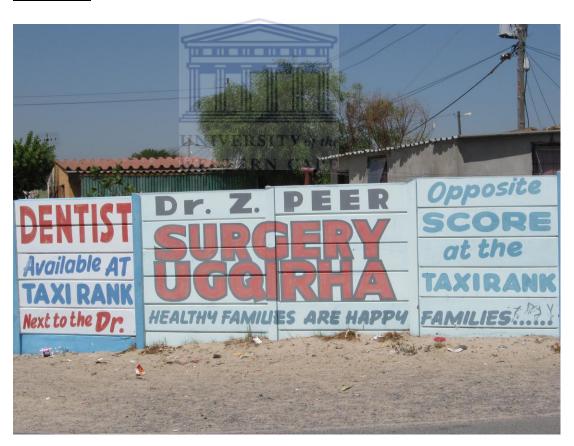M: okay business is good. And where did you go to school? Do you live in Wesbank?

V#3: No I stay in Pinelands.

M: No you stay in Pinelands. And what was your highest grade passed?

V#3: matric.

M: Matric okay. Very nice. Thank you. Very impressive signage. Enjoy your day.

Interview 4:

The owner of the above item of signage participated in an unrecorded interview.

Interview recording was too muffled.