# The Implications of Culture for Dictionaries of the African Languages[*]

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**Abstract:** This article attempts to show how culture or aspects thereof can be used to complement linguistic and other information in the compilation of dictionaries of African languages. Some obstacles in the way of achieving this goal are identified and proposals made on how to deal with them. Although only some cultural aspects of a single language are examined, the conclusions are valid for cultural aspects of all African languages.

**Keywords:** CONTEXT, CULTURE, CORPUS, EUPHEMISM, FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE, HLONIPHA, KINSHIP TERMS, LEXICAL BORROWING, MULTILINGUALISM, SPEECH COMMUNITY, STANDARD ZULU, TABOO

**Opsomming:** **Die implikasies van kultuur vir woordeboeke van die Afrikatale.** Hierdie artikel probeer om aan te toon hoe kultuur of aspekte daarvan gebruik kan word om taalkundige en ander inligting aan te vul by die samestelling van woordeboeke van die Afrikatale. 'n Aantal struikelblokke op die weg om hierdie doel te bereik, word geïdentifiseer en voorstelle gemaak oor hoe om hulle te hanteer. Alhoewel slegs sommige kulturele aspekte van 'n enkele taal ondersoek word, is die gevolgtrekkings geldig vir kulturele aspekte van alle Afrikatale.

**Sleutelwoorde:** EUFEMISME, FIGUURLIKE TAAL, HLONIPHA, KONTEKS, KORPUS, KULTUUR, LEKSIKALE ONTLENING, TAALGEMEENSKAP, TABOE, STANDAARDZOELOE, VEELTALIGHEID, VERWANTSKAPSTERME

## 1. Introduction

The size, content, format, purpose, style and "depth" of a dictionary may vary from dictionary to dictionary according to the compiler's perceived needs of the users of the dictionary. A dictionary may also be largely influenced by the tradition of dictionary making adopted as well as the language described or the level of linguistic description of the language concerned. Other factors which may have a bearing on the language in dictionary making comprise the history and traditions of the specific speech community, including its origins, mythology, legends, exploits, rituals, ceremonies, wisdom, world-view, arts and crafts and other activities together with phenomena in nature and the environment as a whole — indeed the entire universe.

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In South Africa there is a preponderance of translation dictionaries over explanatory dictionaries of the African languages belonging to the Bantu language family. Most of these were produced by Christian missionaries. In addition to the indigenous lexical items they contain, there is also a fair proportion of lexical borrowings from Indo-Germanic languages adapted for school, religious and other uses. The borrowings and adaptation of existing words in the language are mainly used to accommodate new ideas brought about by the contact of languages. They signal the onset of multilingualism in society and the decline of monolingual societies in the various countries in which colonialism or trade or both have occurred. They are a consequence or evidence of the co-existence of legal, social, cultural, religious, economic and other systems over a considerable period of time. A dictionary of "fanakalo" chronicles multilingualism in industry and on the mines in South Africa. A few monolingual dictionaries in the African languages have been produced or are in the process of production.

A notable feature of translation and explanatory dictionaries in the African languages is their relatively limited description of various aspects of traditional life or culture of the African. *The Greater Dictionary of Xhosa* can be considered an exception to this. Various factors may have contributed to this situation, *inter alia*, urbanisation, industrialisation, social and political organisation, the adoption of Christianity, a new value system, and the decline of the influence of tribal and family life. Many of the traditional rites and practices have either disappeared or continue to exist in a drastically reduced or fragmented fashion.

## 2.1    What is Culture?

Herskovits (1960: 17) defines "culture" as "the man-made part of the environment". Culture is also often defined in an hierarchical fashion to indicate various levels of social development in order to distinguish between what is regarded as "primitive" on the one hand and "civilised" on the other. Culture is often regarded by some Africans as a form of national identity. Writing in the *Echo*, supplement to the *Natal Witness* (6 June 2002: 8), Bongani Mthethwa decries the fact that black people are "no longer proud of our Africanness". According to this, the communality of African life is contrasted with the individualism of the West. For purposes of this article, an examination of the interconnection between culture and language in general and lexicography in particular is undertaken.

## 2.2    The Interconnection between Language and Culture

The interconnection between language and culture is widely recognised. Sapir (1921: 233) indicates it as follows: "Culture may be defined as *what* a society does and thinks. Language is a particular *how* of thought."

Thipa (1989: 43-44) stresses the systematic ordering or patterning of culture: "Culture has order or pattern ... comprising a system. This system or unit is composed of interrelated parts which are mutually influencing." He concludes that "culture refers to the *total* way of life of a particular group of people".

The interconnection between language and culture is, however, not always direct or straightforward. Words denoting culture or aspects thereof do not necessarily have special markers or some special features in the grammar. Sapir (1921: 234) says: "In the sense that the vocabulary of a language more or less faithfully reflects the culture whose purposes it serves it is perfectly true that the history of language and the history of culture move along parallel lines." This makes it difficult to distinguish cultural words from the rest of the vocabulary of a language. Context appears to be the only means of establishing the use of words denoting culture.[1] We accordingly want to investigate the identification of words in cultural context as a means of determining the interconnection between culture and language.

One of the methods of identifying words in cultural context is to determine the various cultural aspects peculiar to a speech community rather than address the entire domain of culture as such. It is also more illuminating to concentrate on a single speech community rather than to deal with the broad subject of the interconnection between culture and language in general.

Zulu culture can roughly be classified according to about twenty aspects, e.g. kinship and social organization, communal activities, recreation, customs and beliefs, food and beverages, sorcery and witchcraft, mourning, burial and death, agriculture and animal husbandry, mythology and legends, music, dancing and song, folklore, national ceremonies, etc. Only one of these aspects, viz. kinship terms, will be discussed briefly.

Some Zulu kinship terms show peculiar linguistic behaviour. The singular noun forms, for example, have two or more meanings, e.g. *ubaba* (father/paternal uncle/paternal aunt) and *umama* (mother/maternal aunt). In addition, the terms *ubaba* and *umama* denote plurality. Some kinship terms also accommodate one's siblings. They may further be used to refer to any senior adult male or female. They are sufficiently inclusive to be used without the possessive/genitive form *wami* or *wethu*.[2]

Another set of singular nouns contains singular forms with compound morphemes having plural genitive forms indicating plurality, viz. *udadewethu* (my/our (older) sister), *umfowethu* (my/our (older) brother), *uzakwethu* (my/our fellow bride/companion), *umnewethu* (my/our elder brother), etc. These kinship terms may also apply beyond the ambit of the clan. In spite of the plural genitive morpheme used in these nouns, they retain their singular forms because of the singular prefix they use. This shows clearly that these nouns coincide in meaning with those divested of this morpheme, viz. *ubaba*, *umama*, etc.

There are kinship terms that are contrastive. These are:

(a)  Age:
   (i)  according to Seniority:
      *umnewethu* (elder brother)
      *udadewethu* (older sister)
      *ubabamkhulu* (older than parents — grandfather)
      *ugogo/ukhulu* (grandmother)
   (ii)  according to Juniority:
      *umnawami* (younger brother)

(b)  Sib:
   (i)  by Marriage
      *umlanda/umlamu* (brother-/sister-in-law on wife's side — her brother or sister)
      *umfumbesi/umnakwethu* (fellow son-in-law — married to wife's sister)
      *umalume* (uncle — mother's brother)
      *umukhwe* (wife's father)
      *umkhwekazi* (wife's mother/wife's mother's sister)
      *ubabekazi* (father's sister)
      *ubabezala* (husband's father/husband's paternal uncle)
      *abalandakazi* (in-laws on wife's side)
      *umkhozi/umlingani/usebele* (fellow parent-in-law)
      *umamezala* (husband's mother)
   (ii)  by Descent
      *ukanina* (cousin on mother's side — child of mother's sister)
      *umzala* (cousin on father's side — aunt's/uncle's son or daughter).
   (iii)  as Offspring
      *umshana* (sister's son or daughter)

Some kinship terms are borrowed from Afrikaans or English. These are:

   *usisi* (sister/suster — elder sister)
   *ubhuti* (boetie — elder brother)
   *uanti* (aunt/tante — father's or mother's sister/any adult woman older than oneself/any adult woman of the same age as one's mother)
   *ubhululu* (broer — friend/mate)

It is not clear why these borrowings took place. They may have resulted from the following factors:

(a)  Redundancy: *Ubaba* which has a long series of meanings (father/paternal uncle/paternal aunt) often requires some distinguishing qualification, e.g. *ubaba omncane* (father's younger brother) and *ubaba omdala/omkhulu* (father's older brother).

(b) Compensation: *Usisi* (sister/suster) probably reinforces *udadewethu* which is the only term for sister in contrast with *umfowethu*, *umne-wethu* and *umnawami* the masculine counterparts.

(c) Harmonisation: *Ubhuti/Ubhululu* (boetie/broer) may be the result of harmonisation of the vocabulary in a multilingual environment. *Ubhululu* could also be evidence of the decline or disuse of indigenous words such as *unkabimalanga*, *untanga* or *utate*.[3]

The foregoing nouns demonstrate forcibly the inclusivity peculiar to kinship terms in Zulu. They are classificatory by nature and appear to conform to the social organisation of the people where the clan or sib plays an important role. The layout of the *umuzi* (kraal) also conforms to the hierarchical structure of the family and the various positions of the nuclear forms of the households.

The lexical borrowings of kinship terms are testimony of a steady change in the culture of the people. They indicate the influence of multilingualism on the culture and language of the people. The lexical borrowing found in kinship terms illustrates the need and importance of viewing culture as a whole without confining it to a traditional setting. Furthermore, the examination of lexical items without also taking cognizance of their cultural background is likely to result in superficial definitions of entries in a dictionary.

The rest of the aspects we have identified in Zulu culture is likely to confirm our findings in the examination of the interconnection between language and culture demonstrated by kinship terms.

## 3.    Some Problems

The accommodation of Zulu culture, like that of the entire material used in the compilation of a dictionary, presents very complex and often controversial problems. These are discussed below.

### 3.1.1  Standard Zulu

Standard language is a form of language prescribed and recognised for all official communication (both written and spoken) in a language. The vocabulary and usage of such a form of language are usually based on a prestigious variant or dialect of a language. Standard language is often elitist. It does not accommodate regional or dialectal forms of a language.

Ideally, each of the six Zulu dialects identified by Kubheka (1979: 90), for example, ought to have its own literature and dictionaries where all its individual linguistic idiosyncrasies could be fully catered for. Basically, each dialect is a language in its own right (see Mokgokong 1966: 32). This is, however, impractical for literary purposes. It is unviable to cater for the literary needs of small populations of dialects, more than 50% of whose members are illiterate.

The practical solution for such speakers is to provide jointly for the needs of the Zulu people as a whole. The implication of this is to find a compromise by declaring one of the dialects a standard language. However, such a plan creates scope for strife and conflict.

Earlier efforts to recognise a speech form that could pass for a standard Zulu language have not been successful. Suter's (n.d.) proposal that *isiNtungwa* be made the standard language did not receive support. Kubheka's (1979) suggestion that the Central Zululand dialect be adopted as standard language has for historical and other reasons been a failure. Ndlovu (1963) advocated what he calls "standard educated speech" as the norm for standard Zulu.

Some reasons for the failure to have proposals on standard Zulu recognised include the following:

1. The proposals are based solely on written language. On his own admission, Suter says that even educated Zulus speak a mixture of dialects. It is not clear how such speakers would acquire and use *isiNtungwa* in their writing without adequate written sources in this language.

   It seems unrealistic to determine a standard language on the basis of a language with limited literary sources and a very small percentage of the population literate. Despite the declaration of compulsory education, thousands of children in KwaZulu-Natal still do not attend school or leave school before acquiring functional literacy.

2. The adoption of a standard language purely on the historical accident that a certain dialect had a headstart over the other dialects of having been written, could cause speakers of other dialects to resist or reject it.

3. It seems odd artificially to constrain speakers of a dialect of the same language not to use certain forms of speech under certain conditions.

4. The concept of "standard educated speech" does not help much without an indication of the characteristics of such speech. Except for some distinct phonological, tonological and vocabulary characteristics of the various dialects, the Zulu language is fairly homogeneous. The different dialects can be accommodated in a single grammar with fairly identical syntactic and morphological features.

Economic, social, educational, religious and political influences during the past century, and more particularly during the past fifty years, have drawn KwaZulu-Natal citizens irrevocably closer together. This provides a platform on which a more dynamic and uniform language can flourish.

The foregoing statement has serious implications for dictionary makers, writers and other linguists. The promotion of multilingualism enshrined in the

South African Constitution offers scope for the resurgence of dialects in addition to the acquisition of other languages. A vigorous development of multilingualism has the capacity to enrich the existing written African languages.

There is a need for a more intensive study of the cultures of speakers of the various Zulu dialects and a recording of lexical items of these dialects in dictionaries. Forms drawn from dialects could be entered alongside conventional Zulu forms as variants and indicated accordingly. The peculiarities of the various dialects could be discussed in the introductory section of the dictionary.

### 3.1.2  Use of a Corpus

A corpus is a useful tool in dictionary making. It enables the lexicographer to determine the various usages and frequencies of different words with the least effort. It is generally assumed that the corpus contains all or most words in a language together with their different usages. It is, however, doubtful if the use of a corpus is equally effective in a language like Zulu with a relatively small literature.

Due to market forces, the output of Zulu literature has been largely confined to educational and religious material. Traditional customs and beliefs are not fully documented in the language itself. The work environment, trade and industry are still dominated by English. Zulu is not used for recording in the law-courts. Advertisements, bill-boards and road signs are still found in English even in predominantly Black areas. Politicians still address their constituents in English in largely monolingual constituencies. The electronic media also tend to use Zulu interspersed with English terms even where such terms are available in Zulu. The language is still under siege. A corpus should be used to supplement the usages obtained through fieldwork in the compilation of a dictionary.

### 3.2.1  Figurative Use of Language

The use of metaphor, simile, hyperbole and other figures of speech presents some difficulty. Understanding figures of speech requires some knowledge of the history, mythology, legends, or culture of a people.

As in the case of the examination of kinship terms, some of the aspects of culture that may throw light upon certain proverbs and idioms will be discussed briefly.

(a) Parts of a Hut
   *umsamo* (inside back of the hut), *umnyango* (door)
   *Lithatha osemsamo limphose emnyango, lithathe osemnyango limphose emsamo* (Lightning moves a person from the inside back of a hut (favourable place) to the door (unfavourable place) and *vice versa*, i.e. the first shall be last and the last first).

*iziko* (hearth)
*Ikati lilala eziko* (The cat lies at the hearth, i.e. there is famine because there is nothing to cook).

(b) Social Organisation
Recognition of status
*Umlomo ongathethi manga* (the King, i.e. one whose mouth utters no lies/falsehoods).

(c) Communal Activities
*Akudlulwa ngendlu yakhiwa* (It is a good practice to give others a hand, i.e. one must not forbear to do communal work).

(d) Artifacts
*igula* (calabash, milk-vessel)
*Igula lendlebe aligcwali* (The gourd of the ear does not get filled, i.e. the ear does not tire of hearing).
*ithunga* (wooden milking-pail)
*Selidumela emasumpeni* (The milking-pail is resounding near the handles, i.e. the matter is coming to fruition).
*umkhombe* (meat tray)
*Imikhombe iyenanana* (Meat trays are exchanged, i.e. hospitality is expressed between homes).

In a study of the colour names of *Sanga-Nguni* cattle, Poland (1996) shows the important part played by imagery. She views the similarities established between the different colours of cattle with other objects, e.g. birds, vegetation, etc. as iterative rather than simply comparative or substitutive. This view appears to have a high validity in the use of imagery in cultural material. It is important to know how to deal with this in the compilation of a dictionary.

There seems to be three ways of dealing with this, viz. by

1. identifying a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech,
2. establishing the context in which it occurs, and
3. determining the way it could be entered in a dictionary.

— **Some Characteristics of Proverbs and Idioms**

1. Proverbs occur as independent sentences in speech. They are found individually or interspersed among other sentences, much depending on the context. The predicate of the proverb comprises a simple, complex or compound verb or a copulative (in the positive or negative conjugation). It can also be used in various tenses. Some proverbs are commonly used with the subject of the sentence unexpressed. Similarly, the subject may occur in post-verbal position in the imperative.

Examples:

*Umendo awuthunyelwa gundane* (A girl cannot spy on conditions that will bring her happiness in marriage, i.e. they are unpredictable).

*Sobohla Manyosi* (Your prosperity will decline, like Manyosi's).

*Ayikhulunyelwa eziko* (Do not discuss your plans or secrets in public).

2. An idiom generally constitutes a clause, a word or a phrase. When used, the idiom is usually integrated into a sentence. It does not exist independently. For purposes of linguistic discussion or classification, the idiom with a verbal stem is used in the infinitive form.

Examples:

*ukuphuma umuzi* (to move away from the main homestead to establish one's own — said of a married son), e.g. *UGebhuza usephume umuzi.*

*ukudliwa yinkatho* (to be chosen by means of casting lots), e.g. *UJabulile udliwe inkatho* (Jabulile was chosen).

*ukudlala umkhosi* (to celebrate the first fruits ceremony), e.g. *Umkhosi uzodlalwa ngolwesine* (The first fruits ceremony will be held on Thursday).

*ukudlala ngegeja kuziliwe* (to do something held in taboo during mourning), e.g. *Le ndoda idlala ngegeja kuziliwe* (This man is impudent).

*selimathunzi* (towards sunset), e.g. *Bafike selimathunzi* (They arrived towards sunset).

*abaphansi* (the departed spirits), e.g. *Bayasibona abaphansi* (The departed spirits are with us).

*kwelenyoni* (at the highest point of a tree), e.g. *Sebekhuphuke baze bafika kwelenyoni* (They have climbed to the highest point of the tree).

— **Context of Proverbs and Idioms**

Proverbs and idioms occur in various contexts. They are also found in elements of culture.

— **Entry of Proverbs and Idioms in a Dictionary**

**The Proverb**

The proverb occurs as a sentence in Zulu. The subject of the proverb may be expressed or deleted.

Historically, the subject of the sentence (i.e. the proverb) is collocated with a headword in the dictionary. However, where such a subject is not expressed or where it occurs after the predicate, the latter is collocated with a headword in the dictionary.

Examples:
 *Unyawo alunampumulo* (The foot has no rest/does not suspect/smell trouble, i.e. one's travels may take one to people one has ill-treated).
 *Lala lulaza bakwengule* (Let the cream set so that it can be creamed off — said of someone taking advantage of another).
 *Ithi ingalamba iphenduke inkentshane* (A starving dog can go wild, i.e. need can change one's behaviour).

The entry of proverbs is usually arbitrary and inconsistent in Zulu dictionaries.

Proposal
The proverb can be entered by collocating the predicate with a headword in the dictionary.

**The Idiom**

Zulu idioms with a verbal stem are currently entered in the infinitive form in dictionaries. Other forms are entered without change.

If the infinitive is followed by a noun, the verb-stem of the infinitive is collocated with a headword. If the verb-stem occurs alone without a following noun, its stem is collocated with a headword in the dictionary. An idiom comprising a single noun has its stem collocated with a headword, and one with one or more following nouns has the stem of the first noun collocated with a headword in the dictionary.

Examples:
 *ukudla umuntu izithende* (to chew up a person's heels, i.e. to backbite)
 *ukuthela ngehlazo* (to pour shame onto someone, i.e. to disgrace someone)
 *ukuvaleka* (to be broke)
 *umthakathi wendaba* (a witch of a story, i.e. something on everyone's lips)
 *uwafawafa* (a stiff contest)

The entry of an idiom in the dictionary purely on the basis of the linear order of the words contained in the idiom is unreliable. It leads to unnecessary repetition when idioms entered under the infinitive also occur under the definition of the complement of the infinitive. This is evidence of uncertainty on the part of the lexicographers.

Proposals
1. The repetition of the definition of idioms in a dictionary can be avoided by entering idioms comprising an infinitive and a complement under the noun (or first noun) of the complement.

Examples:
*indlebe* (as headword)
(a) *isitho somzimba sokuzwa* (an ear)
(b) *ukuluma indlebe (ssh)*, izwi noma umsindo wokuvusa umuntu ngento ebucayi ephuthumayo (to inform someone of impending trouble/danger)
*ukungabi nandlebe (ssh)*, ukungalaleli (insolence)
*ukushaywa yindlebe (ssh)*, ukuzwa okuthile kube kungakhulunywa' nawe (to overhear something)
*ukubeka indlebe ngomuntu (ssh)*, ukwalusa umuntu (to spy on someone)

*imali* (as headword)
(a) *uhlamvu noma amaphepha okuthenga* (money)
(b) *ukuchitha imali (ssh)*, ukuhlaphaza imali (to waste money)
*ukwenza imali (ssh),* ukungenisa imali (to make money)
*ukudla imali (ssh),* ukuchithiza imali (to waste money)
*insumansumane imali yamakhanda (ssh),* indida yentela (bewilderment, head/poll tax)

2. Idioms occurring as single words in the infinitive form can be collocated with a headword in the dictionary.

Examples:
*ukubaleka* (as headword)
(a) *ukusuka ngejubane ugwema ingozi* (to run)
(b) *ukweqa kwentombazane iyogana* (to marry a man by fleeing to his home to claim lobolo)

*ukuvaleka* (as headword)
(a) *ukuvimbeka*; *ukusitheka* (to be closed)
(b) *ukuphelelwa yimali*; *ukushona* (to be hard up)

*ukuqina* (as headword)
(a) *ukuba lukhuni* (to be strong)
(b) *ukujiya noma ukuhlangana kokuthile kube luzica* (to be firm)
(c) *ukuphapha noma ukuba nobuqha* (to be precocious)

3. Nouns used as idioms can be collocated with a headword in the dictionary.

Examples:
*inkomo* (as headword)
(a) *isilwane esikhulu esifuywayo esinezimpondo nezi* (a cow, a beast)
(b) *umuntu ohluleka ukudlala ibhola* (a poor football player)

*ingwenya* (as headword)
(a) *isilwane esinomzimba omaholoholo esidla ezinye izilwane esihlala*

      *emanzini* (a crocodile)
- (b) *umuntu oyisichwensi oyisichokolozi* (a bully)
- (c) *insimbi eqoba amatshe* (a stone crusher)

*inkabi* (as headword)
- (a) *inkomo yeduna etheniwe* (an ox)
- (b) *umuntu oqashelwe ukubulala abantu kwezemibango* (a hired executioner in violent conflict)

### 3.2.2  Euphemism

Euphemism is used to ameliorate the force or impact of something unpleasant said to someone. It is a form of avoidance of using a word or speech that is harsh or unpleasant.

    Examples:
      *amasimba / uthuvi:* indle (faeces)
      *ukushona / ukuhamba emhlabeni:* ukufa (to die)
      *ukuzala:* ukubeletha (to give birth)
      *ukumitha:* ukukhulelwa (to be pregnant)
      *ukuphunza:* ukuphuphuma kwesisu esilwaneni (to have a miscarriage — said of an animal)
      *ukubhebha:* ukulala owesifazane (to have sexual intercourse)

The equivalents of the abusive words could be used as definitions of the words in the dictionary.

### 3.2.3  Taboo

Vulgarisms are common in Zulu. The use of some anatomical terms, particularly those referring to private parts of human beings or sexual organs of animals are avoided in polite speech. Vulgarisms also include the use of swearwords or the description of acts which are not acceptable in polite speech.

    The question is whether or not to enter vulgarisms in a dictionary. As vulgarisms are part and parcel of the language, they should be included in a dictionary. It is important, however, to describe vulgarisms in a way that is inoffensive and that does not reinforce the hurt or cruelty with which they are generally associated.

    Examples:
      *ubolo/ufenu:* iphobana (penis)
      *umnqundu:* inhlangano yamathambo emilenze (crotch)
      *umsunu:* isitho sobulili sowesifazane (clitoris)

The use of anatomical terms by themselves is innocuous. The sting of a vulgarism appears to be the genitive noun following it. The latter seems to equate the

person addressed with the preceding noun. To equate a person with something so private and personal is the height of insult and disrespect.

>   Examples:
>   *msunu kanyoko:* ukubiza umuntu ngesitho sobulili sikanina (your mother's clitoris, i.e. you are the clitoris of your mother)
>   *golo likadadewenu:* ukubiza umuntu ngesitho sobulili sikadadewabo (your sister's vulva, i.e. you are your sister's vulva)
>   *mdidi wakho:* ukubiza umuntu ngendunu yakhe (you are your own anus)

Lexical borrowing of swear-words is also found in Zulu. These are, however, used without the accompanying genitive form.

### 3.2.4  *Hlonipha*

Much has been written about *hlonipha* used by women (see among others Mncube (1950)). *Hlonipha* is a form of avoidance of using words resembling the names of male persons and others of the extended family of a married woman's in-laws. Except forms of behaviour that avoid eye contact between the woman and those she *hlonipha*s, forms of dress that cover parts of her body such as the breasts and the head, and the adoption of certain forms of posture, such avoidance is also expressed through the substitution of certain sounds contained in words that resemble the names which refer to her in-laws.

>   Examples:
>   *amada:* amanzi (water)
>   *ukucuya:* ukufuya (to rear stock)
>   *isigosho:* isivalo (door)
>   *umjaqanga:* umbhaqanga (thick porridge)

It is not clear whether certain *hlonipha* words are used across the entire Zulu-speaking region. It is, however, common to find *hlonipha* words which occur in certain families.

   *Hlonipha* words should specially be marked in a dictionary in order to avoid confusing them with the rest of the vocabulary.

### 4.    Conclusion

Culture is indispensable in the description of a language in general and in the compilation of a dictionary in particular. It is, however, important not to confine culture to traditional culture. Culture is dynamic, so is language. The new world culture brought about by globalisation, for example, can no longer be ignored by linguists. The evidence of lexical borrowing is testimony of ongoing changes and adaptation of the Zulu language to new situations.

The new political dispensation is likely to accelerate multilingualism and lower the barriers and inhibitions about other languages. Dialects are likely to blossom and groups of similar languages may come closer and closer together. The over-sensitivity about the differences between dialects may progressively diminish. A good example of this is the benefit of the grouping together of the Nguni languages on the national television network. Speakers of Nguni languages have not clamoured for separate services. This sense of pragmatism needs to be complemented by the implementation of the work of authors, terminographers and language planners, especially the rationalisation of the orthographies of cognate African languages.

Lexicographers have an important task to perform in the preservation and transfer of cultural aspects contained in language through explanatory and translation dictionaries.

## Endnotes

1. Cf. *ukuthwala* in *ukuthwala intombi* (to marry a girl by abducting her, as opposed to *ukuthwala* (to carry) or *ukuthwala* (to seek a fortune through magical means).
2. Cf. the Lord's Prayer which uses the genitive form *wethu* instead of *ubaba*.
3. Note that the Afrikaans word *broer* is a kinship term of relationship but *ubhululu* is not.

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