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**STRATEGIES FOR THE TRANSLATION OF
TABOO WORDS INTO ISIXHOSA**

A minithesis submitted by
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In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

The following abbreviations and acronyms represent key words and terms that are used in this paper.

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ELISA	Enzyme-linked Immunosorbent Assay
FSP	Functional Sentence Perspective
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
SL	Source Language
ST	Source Text
SLT	Source Language Text
TL	Target Language
TT	Target Text
TLT	Target Language Text
LSEN	Learners with Special Educational Needs
DACST	Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology
NEHAWU	National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union
NLS	National Language Service
PANSALB	Pan South African Language Board
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Ms Mfazwe has also translated a number books from English into isiXhosa for publishing companies such as the READ Educational Trust, Maskew Miller Longman.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. NECESSITY OF THE RESEARCH

Terms that are considered acceptable in Western cultures are taboo in isiXhosa and other African languages...

Certain words, which are acceptable in the Western culture, pose a problem for translation into isiXhosa and other African languages because they are taboo when translated into equivalent terms. An example of this can be found in sex and sexual related discourses, teenage pregnancies, loss of virginity, human genitalia, HIV/AIDS and related diseases which are regarded as a very private matter in the African culture and a taboo subject for discussions in general public, particularly for women.

Other examples of taboos, which are acceptable in Western texts but regarded as taboo when translated into isiXhosa, include the systemic vilification of homosexuals (homophobia), xenophobia, racial terms, etc. This is also evident in a vast range of euphemistic expressions and vague references used to translate female and male anatomy in a medico-legal context (forensic interpretation). The translator/interpreter opts for the linguistic code of '*hlonipha*' (literally 'to respect') references to sex, which imply consensual sex in sexual assault trials or rape cases, instead of the crude, embarrassing vulgar language. This also illustrates the clash between culture and the law, their different value systems and the avoidance of the exact sexual explicitness. In most African societies, a woman's reputation in society is judged on the basis of her monogamous sexual behaviour.

The aim of this study is to investigate these taboos and translation strategies which may be used to overcome them. Since multiculturalism in South Africa is so extended, a comprehensive research and in-depth study of vocabulary should be a pre-condition for translation.

1.1 LEXICAL MODERNISATION OF THE AFRICAN LANGUAGES IS NECESSARY TO FACILITATE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The dramatic political changes in South Africa over the past nine years have provided a unique opportunity for social renewal in respect of our value systems, the role of the individual in a society and the State. Since 1994, the National Terminology Services of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science & Technology (DACST) has become the official national office for documenting and disseminating terminology, which has led to the compilation and publication of a number of dictionaries in various African languages. During this time, DACST has employed African language terminologists to document African language terminology in a variety of subject fields. These terminologists have also extracted terms from documents, where they have systematised and standardised terminology. Their work provides a base of knowledge for all language groups at national, provincial and local government levels and, also, for all other spheres of technical and scientific communication. All these attempts by different stakeholders facilitate intercultural communication.

Apart from the facilitation of intercultural communication, the new developments in the field of communication are very exciting and have assumed firmer shape and increased prominence. Translation has a proud tradition of bridging language barriers to spark new ideas and philosophies, however, one of the pitfalls related to modernising the lexicon in African languages is that it has highlighted the constant need for more comprehensive definitions of words. This is perhaps more acutely felt in lexicography than in any other linguistic endeavour.

Furthermore, important lexicographic principles have to be considered and harmonised into a delicate balance to facilitate the compilation of dictionaries where the identification of the target user is of primary importance. However, general vocabulary on various linguistic levels, such as vulgar language, terms regarded as taboo, slang, dialects, varieties, language in literature, poetry, etc needs to be documented more. Due to the importance of these aspects insofar as the preservation of a nation's cultural heritage, language experts need to elaborate and modernise technical terminologies of the African languages. In this way, the South African

linguistic diversity in all its forms, and regardless of political, demographic or linguistic factors, should be preserved and utilised. The only tool that is needed in South Africa to ease communication is the creation of terms and the compilation of dictionaries. Deliberate efforts are being made to combine all existing terminological databases in South Africa in order to supply standardised terminology in the eleven official languages of South Africa by means of the electronic media and the full use of multimedia, including videos, which will increase the accessibility of such information and enable it to be displayed globally.

People use different kinds of language depending upon the social groups to which they belong, the person or people they are talking to, and the context – for instance whether formal or informal (Swann 1992:20). Studies have been carried out in a variety of intercultural communications, though these are discriminatory towards the words and images which confront translators in the translation of taboo words. As stated by Katan (1999:9-10), translators are implicitly expected to understand the requirements of different markets, which means that translators need to understand the prevalent cultures among their target audiences. Katan further states that translators, and interpreters in particular, need to be well versed in the customs, habits and traditions of the two cultures between which they are mediating, whether or not they are involved in labeling or advertising. They need solid background information about both the cultures with which they are dealing, particularly their geography and contemporary social and political history since these form the backbone of a culture's cognitive environment.

Furthermore, there are certain political implications besetting a language policy and language planning in South Africa, which affect the modernisation of African languages in one way or another. Government official documents, for instance, which in most cases are written in English, need to be made accessible in various official languages. While a number of crucial government documents, such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, have been translated from English into all 10 of the other official languages, these versions are marked by inadequacies in relation to the terminology that is used in these translations. This is a reflection of the extent to which apartheid policies have affected the level of terminological development of the African languages, due to the priority accorded to English and

Afrikaans at the expense of all the other indigenous languages. The medium of instruction is another complex linguistic challenge that faces South Africa: while mother tongue instruction is supported by various scholars, and international organisations, such as UNESCO, its support among the African language speakers in South Africa is limited – English, rather, is preferred as the medium of instruction. Such challenges, where indigenous African languages are perceived to be inferior within their country of origin, are due to the legacy of past apartheid policies. The resulting imperative for statutory bodies such as the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) is to establish guiding principles that will facilitate the development and modernisation of these languages.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa clearly stipulates that all official languages should enjoy parity and be treated equally. In order to realise multilingualism as a reality, it is important that sufficient opportunities for all official languages to be used regularly are made available. Additional consideration needs to be given to other factors, such as the relative level of development, historical disadvantage or privilege and the geographical distribution as they apply to the languages. The Western Cape Province, for instance, has three official languages, viz. isiXhosa, English and Afrikaans; similarly in the Free State Province, the dominant languages in public life are Afrikaans, English and seSotho. This demonstrates the difficulty in placing practical considerations on a par with constitutional commitment with regard to the promotion of language equity, diversity and development.

A nation may be composed of a number of different linguistic groups whose languages, like the groups themselves, serve various functions. This is when the effect of taboo words start. Translators need to understand their target groups intimately – how they communicate, what is required and what is considered redundant in that particular community. The question of language is a very emotive issue that relates to the consciousness of the people of South Africa. Moreover, this is a complex domain that involves a plethora of interrelated and significant problem areas. It is crucial that, in the field of translation studies, translators are trained to show tolerance and respect for different languages and cultures, an important prerequisite in their ability to instill a high regard for own language and culture in

their target groups. In working towards the achievement of harmonious multilingualism, a significant milestone for translators is to strive to provide target groups with their own vocabulary, an important contribution towards the realisation of the all-important goal of harmonious multilingualism.

Translation plays a very important part in the development of previously-marginalised indigenous languages of South Africa. It also overcomes the heritage of linguistic discrimination. The constitutional enshrinement of multilingualism is potentially a powerful instrument in enabling equitable utilisation of all the new official languages by translation and interpretation, provided it is properly developed and implemented. There is a real danger that the hierarchical gradations of culture may collapse as a result of the failure to establish taboo-based policies in our society. This may cause a wide array of considerations.

During the 1976 uprising, where students vehemently protested against the use of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction, South Africa had a language upheaval of sorts in which the previously dominant language planning approach was directly contested. This means that indigenous languages still need to be supported in order to make a significant contribution to the transformation of our society and towards the removal of the blatant disregard for language-related considerations in certain sectors of government and our society. There are many fascinating problems which demand attention. This is especially true in the field of culture-specific terms, the main focus of this study, which includes the transfer of words or terms that are regarded as taboo, from English into isiXhosa.

An analysis that focuses on translation imbalances may also be important, as well as the more subtle aspects of culture on taboo words. No research method is perfect; each has its pros and cons. Moreover, there is the concern that, in the long run, such imbalances may reinforce language differences and a lack of proper terminology or equivalent terms in African languages. The introduction of alternative strategies may either redress the balance or have a disruptive effect, causing translators to question accepted views, standards and strategies in the translation of taboo words.

Furthermore, they may be rejected because they fail to meet expectations. It becomes clear that translating these terms depends, to a large extent, on the patterns of social interaction seen in everyday life. Taboos express a society's concern and act as a forward-line of defence. If a certain family, for example, experiences many natural disasters, the society views such disastrous occurrences as the result of either the family's failure to observe appropriate rituals or their violation of a taboo. An analysis of ways in which language intermeshes with societal power in its complex multilingual context, which is dominated by a patriarchal system, should be considered in the explanation of these varying societal patterns.

1.2 THE NECESSITY FOR A MEANS TO TRANSFER SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE IN A PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

The Xhosa nation has a paradoxical history of deep-rooted patriarchal tradition; therefore, a tremendous responsibility is placed on translators, as well as interpreters, to steer clear of any stereotypes in language that may offend members of the Xhosa society. The onus is on translators and interpreters to investigate new, clearer, accessible, non-racial and non-sexist discourses. Research of this kind is a sensitive matter for the speakers of the isiXhosa language. However, it is a necessary endeavour, given that nothing of this nature has been attempted before.

Apart from translating taboo words, many parents find it difficult and embarrassing to discuss sex with their children. All parents want their children to approach their emerging sexuality with a healthy attitude, informed choices and knowledge of the consequences of irresponsible sexual behaviour. Nowadays, sex-related crises, such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the increasing rate of teenage pregnancy and the inability to control the spread of sexually transmitted diseases have made sex education essential. Honest, meaningful communication about sex is crucial to children's future well-being. It encompasses far more than the mere names of the organs of generation and the development of infants in the womb. It concerns the exploration of fears and assistance given, which might help the youth to understand and accept their emerging sexuality as a unique gift. Parents are faced with a problem because in African culture, talking about 'private parts' is taboo. Hence, when questioned about sex by their children, they give incomplete information, cry, laugh or look disgusted.

2. DEVELOPMENTS IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

Translation studies have emerged over the past thirty years as a new international and interdisciplinary academic field (Naudé 2002). Since the 1950s, there has been a variety of linguistic approaches to the analysis of translation, which have proposed detailed lists or taxonomies in an effort to categorise the translation process. The notion of equivalence held sway as a key issue in translation throughout the 1970s and beyond. For instance, in his book on translation studies, Munday (2001:49) noted that 'equivalence is obviously a central concept in translation theory' while Bassnett (1991) devotes a section to 'problems of equivalence' in the chapter entitled 'central issues' of translation studies. Mona Baker, *In Other Words*, her influential 'coursebook' for translators that continues to be popular at the time of writing, structures her chapters around different kinds of equivalence – at the levels of word, phrase, grammar, text, pragmatics, etc., but with the proviso that equivalence 'is influenced by a variety of linguistic and cultural factors and is, therefore, always relative' (Baker 1992:6).

Many translation theorists have found that the concept of equivalence has its limitations. All claim that it is impossible to view a translated text as the mirror image of its original, as is required by Equivalence-based prescriptive theories. The main shortcoming of these theories is the fact that they ignore the sociocultural conditions under which translations are produced in order to function in the receiving culture as acts of communication (Kruger & Wallmach 1997:121).

The 1980s saw the cultural turn in translation studies with its focus on the way culture impacts on and constrains translation. Especially from the eighties onwards, scholars of translation studies made use of frameworks and methodologies borrowed from other disciplines such as psychology, the theory of communication, literary theory, anthropology, philosophy and, more recently, cultural studies (Naudé 2002:46). Naudé further states that these distinctive methodologies and theoretical frameworks derived from other disciplines were constantly adapted and re-evaluated in order to serve the needs of translation studies as an integral and autonomous discipline. As a result of this development, the focus in translation studies has shifted from the source

text to the translation process, the product and/or reception of the translation as well as the cultural-social bound character of translation.

As an alternative to equivalence, Katharina Reiss introduced a functional category into her translation model and Hans Vermeer formulated his *skopos* theory as a technical term for the purpose of a translation and for the action of translating (Naudé 2002). *Skopos* theory focuses, above all, on the purpose of the translation, which determines translation methods and strategies that are to be employed in order to produce a functionally adequate result. This result is the target text (TT), which Vermeer calls the *translatum*. Therefore, in *skopos* theory, knowing why a source text (ST) is to be translated and what the function of the target text (TT) will be are crucial for the translator (Munday 2001). The translator is, once again, the key player in a process of intercultural communication and production of the *translatum*.

Christiane Nord, with her model of translation-oriented text analysis (1991; 1997) provides yet another insight into the interpersonal interaction of the translation process (Naudé 2002). Nord's *Text Analysis in Translation* is aimed primarily at providing translation students with a model of ST analysis, which is applicable to all text types and translation situations. The model is based on a functional concept, enabling understanding of the function of ST features and the selection of translation strategies appropriate to the intended purpose of the translation. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3 as the framework for the translation strategies I suggest in Chapter 4.

The methodological impact was a shift from normative linguistic-based theories of translation (e.g. the functional-equivalent approach), which dominated translation work to either descriptive translation studies (DTS) or functionalist approaches to translation.

Linguistic theorists regard the source text as a norm and evaluate any translation in terms of its equivalence to the source text. In contrast, descriptive translation studies (DTS) view a text as a translation if it functions as such in the receiving culture and literary system, while the functionalist theorists regard a translation as a new

communicative act that must be purposeful with respect to the translator's clients and readership (Naudé 2002).

The aim of translation has remained the same throughout the ages: to create a text, in another language, which is the equivalent of the original. While the indigenous languages of South Africa have been developed to a certain extent, their terminologies have yet to be developed systematically and efficiently. This lack of development has a historical root: most of the terminology problems encountered in African languages are due to politico-historical factors. Our history was dominated by apartheid policies that were based, mainly, on the 'racial' division and discrimination of people. This division into ethnic states led to a situation where African languages were developed in isolation from each other. The major problem encountered by translators like myself is to determine the way in which these **taboo words** should be translated into isiXhosa. It is impossible to assume that a single translation may have the same impact on all speakers of a language. It is not sufficient for a language to be recognised academically only, without it being recognised politically, commercially and socially as well. A move from formal equivalence to a functionalist approach provides opportunities to translate taboo words.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM

This example below appeared in the Sunday Times Magazine, dated 20 January 2002, page 21 and was issued by a female:

RESTORE YOUR MANHOOD

IMPOTENCE

PREMATURE EJACULATION

LOSS OF LIBIDO

“Research shows that 52% of men between 40 and 70 years old suffer from some form of erectile dysfunction (impotence). But the real tragedy is that most of these men suffer needlessly, because they are unaware that there are a number of safe and effective medical treatments for this condition. The highly trained medical doctors at Men’s Clinic International will perform a full appropriate treatment to return you to a healthy, normal, sexually active life”.

This example features many words that will shock members of the Xhosa society. The first question that will come to their minds is that what does a woman know about the private parts of a man? How can a woman even mention a word like impotence? Why does the writer / translator not show respect towards men in that age group (40-70 years)? In the Xhosa culture, conversation that carries a sexual connotation is shunned to the extent that it is even taboo for women to talk about circumcision since it is a male ritual.

The research problem is as follows: **WHAT OTHER STRATEGIES, BESIDES EQUIVALENCE, CAN BE USED TO TRANSLATE WORDS OR TERMS REGARDED AS TABOO IN THE ISIXHOSA LANGUAGE?** Given the nature of the research problem on which this paper focuses, a research hypothesis – in the sense of an introduction to a study that will prove or disprove a statistical inference – is not relevant. This is due to the fact that the research for this paper has been

conducted as a desktop research, and a review of the literature developed by linguists and linguistic theorists, rather than 'asking questions'. Therefore, this study takes its guidance from the research problem stated above and the Purpose of the Research, which is detailed in the following section.

3.2 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this research is twofold. Firstly, the intention is to contribute to an alleviation of the problems facing translators today in the translation of taboo words into isiXhosa. I would like to assist translators, interpreters, language workers at local, provincial and national government levels, as well as students doing translation studies to approach different strategies that they may use to overcome this problem by increasing their awareness of cultural diversity especially with respect to taboo words. The strategies, which are suggested, will also encourage future researchers to contribute to the elimination of this problem or to provide recommendations.

Secondly, the biggest problem facing all the language workers that I have mentioned above, especially when translating into African languages, is the lack of equivalent terms. The creation of such terminology entails the deliberate and conscious use of word-formation patterns or methods such as borrowing, compounding, derivation, loan translation or calquing, semantic shift, blending, clipping, etc. Moreover, to find an appropriate equivalent term to translate a taboo word into isiXhosa is the most challenging task. Although, there are numerous obstacles that the translator has to circumvent in the process, the use of translation strategies at various levels of linguistic organisation, namely, the word, phrase, sentence and textual levels, is always the solution.

This research is very necessary because it emphasises and seeks to eliminate the problems facing translators today in the translation of words that are regarded as taboo by isiXhosa speaking people. The use of African languages in register-specific documents requires that an assessment and critique of the traditional definitions of concepts and terminology in African languages be made. The target group should find a translation comprehensible and almost natural as first language speakers. This

effectiveness is not easily achieved especially with regard to terminology and, to a certain extent, taboo words.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.3.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that will be utilised for the translation of taboo words into isiXhosa will be the functionalist model of Christiane Nord (1991, 1997). One of the major aspects of this study will be the identification of problems and strategies concerned with the transfer of cultural aspects. According to Nord (1997:24) culture is a complex system. It can be subdivided into paraculture (the norms, rules and conventions valid for an entire society), diaculture (norms, rules and conventions valid for a particular group within a society, such as a club, a firm or a regional entity) and idioculture (the culture of an individual person as opposed to other individuals). All of those aspects mentioned above are necessary for a scholar seeking to conduct a research of this nature and scope. The basic principle of the functionalist approach in translation is the orientation towards the function of the target text. Every source text may be translated into different target languages aiming at different translation purposes.

i. Strategies

This study will examine the translation strategies used by other theorists such as Delabastita (1993), Newmark (1988), Williams (1990) and Baker (1992) to transfer the aspects of culture. These strategies will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

ii. Research Procedures

- The research is done in the following phases:

- Literary study of sociolinguistic and cultural works on taboo words in general and in isiXhosa specifically
- Data covering the following aspects are collected from:
 - Health / Anatomical / Medical taboos across gender lines
 - Clinic / hospital situations
 - Medico-legal context (forensic interpretation)
 - Female anatomy
 - Religious texts

- Swear words
- Political / racist terms
- Analysis of collected data
- Formulation of relevant strategies

iii. Organisation of the Study

This study has been divided into five chapters, the focus of which is as follows:

Chapter 2 of this study briefly considers taboo words in general and in isiXhosa specifically within a sociolinguistic and cultural frame.

Chapter 3 considers the developments in translation theory that will benefit the translation of taboo words in isiXhosa.

Chapter 4 provides an outline of strategies in terms of the theoretical framework to translate taboo words and in **Chapter 5** final conclusions are drawn.

CHAPTER 2
TABOO WORDS IN A SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL
FRAMEWORK

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIM

The aim of this chapter is to explore the different approaches that may be used to reduce the overlap that exists in translating culture-specific terms. Newmark (1988:83) discusses the importance of 'chunking down' which he refers to as cultural componential analysis. The term 'chunking' is taken from computing and, basically, means to change the size of a unit. A unit can be increased (chunking up) which means that as more comes into view so we move from the specific to general, or from the part to the whole. Moving in the other direction, we chunk down from the general to the specific or from the whole to the parts (Katan 1999:147). The use of the chunking strategy is essential as a first step in facilitating a mind shift from one cultural reality to another and is not a very easy task for the translator. Katan further states that translators need to be able to 'chunk up' and 'chunk down' to establish the wider and narrower frames of reference of the source text.

Translators also need to be able to chunk up, above the individual and different cultures, to include culture-inclusive frames. Translators, therefore, may adopt this strategy while following the lexico-grammatical rules of their mother-tongue, including terms that are regarded as taboo in their culture. Through chunking, the translator may chunk the genre, or text type, while remaining faithful to the real world of the target culture. This chapter, therefore, includes a brief overview of the links between sociolinguistics and culture and an emphasis on taboo words. A definition of culture, as well as an explanation of the position of language within culture, is also considered. The sociolinguistic aspects of taboo words in relation to standard language, dialects and slang are discussed and an analysis and description of some examples of taboo words from various cultures will be provided.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Linguistic taboos exist in most cultures, where tabooed words are generally culture-specific and relate to bodily functions or aspects of a culture that are sacred (de Klerk 1992:277). De Klerk elaborates that such words are avoided, considered inappropriate and loaded with affective meaning. In addressing the issue of taboo words, Hughes (1992:292) purports that in sociolinguistics, many sociological, anthropological and psychological theories carry unexamined assumptions and stereotypes about women, and that research into sex differences in language appears to be no exception. This also proves the fact that language is employed, not only as a tool for communication, but also as a manipulative tool to devalue the status of women, since even today, rural women who do not uphold the '*hlonipha*' (to accord respect) custom are ridiculed and ostracised.

1.3 ORGANISATION OF CHAPTER 2

As a point of departure, the term *taboo*, from the viewpoint of various cultures, is discussed and, because taboo words are language-specific and, therefore, culture-specific, a discussion of language and culture will follow. The differences that exist in the way in which dialects and language in society attribute taboos are also discussed. Finally, a literature review of existing studies and a general analysis of the exposition of taboos in the traditions, culture and customs of the isiXhosa speaking people, including non-sexual terms as well as swear words and racist terms, will be discussed.

2. THE TERM 'TABOO'

A taboo is "Any prohibition resulting from social or other conventions, especially something that is considered holy or unclean" (Collins Dictionary 1999:1557).

Steiner (cited in the Journal of Humanities, 1995:26) defines a taboo as being concerned with four areas:

- (a) obedience mechanisms of importance within a society;
- (b) individual protection;
- (c) societal protection; and
- (d) danger behaviour.

Taboos have, in their wake, a sense of the unapproachable: those who transgress taboos assume an element of being taboo themselves (Freud 1995). Steiner (1995) referred to a three-tier historical process of the power of taboo. In the ancient world the violated taboo was powerful enough to wreak vengeance upon the violator. He further explains that instances have been observed where Australian Aborigines will physically sicken and die when a taboo has been "pronounced": the taboo penalty was determined by State power and, in the present stage, society itself becomes the arbitrator.

Taboo also refers to words or conduct that are forbidden from being used or performed in a particular society. Crystal (1995), states that taboo words are often associated with swearing which may lead to profanity, obscenity and blasphemy. Swearing can be seen as both an emotional phenomenon (emotional relief, a substitute for violence, etc.) and as having a social dimension, with uses in establishing social distance and reinforcing social solidarity. Morige (1998:1) defines a taboo as a Polynesian word, which literally means something marked out as forbidden. He further states that in some cultures, certain foodstuffs that are considered taboo are not to be eaten and on certain days, it is taboo to work or eat or drink or have sexual intercourse, while anything that has to do with death or the dead is also often taboo.

A taboo is any object, act or person that implies a danger for the individual or community, that must consequently be avoided (Junod in Motlhabi 1996:60). Junod argues the fact that a taboo is considered, by some, to be a significant word in understanding African ethics. In spite of their negative connotations, taboos are considered an important element of morality in most African cultures; they are seen as practical and effective ways of dealing with ethical matters. Their prohibitions cover almost every aspect of life, providing what amounts to a form of negative conditioning in relation to unacceptable behaviour. Most, if not all, of these prohibitions are considered to be divinely sanctioned and, for this reason, their contravention is considered an affront to the deities, ancestors and/or the Supreme Being. A taboo, therefore, carries the authority to instruct the individual on what to do under pain of particular sanctions.

2.1 AN EXPLORATION OF THE NOTIONS OF LANGUAGE AND TABOO IN THE SOCIETAL CONTEXT

Modern research has clearly demonstrated that the concept of taboo is, indeed, as old as humanity whose influence continues to guide behaviour in the present day. When a taboo has been broken, some kind of purification ritual is invoked both to mitigate the effects of the transgression and to prevent the repetition of these effects in future. O'Keefe (1995) states that taboo words have often been referred to as magical words and that linguistic symbols are central to magic. Leach (1995) expands upon this theme with his notion of thresholds and gateways (entries or openings to rituals): these gateways, are located at the margins of either the society as a whole, or those of its most individual constituent, the body. He further explains that some of the societal thresholds deal with transitions and the related rites of passage, which include puberty, weddings, coronations, and funerals. According to Leach, these rights lie in a sacred gateway area and, as such, are shrouded in ambiguity. On the other hand, individual thresholds are related to much ritual, attendant magic and taboo where, for example, body orifices which are seen as thresholds, became the focus of elaborate taboo systems.

In addition to the strengths and weaknesses of these translation approaches is the concern that, in the longer term, the imbalances resulting from one language's

inability to accurately represent linguistic nuances of the original text, due to the lack of proper terminology or equivalent terms in African languages may reinforce language differences. While introducing alternative strategies may redress these imbalances, it may also have a disruptive effect, causing translators to question accepted views, standards and strategies for translating these taboo words. Furthermore, these alternatives may be rejected because they fail to meet expectations. These dynamics demonstrate the importance of understanding a society's psyche and the patterns of social interaction that are manifest in everyday life as a means of more accurate translation of these words and terms. This is especially relevant when one considers that taboos express a society's concern and act as a forward line of defence.

Von Flotow (1997:24) argues that when translators are confronted with texts that are full of wordplay and fragmented syntax, they need to develop creative methods, similar to those of the source-text writers. This enables them to go beyond translation in order to supplement their work and make up for the differences that exist between various patriarchal languages and is achieved by employing wordplay, grammatical dislocations and syntactic subversion in other places of their texts. Further, Von Flotow mentions that in the translation of work that 'writes the body', translators have dealt with the need to create or borrow words from other languages in order to name and describe female body parts that are culturally taboo.

3. LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Definitions of culture have undergone some evolution since the beginning of the 20th century. Nord (1997:33) defines culture as whatever one has to know, master of feel in order to judge whether or not a particular form of behaviour shown by members of a community, in their various roles, conforms to general expectations. Where behaviour does not conform to the society's expectations, one can expect to bear the consequences associated with unaccepted behaviour. Katan (1999) states that, according to American anthropologists, culture consists of explicit and implicit patterns of behaviour that are acquired and transmitted by symbols that constitute the distinctive achievement of human groups. This definition includes the embodiment of such patterns in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and associated values. Culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered to be products of action and, on the other hand, as conditioning elements of future action.

Following this line of thought, Nida (1969) argues that all cultures possess some historical 'hangovers', which are quite nonsensical in their outdated form. Culture is also defined as the totality of the signifying systems by means of which a particular group maintains its cohesion (its values and its interaction with the world). These signifying systems comprise not only all the arts (literature, painting, music, etc.), the various social activities and behaviour patterns prevalent in the given community (including gestures, dress, manners, rituals, etc.), but also the established methods by which the community preserves its memory and its sense of identity, such as myths, history, legal systems, religious beliefs, etc. (Ulrych 1992). Nida (1958:28) sees culture as all learned behaviour, which is socially acquired, that is, the material and non-material traits which are passed on from one generation to another. Vermeer put an emphasis on the following features of the definition: its dynamic qualities (focusing on human action and behaviour), its comprehensiveness (conceiving culture as a complex system determining any human action or behaviour, including language) and the fact that it may be used as a starting point for a descriptive as well as explicative or prescriptive approach to culture-specificity. His own definition focuses

even more on norms and conventions as the main features of a culture (Nord 1997:33).

Translating means comparing cultures. A culture-specific phenomenon is the one that is found to exist in a particular form or function in only one of the two cultures being compared. A foreign culture can only be perceived by means of comparison with our own culture, the culture of our primary enculturation. The concepts of our own culture will be the touchstones for the perception of otherness (Nord 1997:34). Furthermore, our attention tends to focus on phenomena that are either different from our own culture (where we expected similarity) or similar to our own culture (where difference had been expected).

Taylor in Thipa (1980:12) defines culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. In Gerritsen (1998:28) Hofstede's definition of the collective programming of the mind distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. She argues that with culture, we refer to all the activities that a group of human beings have in common and what they have learned from previous generations, i.e. their parents and grandparents. The role players, who are central to the process of cultural learning, are depicted in *Figure 1* below.

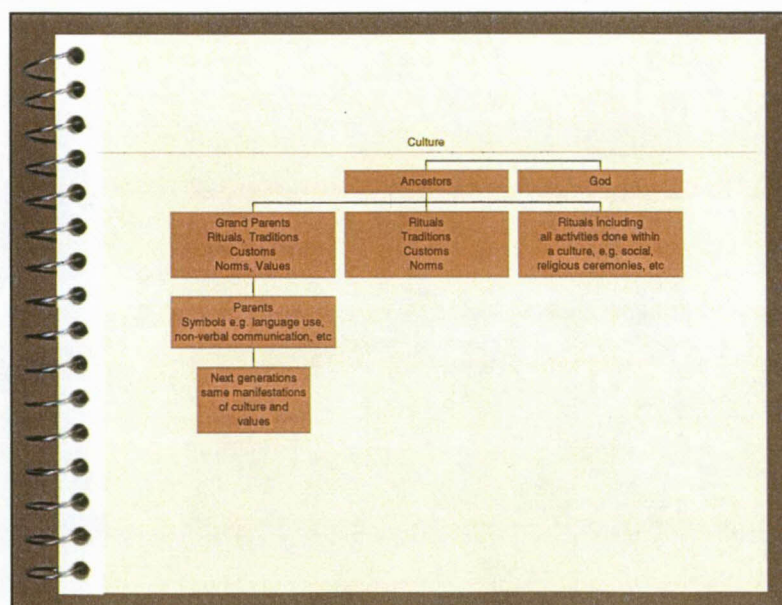


Figure 1: Role players responsible for cultural learning

Over the centuries, various social and nationalistic prejudices associated with language and many popular misconceptions fostered by distorted versions of traditional culture and customs have existed. As an alternative theory in translating cultures, Katan (1999) introduced approaches to the study of culture, namely:

- **Behaviourist** - This approach focuses on what a certain group of people choose to do or not do at all. They view themselves as being better or superior to other groups.
- **Ethnocentrism** – An ethnocentric approach is the belief in the intrinsic superiority of the culture to which one belongs and is often accompanied by feelings of dislike and contempt for other cultures.
- **Functionalist** – A functionalist approach to culture tends to be locked within a judgmental frame, based on the dominant or preferred values of one culture. The bias towards other cultures tends to be ideologically based.
- **Cognitive** – This approach represents a move away from the functionalist approach in that it attempts to account for internal, mental reasons to explain the links between a particular cause and a particular effect. It uses the concepts of modelling and refers to mapping, underlying patterns and the culture-bound categorisation of experience. This view of culture suggests that, in learning about another culture, one first needs to learn about how the internal programming functions in one's own culture.
- **Dynamic** – According to this approach, culture is viewed as a dynamic process, which is constantly being negotiated by those involved. It is influenced, but not determined, by past meanings and establishes precedents to interpret meanings. However, this does not mean that culture is constantly changing, rather that it is a dialectic process between one's internal models of the world and external reality.

The above approach pinpoints the fact that change is possible at both the individual and societal levels because culture is not static. Ordinary people (i.e. non-linguists) have been accustomed to making value judgments about language from time immemorial (James & Lesley Milroy 1985:12). Such value judgments have gone to the extent that words have even been considered to have magical properties or to be subject to taboo. The result is that certain words referring, for example, to the deity, illness, sex or death, may be forbidden and, in some societies, a man is not allowed to use his mother-in-law's name. Some words that are associated with bodily functions are avoided and replaced by euphemisms such as *wee-wee* or, in formal circumstances, by technical terms such as *faeces*, *vagina*. The histories of languages are full of rapid vocabulary changes, motivated by the avoidance of taboo, as the euphemisms themselves take on the 'unpleasant' associations of the words they replace. All this may seem to be very illogical, but it is part of the life and evolution of language. Beliefs in magic, taboos and the power of words also bear a relation to social stratification and cultural conditioning.

Swann (1992) expands on the functional aspects of using taboo words and mentions the following: "exclamations of annoyance; exclamations of surprise; surprised questions; insults; insulting requests to go away; expressions of unconcern; violent refusals; expressions of defiance; intensifying adjectives; and adverbs". This is clearly a more important aspect of language than is commonly assumed. Some of the taboo words referred to by Swann are concerned with bodily wastes and emissions (excreta) and are somewhat stronger, while those related to sex (intercourse, incest), racial epithets and body parts associated with sex (female genitalia) are also very strong.

It could be said that the situation with taboo words is far more complex in today's fragmented and rapidly evolving society than in previous generations. Social class distinctions, as sources of taboo words, have lost much of their influence, being replaced by restrictions on usage with regard to racial, ethnic and other minorities, as well as gender restrictions against the disparagement of women.

3.1 Dialects and Language in Society

Languages are all of roughly equal complexity and are equally well adapted to the purpose they serve in the societies in which they operate. Some languages, by virtue of their role, have flexibility and a versatility that most languages do not possess. Language is a guide to social reality and human beings are at the mercy of the language that has become the medium of expression in their society (Edward Sapir in Bassnet-McGuire (1980:13). There are eminently defensible reasons for some languages being widely taught in our schools and universities.

The South African government is making deliberate efforts to ensure that language barriers are overcome as a means of ensuring that all South Africans have access to the resources which the government manages on their behalf. People are able to participate freely in all the domains of a democratic, multilingual society, particularly in the socio-economic and political spheres. However, some people are excluded from the various sectors of economic life because their language knowledge is considered inadequate. In order to address such challenges that confront our society, attention should be given to functionally relevant language adaptation and acquisition in the context of the South African economy. This will enable an opportunity where all our languages are optimally used as economic resources and the users of dialects are able to contribute to the economy of the country, should their communication systems be recognised and supported.

On the other hand, taboos ("forbidden practices") develop in response to societal restrictions, which differ among dialects – even situational dialects – and, therefore, result in different taboos. By way of example, some words are not used in 'respectable' company because they refer to private actions or, perhaps religious ceremonies, and are considered forbidden outside of those specific contexts. There is no linguistic basis for taboos, but pointing this fact out does not imply advocating the use or non-use of such words (Fromkin & Rodman 1997:304). Because of these taboos, euphemisms are created which replace taboo words or help to avoid unpleasant subjects.

In addition to George Carlin's seven "dirty" words, euphemistic words and terms that assist in reducing the severity of their meaning include : one does not *die*, but *passes on*, the one who cares for the dead is not a *mortician*, but a *funeral director*. However, those responsible for the development of the taboo connotations in relation to certain words may have a valid point about the use of epithets: they tell us something about the users of those words, especially those who use the epithets of race, nationality, religion, or sex (Fromkin & Rodman 1997:302-306).

A translator may replace the image in the source language (SL) with a standard target language (TL) image, which does not clash with the TL culture. When speakers of a language demonstrate systematic differences in their use of the language based on the differences in the geographical regions or social groups to which they belong, these groups are said to speak different dialects of the same language. An example, is of *amaMpondo* as a target group (IsiXhosa speaking people who are mostly found on the border between KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape Provinces), where the following terms will be used for translation:

English word	IsiXhosa equivalent	IsiMpondo equivalent
Broom	<i>umtshayelo</i>	<i>umtshanyelo</i>
Sheep	<i>igusha</i>	<i>igutsha</i>
Anger, to be angry	<i>ukucaphuka</i>	<i>ukucunuka</i>
In the afternoon	<i>emalanga</i>	<i>ngojwaxa</i>
Hands	<i>izandla</i>	<i>iidlanza</i>

There are numerous differences between isiXhosa and isiMpondo terminology and use of language. Some of the major differences are:

- **Use of euphemisms:** while isiXhosa speakers have an extensive network of euphemisms and a linguistic system that caters for expressions that are forbidden from use (*ukuhlonipha*), the same is not true in isiMpondo.

- **Pronunciation differences:** while isiMpondo finds its roots in isiXhosa and isiZulu, it has evolved to the extent of developing different words from the isiXhosa and isiZulu language, such as the term for ‘in the afternoon’. This evolution has also resulted in a variation in the pronunciation of some words that are common between isiXhosa and isiMpondo. An example is the tendency to reverse / switch syllables: where a hand is ‘*isandla*’ in isiXhosa, it is ‘*ihlanza*’ in the isiMpondo dialect.

Dialectal diversity develops when people are separated from each other geographically and socially and the diversified groups do not necessarily share the linguistic changes that occur as a result of this separation. Within a single group of speakers who are in regular contact with one another, these changes are spread among the group and relearned by their children. A change that occurs in one region but fails to spread to other regions of the language community gives rise to dialect differences.

3.2 Slang

Slang is a set of expressions, phrases and words that, characteristically, are used in informal language or casual speech; they also serve to indicate solidarity within a given social group. While everyone makes occasional use of slang terminology, its appropriateness is limited to specific contexts and audiences and considered taboo when used in another setting. An example is illustrated in the sentence “I’m so tired because I woke up at sparrowfart this morning”, a perfectly acceptable – even funny – way of telling my friends that I woke up extremely early this morning. However, when used in the context of the workplace, where my conduct is expected to reflect my appreciation of and respect for the professional setting, such an expression is entirely unacceptable and may even call my professional maturity to question.

The use of slang or colloquial language also introduces new words into a language either by recombining old words to create new meanings or through introducing words that are entirely new, such as *barf*, *flub*, *pooped*, etc. A number of slang words have entered English from the ‘underworld’, e.g. *zol* for marijuana or dagga, *cigi* or cigarettes, *irata* for a police officer, etc. Regardless of their origin, the use of slang

terms and words varies among geographical regions: even the word 'slang' means 'scold' when used in Britain. In the next section, examples of taboo words from different cultural backgrounds are introduced.

4. CULTURE AND CUSTOMS OF THE ISIXHOSA-SPEAKING PEOPLE

4.1 Taboo words in isiXhosa

In pre-colonial days, amaXhosa were illiterate; they relied on their rich oral tradition to communicate across the ages. This was mostly done by listening to the traditional poet known as '*imbongi yomthonyama*', singing traditional songs, and relating stories, myths, legends, etc. The arrival of the Christian missionaries in the 19th century paved the way for the first writings of the isiXhosa language and given that most African language speakers have long since converted to Christianity; it should be noted that this account of their religious beliefs refers to traditional and not to modern beliefs. They believe that God is an omnipresent spirit – all living things are in His hands and He protects them and takes them back to Him (Stoffberg 1988:69). According to the colonial way of thinking, black people had no culture, their acculturation could only take place once they had been "civilised" in accordance with Western norms, values and traditions.

In contrast with the above statement, the isiXhosa language is very rich in vocabulary for the areas of cultural focus and the specialities of the isiXhosa. It is particularly adept in the development of figurative language and has very rich literal resources, both written and oral.

Taboos or prohibitions cover every aspect of daily life of amaXhosa. Their application is formal, inflexible and observed scrupulously and failure to observe a taboo or prohibition angers the ancestral spirits, the family and the society as a whole. Such misdemeanours which are regarded in a serious light include:

- a nursing or breastfeeding woman who sleeps around with men, including her husband;
- '*abakhwetha*' (circumcised males – the rite of passage into manhood more commonly referred to as initiation) who approach the community village or township. The purpose of the rituals that are carried out during *ukoluka* is to ensure that, when they become men, *abakhwetha* are able to take on their role as the head of the household. Among other things their training, which takes

place in isolation – away from the community – focuses on developing their identity as men who are strong, brave and self-sufficient. It is here that they learn to look after themselves – even hunting for their food, therefore, approaching the community is a sign of dependence and weakness and defeats the development of these important attributes;

- a mother of 'umkhwetha' who goes to the 'ibhoma' (a grass hut made specially to accommodate *abakhwetha* during their isolation period);

A key tenet of *ukoluka* is the mystery, within which it is shrouded and the taboo associated with violating this air of mystery – *abakhwetha* do not tell stories. The code of silence plays many important roles – a key role being the maintenance of *isidima* (dignity) among men, therefore allowing a mother / woman to enter *ibhoma* is considered a grave violation.

- a woman who approaches or enters a kraal when she is menstruating; The kraal is a sacred place – the home of ancestors and, therefore, central to family and clan rituals and customs that call for communication with the ancestors. It is for these reasons that the entry of people who are external to the family or clan, including women who have married into the family, is tightly controlled. Menstruation, while it is understood to be a natural phenomenon, is considered 'dirty' and it is for this reason that various restrictions are imposed on Xhosa women during their time of menstruation.
- marriage between people who share a clan name;

The rationale behind this restriction is similar to that which applies in other cultures – the prevention of incest. In instances where, due to a grave oversight, such a forbidden marriage does occur, the offending couples' families are required to slaughter a black goat to acknowledge the graveness of the transgression, as a means of appeasing the ancestors and to ward off curses ('*amashwa*') that may befall the couple in the future.

- a woman sitting in a doorway – this is to prevent a spell being cast on her.

All groups and communities have their own set of taboos that guide many activities and, if violated by any person, result in harm being inflicted on the entire community. In the Xhosa society, the offending person or family (in Xhosa society, the family unit bears ultimate responsibility for transgressions) is obliged to slaughter a cow and

brew Xhosa-beer (*umqombothi*) in the process of seeking atonement (*ukungxengeza*). It is believed that the ancestors are angry and sometimes the ancestral spirits may reject the sacrifice made in order to *ngxengeza*. The traditional way of approaching the ancestral spirits is through the sacrifice of an ox for major offences and a goat for lesser misdemeanours.

The respect that amaXhosa are obliged to demonstrate for their ancestors is also guided by taboos. For example, if your husband's father's name is 'Mr. Bones', as a daughter-in-law you are not allowed to utter the word 'bone' as long as you are still married to that family. Your mother-in-law and some of the family members will supply you with a synonym to be used instead of 'bone', and also a list of other terms that are regarded to be taboo. This custom is known as '*ukuhlonipha*' (to accord respect), which comes from the awe surrounding taboos that they may not be named or discussed.

Various reasons for this linguistic form of respect may be postulated, such as the intention of making the '*molokazana*' (daughter-in-law) aware that she has not been born into this particular family and thus distinguishing her from the natural daughters (Finlayson 1995:143). Furthermore, the intention of observing *ukuhlonipha* could be to raise the daughter-in-law's consciousness of her new status and, by respecting her in-laws, including those who are deceased, she may be seen to respect the ancestors of her new home, in turn, thus to be respected and protected herself.

The table below contains some examples of additional words, which may be given to a daughter-in-law by her new in-laws:

English word	IsiXhosa equivalent	Hlonipha equivalent
Water	<i>Amanzi</i>	<i>Amathinzi / imvotho</i>
Milk	<i>Ubisi</i>	<i>ikraca</i>
Feet	<i>Iinyawo</i>	<i>iinxubulo</i>
Food	<i>Ukutya</i>	<i>Ukumala / ukumunda</i>
Sun	<i>Ilanga</i>	<i>isotha</i>
Kraal	<i>Ubuhlanti</i>	<i>uthango</i>
Bread	<i>Isonka</i>	<i>isiqhusheko</i>
Chair / bench	<i>Isitulo</i>	<i>isichopho</i>
A boy	<i>inkwenkwe</i>	<i>ityhagi</i>
A man	<i>Indoda</i>	<i>incentisa</i>

Words relating to sex, sex organs, and other natural bodily functions constitute a large part of the list of taboo words in many cultures. Strategies to translate these taboo words are dealt with in Chapter 4.

In some areas, especially in the rural areas of the Transkei, these taboo words, though somewhat diminished because of the emerging middle class, are still retained with very interesting consequences. Although taboo words are often used in a swearing context, and in spite of the overlap that exists between taboo words and swear words, they are not necessarily the same.

The following is an interesting incident, where the use of a taboo word to name a municipality has resulted in much conflict and division in a small village of the Transkei:

Through the ages, men have written poetry to describe the anatomy of women, which practice seems to have been taken a step further by a group of civic leaders in the Eastern Cape who have named their municipality after a woman's sexual organ. "*Ingquza*" is the name of the municipality that incorporates the towns of Lusikisiki and Flagstaff: it also happens to be the word for vagina in isiZulu. The name angered women's lobby groups and split the council into two factions. The Mayor, Veli Ntsubane, and the Speaker of the council, William Ngozi, have asked Chief Thandizulu Sigcawu to mediate the resultant impasse. The leader of the group supporting the *Ingquza* name, Mluleki Fihlane maintained that there was no need to change it because it was derived from a local hill bearing that name. "People should not look into the name in that particular (anatomical) meaning. There is history behind the mountain and its name. We cannot waste time fighting over a name," he said, which comment he supported by saying that there was a group of people within the municipality who were scoring points by starting a controversy over the name.

Mayor Ntsubane, however, said the council had adopted an alternative name and would be taking it together with the existing one to their king to adjudicate. "We cannot have a council that could be seen as sexist or derogatory of women. We will use the necessary processes to change it because people do not like it," he said. Ntsubane said the council would test the people to get their views on the name.

Commissioner for Gender Equality in KwaZulu-Natal, Beatrice Ngcobo described the name as "unpalatable and disgusting". Some residents have also objected to the name, accusing the council of undermining their moral fibre.

In addition, linguistic differences are *inter alia* a reflection of social differences. In the Xhosa culture, for instance, society views men and women as different and unequal which causes the difference in the language used by women and men to persist. The speakers who differ from each other in terms of gender, social class and ethnic group, for example, will also differ from each other in their speech, even when used in the same context.

Language itself conveys beliefs and attitudes and, therefore, the translation of a language is also the translation of culture. It is for this reason that language and gender pose an almost insurmountable problem among the African people, since it implies:

- There is interplay between language and social structure
- Language use and the choice of certain terms reflects gender differences;
- Differential use of language reinforces gender divisions in society.

The extent of the relationship between language use and gender differences is evident in the way in which society sanctions and casts judgment on the appropriateness of linguistic choices, based on the gender of the speaker. For example, it is regarded a taboo for men to use phrases such as '*Yhu! Ntombi*' which means '*Gee girl!*' – a man using such terminology needs to clearly demonstrate that he is doing so for the sake of effect (whether imitating someone else or joking) lest his sexual orientation is called into question. Societal sanction is also demonstrated in the different labels, and their connotations, that are given to men and women to describe similar behaviour: a man who is in love with more than one woman is referred to as a '*Casanova*', '*Don Juan*' or '*playboy*' in English. In isiXhosa, terms such as '*dlalani*' (literally meaning '*play*') or '*lewu*' (literally meaning '*one who catches all*' or '*one who will not let anything pass by*') are used. Women who display similar behaviour are not so lucky: they have to contend with offensive names like '*wench*' or '*bitch*' in English – even when a man is referred to as a '*dog*' the connotation is not as harsh as that attached to '*bitch*'.

In some cases, such as in response to a man who regales his friends with stories of his numerous conquests, *'You dog!'* is an expression of admiration. IsiXhosa terms that are used to describe the female 'Don Juan' are varied and very descriptive. They include

'ihule': borrowed word from Afrikaans 'hoer' which means a prostitute/ whore/ harlot;

'uNopatazana': taken from *'ukupataza'*, an onomatopoeic description reflecting the rapid slapping of high-heeled shoes against a concrete or tar surface (*'pata-pata-pata-pata'*): a reference to a sex-worker as she 'walks the street';

'uNonkwabatshula': from *'ukunkwaba'* meaning 'to take more', describes one who grabs more than one man at a time and even

'uNontoroty': *'ntoro'* is derived from the verb *'ukukroba'*, meaning 'to peep': describes a woman who is always on the lookout, even if it means nosing about in other people's business, in order to obtain her 'catch'.

All these words are extremely unkind and carry connotations so harsh that they elicit responses that vary between humiliation, torment and rage. Such use of language demonstrates the powerful role played by linguistic choice in enforcing societal norms, even those that are based on divisive principles or beliefs. It also highlights the need to investigate the translation of taboo words between English and isiXhosa and, indeed, all of the official South African languages.

The implication for traditional language planners or actors relates to the role that they can play in modifying the environment in which a language is used with consultation with the ultimate language users being crucial in this regard. Community involvement at this level will enable language planners to improve the effectiveness of their activities as they hone their own awareness and understanding of the more subtle cultural and belief systems that influence a language. During this process of awareness-building, it is important that they follow the types of adoption with respect to language planning, which are: awareness, evaluation, knowledge or proficiency and usage. The interaction at the societal level will assist language planners as they develop an improved understanding of those interactions through which communicative innovations spread.

4.2 Swear words

Taboo words are often associated with swearing, a category which can be further broken down into profanity, obscenity and blasphemy. Swearing can be seen as both an emotional phenomenon (emotional relief, a substitute for violence, etc.) and a social phenomenon, with uses in establishing social distance and reinforcing social solidarity (Crystal 1995:589). Women, in general, are not allowed to use swear words and this is true, also for the African culture, since it is regarded as a taboo for a woman to swear. Hughes (1992:292-294) argues that, “for a long time, many people thought that women and men differ in their use of swear words and other taboo expressions, however the increasing argument is that there is still very little firm evidence to confirm or deny this”. She further mentions that the idea of distinct female and male swear words, and the extent to which usage varies between the sexes, is still widely held, and that it is still considered aggressive and, therefore, ‘unfeminine’ or ‘unbecoming’ for women to swear.

The idea that women should be ‘ladylike’ in their speech and behaviour can be viewed as a form of social control, as discussed earlier in this chapter. There are many statements in the English language that seem to support the notion that males are superior to females, such as “a woman’s place is in the kitchen”.

4.3 Racist terms

Racist terms are also regarded as a taboo. The following is a list of racist terms:

- Whitey:** ⇒ used contemptuously by a Black person to indicate a White man.
- Poor White:** ⇒ a poverty-stricken and underprivileged White person, e.g. poor white trash.
- Boer:** ⇒ a descendant of any of the Dutch or Huguenot colonists who settled in South Africa.
- Kaffir/kafir:** ⇒ from Arabic kāfir, infidel from ‘*kafara*’ which means to deny, refuse to believe. Offensive among black Africans in Southern Africa.
- Pied Noor:** ⇒ a name given by French people to the Algerian-born woman or

man which also shows hatred.

Oliebek: ⇒ referring to African language speakers who cannot speak Afrikaans.

Houtkop/

Gonnakop: ⇒ referring to African language speakers – simply meaning they do not have brains.

Digkop/

Black material: ⇒ referring to African language speakers with dark skin, also perceived as narrow minded.

Coolies: ⇒ referring to Indians and Muslims.

Snotkop: ⇒ also referring to Black people perceived as stupid.

Bushies: ⇒ referring to people of Bushman origin.

Boerjong/

Plaasjapie: ⇒ referring to people who come from rural settlements.

Amakwere-

kwere: ⇒ referring to people from Central Africa, e.g. Nigerians, Ugandans, people from Mozambique.

Racist terms are not used as widely as they used to be prior to the introduction of a new dispensation in 1994. In some districts of South Africa, these racist terms are not used as much as they were used before South Africa became a democratic country. I cannot really comment about swear words because people swear a great deal. Swan in de Klerk (1992:287) commented that children usually avoid swearing in front of adults, so as not to shock or annoy them, and adults avoid swearing in front of children for similar reasons. He further mentions that adolescents' perception of these words is obviously not the same as those of many adults. They seem less inhibited in their use of swearwords, not even perceiving them as taboo. These differences also relate to communicative competence because a speaker swears better in his/her own mother-tongue but these adolescents referred to above, should know when to say what, to whom, how and why.

5. SUMMARY

In this chapter an attempt has been made to provide a broad outline of the nature of taboos in the Xhosa traditions, culture and customs. The position of language within

culture was discussed and the role of translators and interpreters who are unable to circumvent the lack of appropriate terminology due to the culture-specific nature of some terms, and their need to be well versed in the customs, habits and traditions of both source and target cultures was looked at. As stated by Taft in Katan (1999:12), a translator must possess certain competencies in both the source and target culture, which include the knowledge about the society (prohibitions, values, folklore, history); communication skills (written, spoken); technical skills (those required by the mediator's status, e.g. computer literacy, appropriate dress, etc.) and social skills (knowledge of the rules that govern social relations in society emotional competence, etc.). This led to the four approaches to the study of culture which are the behaviourist (ethnocentrism), functionalist, cognitive and dynamic approaches. The importance of the role of culture as an enriching aspect of national life and the taboos or prohibitions which do not only cover every aspect of the daily life of the isiXhosa speaking people but also the lives of other groups was considered and this challenging concept led to the exploration of the developments in translation theory for the benefit of translation of taboo words, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPMENTS IN TRANSLATION THEORY FOR THE BENEFIT OF TRANSLATING TABOO WORDS

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explore developments in translation theory for the benefit of translating taboo words into isiXhosa. The functionalist approach, as advocated by Christiane Nord (1991;1997), will be employed as the theoretical framework. The reason for using this approach is that Nord's model offers a range of strategies which focus on the function and purpose of the target text as the most important aspects of a translation. Moreover, the functionalist approach considers a translation to be adequate if the translated text is appropriate for the communicative purpose defined in the translation brief (Naudé 2002).

Furthermore, a translation is an intentional interaction which is primarily intended to change an existing state of affairs "minimally, the inability of certain people to communicate with each other..." (Vermeer in Nord 1997:19). This statement is emphasised by Nord (1997:17), who states that translators should enable communication to take place between members of different linguistic and cultural communities and that they should bridge the gap in situations where differences in verbal and non-verbal behaviour, expectations, knowledge and perspectives are such that they create insufficient common ground for the sender and receiver to communicate effectively by themselves. This statement also complements the purpose of this study: to find strategies that can be employed for the translation of taboo words into isiXhosa in order to ensure that culture-specific terms are not misinterpreted.

1.1 BACKGROUND

A number of models describing the translation process have been suggested over the past thirty years. A brief description of some of these models, as noted by Katan (1999:124) are as follows:

- Bell suggests that between the SL and the TL text, the translator creates a semantic representation of the text;
- James Holmes proposed his 'mapping theory';
- Neubert and Shreve wrote of virtual translation which accounts for knowledge, thoughts, and feelings;
- Baker (1992:113) points to the importance of the underlying semantic connections or cohesion in the text; and many others.

Nord's functionalist approach, however, allows for changes that are deemed necessary to ensure an acceptable and functional translation. Moreover, the functionalist approach, according to the Skopostheorie (which will be discussed in the following sections) points out that the intended purpose of the target text is the major factor that should determine the method of translation used. Furthermore, in translation, anything that is likely to violate the target reader's expectations needs to be examined carefully and, if necessary, adjusted in order to avoid conveying the wrong implications or even failing to make sense altogether (Baker 1992:250).

1.2 ORGANISATION OF CHAPTER 3

In this chapter, attention is drawn to the description and explanation of the translation process within a functionalist framework. It will focus on literary-theoretical perspectives on equivalence as a background of the way in which equivalence is viewed by literary translation theorists. Also pertinent within the translation process: the interplay between the translation process and culture, source-text oriented approaches to translation studies, sociolinguistic approaches and sentence-based linguistic theories as well as Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS).

2. TRANSLATION AND TRANSLATION THEORY

2.1 Definitions of Translation

“Translation is a kind of transubstantiation; one poem becomes another. You can choose your philosophy of translation just as you choose how to live: the free adaptation that sacrifices detail to meaning, the strict crib that sacrifices meaning to exactitude. The poet moves from life to language, the translator moves from language to life; both, like the immigrant, try to identify the invisible, what’s between the lines, the mysterious implications”

(Anne Michaels – *Fugitive Pieces* in Naudé 2002:1).

In the time span between the fifties and the seventies, translation studies formed an integral part of applied and general linguistics which was seen as the sole source of translation studies, Naudé (2002:45). Since then, writers, teachers, linguists and, more recently translators as well, have participated in the discussion on the extent to which texts are translatable. Such discussion includes issues such as translation as a secondary activity, the quality of translations, translation equivalence, faithful versus free, semantic versus communicative translation, i.e. source text versus target text emphasis. Recent developments have seen the role of the translator being added to the discussion, where developments in the new field of translation studies are expected to advance our understanding of the evolving vocabulary in a multilingual country like South Africa. Translation, therefore, is a subjective, creative act towards intercultural communication.

The following are some definitions and thoughts on translation, culture and translators:

- “Translation is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language. Each exercise involves some kind of loss of meaning, due to a number of factors. The basic loss is a continuum between overtranslation (increased detail) and undertranslation (increased generalisation)” (Newmark 1981:7).

- “Translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text” (Bassnett & Lefevere in Gentzler 1993).
- “...translation is just like chewing food that is to be fed to others. If one cannot chew the food oneself, one has to be given food that has been already chewed. Such food, however, is bound to be poorer in taste and flavour than the original” (Kumarajiva in Keenan 1978:157).
- “Translation is a procedure which leads from a written source language text (SLT) to an optimally equivalent target language text (TLT) and requires the syntactic, semantic, stylistic and text-pragmatic comprehension by the translator of the original text” (Wilss 1982:112).
- “Translation may be defined as the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL). The central problem of translation is that of finding TL translation equivalents. A central task of translation theory is that of defining the nature and conditions of translation equivalence” (Catford 1965:20).
- “Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first, in terms of meaning and secondly, in terms of style” (Nida & Taber 1969:12).
- Following Nida, Wilss sees translation primarily from the viewpoint of a linguist. He says, ‘any translation is an attempt to come as close as possible to the ideal translation; translation is ideal, however, only if transferability is ideal, ideal transferability is possible, however, only between ideal translation languages and this applies only if there is an ideal translator who accomplishes ideal translation as a sequence of mechanical or respectively, mechanisable substitution procedures with the aim of surface structure text reconstruction’ (Wilss 1982:113).
- “What is generally understood as translation involves the rendering of a source language (SL) text into the target language (TL) so as to ensure that the surface

meaning of the two will be approximately similar and the structures of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible but not so closely that the TL structures will be seriously distorted” (Bassnett-McGuire 1980:2).

- “Translation is only an adequate interpretation of an alien code unit and equivalence is impossible”. Jacobson also mentioned that sometimes a translator has to resort to a combination of units in order to find an approximate equivalent (Jacobson in Bassnett-McGuire 1980:15).
- Neubert and Shreve (1992) are more explicit, suggesting that “in the translator’s mind there is a ‘virtual translation’, which is ‘a composite of the possible relations between a source text and a range of potential target texts. The virtual translation accounts for (author and translator) knowledge, thoughts, and feelings. It includes their aims, intentions, needs and expectations”. According to Neubert and Shreve, a good translator reads the text, and in so doing accesses grouped linguistic and textual knowledge.
- Snell-Hornby in Katan (1997:126), in her chapter “Translation as a Cross-Cultural Event” states that the translation process can no longer be envisaged as being between two languages but between two cultures involving ‘cross-cultural transfer’...”

Most of the above scholars take us back to the point that any translation is an attempt to come as close as possible to the ‘ideal’: the precise interpretation of the meaning intended by the original text. The predominant intention of the science of translation is to ferret out, for each language pair, as many structural equivalents as possible and, in this way, to optimise the proportion of substitutive, qualitatively exact controllable transfer procedures. Language is at the heart of culture, giving voice to cultural practices, necessitating the need for translators to view the source text within its cultural context. Within the context of culture, texts evoke images that are not necessarily mirrored in the target texts. Images, in turn have power through language. Bassnett in Katan (1999:126) also believes that translation should take place within the framework of culture. Culture is defined by Nord (1997:33) as “whatever one has

to know, master or feel in order to judge whether or not a particular form of behaviour shown by members of a community in their various roles conforms to general expectations, and to behave in this community in accordance with general expectations unless one is prepared to bear the consequences of unaccepted behaviour”.

3. SOURCE-TEXT ORIENTED APPROACHES TO TRANSLATION STUDIES

One of the first writers to formulate a theory of translation was the French humanist Etienne Dolet (1509–1546) who was tried and executed for heresy after ‘mistranslating’ one of Plato’s dialogues in such a way that it implied a disregard for the concept of immortality (Bassnett-McGuire: 1980:54). He published a short outline of translation principles, entitled, ‘*How to Translate Well from one Language into Another*’ and established the following five principles for the translator:

- i. The translator must fully understand the sense and meaning of the original author, although he is at liberty to clarify obscurities.
- ii. The translator should have a perfect knowledge of both SL and TL.
- iii. The translator should avoid word-for-word renderings.
- iv. The translator should use forms of speech in common use.
- v. The translator should choose and order words appropriately to produce the correct tone.

During the 19th century, translation theory underwent a radical transformation over a period of time, as translation evolved due to conscious manipulation to ‘move the author toward the reader’. The goal of such manipulation was to make literary texts as palatable in the target language and culture as they were in the source language and culture. This development marks the realisation that precise translation, especially in the case of literary works, was inconceivable without regard for the norms of the target language and culture. Due to this approach, in the 1960s Nida came to the realisation that meaning cannot be divorced from the personal experience and conceptual framework of the person receiving the message. He further drew on extensive fieldwork that showed that the religious message often failed to be communicated because of different cultural contexts and world views, (Gentzler 1993:52). The emergence of a new understanding of the relationship between source text and target text highlights that a work worthy of translation is no longer approached as a long string of words, but rather as an entire text where the translator performs the all-important function of bringing into one universe a text from another,

which often might have remained unknown. It is inappropriate to expect that a theoretical model of translation will solve all the problems a translator encounters. Instead, it should formulate a set of strategies for approaching problems and for coordinating the different aspects entailed (De Beaugrande in Bell 1993:23).

A theory of translation, therefore, endeavours a description and explanation of the translation process, the translation product and/or function of translations in the target culture. Newmark (1988:94) defines culture as “the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression”. The more specific a language becomes in its description of natural phenomena, the more it is embedded in cultural features, complicating the process of translation. Agar (in Nord 1997:24) argues that “culture is not something [that] people have; it is something that fills the spaces between them. And culture is not an exhaustive description of anything: it focuses on differences, differences that can vary from task to task and group to group.

A cultural focus creates a problem between source and target languages because there is a gap between these two cultures”. In short, instead of making subjective and arbitrary judgements about a particular translation, the translator should focus on the strategies employed while transforming the source text into the target text, always maintaining a view of these texts within the context of their relevant sociocultures: as translations that are produced in order to comply with the requirements of acts of communication in the receiving culture. Newmark (1991) critically notes that the cultural component of language, prominent in forms of address, phaticisms and in standard metaphors, is being exaggerated by linguists and translation theorists at a time when it is, in fact, declining, due to the collapse of a ‘great world ideology’.

3.1 SOCIOLINGUISTIC TRANSLATION THEORIES

Sociolinguistic translation theories emphasise the function of linguistic structures in communication, where the focus is on language in use, indicating a vision of translation which takes the situation of usage or context into account. Since the ideal speaker-hearer does not exist among the receptors of the translation, adjustment must be made in relation to the prospective audience. Wilss (1989) notes that there are far too few comprehensive studies on various language, culture and communication communities; and even that few attempts at operationalisation have been made, presumably for lack of systematic frameworks for making comparisons between various cultural settings. As a result, the translator may pay attention to actual language patterns and phenomena rather than ideal language patterns and phenomena.

Naudé's assertion that a language is partly the repository and reflection of a culture (Naudé 2002:16) emphasises the need for translators to constantly be aware of the culture-specificity of any form of behaviour. He further states that there are two factors which result in an extreme gap between cultures and which impede coherence, or even render it impossible, in the understanding of text. Naudé uses Biblical texts as an example where a wide cultural gap separates the target audience from the text. This point demonstrates the importance of the involvement of mother-tongue translators in bridging some of the gaps that result during translation. Such gaps are brought about when the lack of culture-specific background knowledge makes it impossible to establish coherence between what is said and what is known. Secondly, when non-verbal and verbal behaviour do not match, due to the fact that the nonverbal behaviour cannot be interpreted correctly. Mother-tongue translators bring with them an improved understanding of the cultural context, what is considered taboo and, through this knowledge, a better concept of strategies that can be used to overcome translation problems that may arise.

3.2 SENTENCE-BASED LINGUISTIC THEORIES

The greatest potential for miscommunication results from the diversity in the backgrounds of receptors. They often differ greatly in terms of education, age and the degree of understanding of culture. The translator needs to become an intellectual bridge, which permits receptors to cross the chasms of language and culture in order that they are able to comprehend the full implications of the original communication.

In terms of the sentence-based linguistic theories of translation, the functional sentence perspective (FSP) examines the arrangement of the elements of a sentence in the light of its linguistic, situational and cultural context, determining its function within the paragraph and the text. IsiXhosa, like any other language, has various phonetic, lexico-grammatical and punctuation devices for highlighting important information and these assist the translator in reconciling the functional, semantic and syntactic aspects of each sentence. It is also important for the translator to establish his or her priorities which can only be done by considering the text as a whole.

In considering the functional, semantic and syntactic aspects of a sentence, the translator may have to weigh the writer's functional purposes against the particular language's word-order tendencies (not rules). Further aspects of the functional sentence perspective, which are of interest to a translator, are the various devices for either heightening or frustrating expectation, which may differ in two languages. For example, when translating the following sentences: "*There was an illegal strike at the Provincial Administration. The angry workers disagreed with the coalition government and they ended up shooting the Premier*". The translator may want to show whether the second event is an explanation or consequence of the first one. Further developments in translation studies, however, have removed translation from these narrow elements of the language system of semantic and syntactic equivalence, though they are both conditioned and modified by the requirements of pragmatic equivalence. This statement will not be elaborated to any greater extent but Lefevere (1975:102) is correct in saying that a translation can only be complete if and when both the communicative value and the time-place-tradition elements of the source text have been replaced by their nearest possible equivalent in the target text.

3.3 FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE

Functional equivalence is achieved when the target audience, or intended receptors, have a thorough understanding of both the meaning of the source text and also of the expressions that are used to convey the intended meaning in the receptor language. Using the translation of biblical text as an example: some readers prefer to read the Scriptures in a language that is beautifully obscure, while others prefer a translation that reflects the peculiarities of biblical languages more 'faithfully'. What is important is that a translation should communicate directly to the needs of the reader, translating both equivalent content and equivalent form of the message. To ascertain equivalence, whether of content or form, one should focus on the functions that are involved in the text. For example: what functions should a text perform? Does it, indeed, perform these functions? How are these functions communicated through the lexical, grammatical and rhetorical structures that are used?

Furthermore, a translation should provide information that the target audience can understand and also present the message so that the reader understands its relevance and is therefore able to respond to it appropriately. However, inevitably owing to linguistic and cultural differences between languages, translations always fall short of the equivalence ideal. It is impossible to produce a translation, to be the mirror image of its original in accordance with the equivalence-based prescriptive/normative theories. Therefore, the main shortcoming of prescriptive/normative translation theories is their total disregard for those sociocultural conditions under which translations are produced in order to comply with the requirements of acts of communication in the receiving culture (Naudé 2002:47).

In my point of view, a translator should try to cover a wide range of adjustments as a point of necessity in any translation process, considering the intended function and adapting to the norms and conventions of the respective target culture in order to make sure that the target recipients will receive almost the 'same' communicative effect. Such shortcomings have led to the development of Descriptive Translation Studies, discussed later in this chapter.

3.4 DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE

Nida & Taber (1974) as well as House (1981) had different approaches to the principle of equivalent effect, which led to Newmark's (1988) communicative approach to translation. Equivalence is the key concept in House's definition of translation: the replacement of a text in the source language by a semantically and pragmatically equivalent text in the target language (House:1981:29-30). Below is a brief discussion of perceptions regarding this dynamic equivalent.

Eugene Nida distinguishes two types of equivalence: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence (Nida 1964, Nida & Taber 1969).

- **Formal equivalence** focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content;
- **Dynamic equivalence** is based on the principle of equivalent effect, i.e. that the relationship between receiver and message should coincide with that between the original receivers and the SL message.

Dynamic equivalence in translation is far more than mere correct communication of information. Its significance lies in the degree to which the receptors of the message in the receptor language respond to it in, substantially, the same manner as the receptors of the source language. However, due to the widely-divergent cultural and historical settings, there may be difficulties in eliciting an identical response from the translated text. Therefore, the adequacy of a translation should be judged in terms of the way the target audience responds to it: the inability to achieve a high degree of equivalence of response means that the translation has failed to accomplish its purpose. In assessing dynamic equivalence, we can only compare the equivalence response, rather than the degree of agreement between the original source and the later receptors. We cannot presume that the source text was written for this unknown audience or that the monolingual receptors in the second language have enough background to understand the setting of the original communication. The impact of how the target audience will judge a translation, especially of taboo words, cannot be underestimated.

4. THE DESCRIPTIVE APPROACH IN TRANSLATION STUDIES (DTS)

The descriptive translation theorists comprise of a group of scholars which includes Gideon Toury, André Lefevere, José Lambert, Hendrik van Gorp, Theo Hermans, Susan Bassnet, etc. This group was given the name Manipulation School (Naude 2002:50). The aim of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) is to determine the way in which translations have been done in a specific culture for a specific target group at a specific time. As stated by Hermans (1985), DTS is, first and foremost, target-oriented, i.e. the role played by translations in the target culture is examined first and followed by a focus on their historical and cultural role, i.e. specific texts are regarded as translations and function as translations that are relevant to the target culture at a specific point in time: the theorists attempt to account not only for textual strategies in the translated text, but also for the way in which the translation functions in the target cultural and literary system (Naude 2002:50).

Descriptive Translation Studies came into being as a challenge to prescriptive theories of translation, which emphasise equivalence between the original and the translated texts. As stated by Naude (2002:50), prescriptive theorists first theorise on translation and then attempt to prove these theories in practice. In contrast, DTS theorists start with a practical examination of the *corpus* and systems of texts, after which they attempt to extrapolate the norms and constraints operating on those texts within the context of a specific culture and at a specific historical moment. The significance of the development of a functionalist approach is that it concentrates more on the *process* of translation rather than the effect thereof. The following subsection contains a discussion of the functionalist approach.

5. THE FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH

As indicated in Section 1.4, the theoretical framework that will be utilised for the translation of taboo words into isiXhosa will be Christiane Nord's functionalist approach (1991;1997), which will be discussed fully in following sections. This approach takes a translational-oriented analysis of the texts into consideration and includes an examination of extratextual and intratextual factors that are important in

the translation, non-verbal elements and the source text itself. Nord (1991:43) suggests the following set of questions:

Extratextual factors are analysed by asking the following:	
Who (transmits)	Information about the author or sender of the text
To whom	Intended target group or recipient/s of text
What for	The intentions of the sender
By which medium	Assess the quality of the article (value judgment)
Where	Place of communication
When	Time of communication
Why	Motive of communication
With what function	e.g. informative , vocative
Intratextual factors are analysed by asking the following:	
Subject matter	Legal, technical
What	Context of text
What not	Knowledge assumptions made by the author
In what order	Text construction
Non-verbal elements	e.g. layout, punctuation
In what words	Lexical characteristics
Kind of sentence	Syntax
In which tone	e.g. sarcastic
To what effect	Interplay of extratextual and intratextual factors

The text should be scrutinised and analysed carefully on word/phrase/sentence and textual levels. By analysing the source text as well as the translation brief in relation to the above set of questions and by comparing the two results, the translator is able to decide whether, and in what respect, the source-text material has to be adapted to the target situation. The translator is also able to decide on the adaptation procedures that are relevant for the production of an adequate text (Nord 1991:45). In due course, a translator should take note of the stylistic scale of formality expressed by the following example:

- Official
- Formal
- Neutral

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- Informal
- Conversational/Colloquial language (language at grass roots level – people and the newly literate)
- Slang (Newmark 1988:14)
- Taboo language

5.1 Translation Models

As early as 1971, Katharina Reiss introduced a functional category of translation, based on the functional relationship between source and target texts. According to Reiss, the ideal translation would be one 'in which the aim in the TL is equivalence as regards the conceptual content, linguistic form and communicative function of a SL text'. She refers to this kind of translation as 'integral communicative performance' (Nord 1997:9).

In the 1970s, Hans J. Vermeer (Nord 1997:10) introduced into translation theory the *Skopos* – a Greek word referring to the 'aim' or 'purpose' of a translation and the action of translating. He considers translation to be a type of transfer where communicative verbal and non-verbal signs are transferred from one language into another. *Skopostheorie* was developed as the foundation for a general theory of translation that is able to embrace theories dealing with specific languages and cultures (Nord 1997:12). This concept states that it is important to take note of cultural-specific aspects of the text. In practice, a translation is always initiated by somebody (the initiator) for a special purpose, i.e. *skopostheorie*. The *skopostheorie*, therefore, claims that the overall frame of reference for the translator should not be the original text (?) and its function, as equivalence-based translation theory would have it, but rather the function (or set of functions) the target text is to achieve in the target culture (Nord 1991:39). A translator should bear in mind that the purpose of the author reflects his/her attitude towards the subject; therefore the translator should strive to retain the intention of the translation brief by successfully conveying the intentions of the author to the proposed target audience.

Justa Holz-Mänttari introduced her theory with special emphasis on the actional aspects of the translation process, analysing the role of the participants (initiator,

translator, user, message receiver) and the situational conditions (time, place, medium) in which their activities take place. Her concepts of vocational training emphasise the role of translators as experts in their field (Nord 1997:13). However, Nord makes the point that the *skopos* rule 'is a very general rule which does not account for specific conventions prevalent in a particular culture community'. She therefore modifies the conventional *skopos* theory by adding the concept of loyalty and convention to it and, in this way limits the variety of possible functions or *skopos* (Naudé 2002:52).

5.2 Skopostheorie

Skopos is the Greek word for 'aim' or 'purpose' and was introduced into translation theory in the 1970s by Hans J. Vermeer as a technical term for the purpose of a translation and of the action of translating (Munday 2001:78-79). Also, *skopostheorie* is part of the model of translational action also proposed by Holz Manttari who places professional commercial translation within a sociocultural context, using the jargon of business and management (Munday 2001:87). This theory is also based on the source text and focuses on the purpose of the translation which determines the translation methods and strategies that are to be employed in order to produce a functionally adequate result. This means that one should produce a translation in accordance with some principle respecting the target text and the text should serve this purpose. Apart from the term *Skopos*, Vermeer uses related words: *aim*, defined as the final result an agent intends to achieve by means of an action; *purpose*, defined as the provisional stage in the process of attaining an aim; *intention*, conceived as an aim-oriented plan of action; and *function* which refers to what a text means or is intended to mean from the receiver's point of view (Nord 1997:28).

5.3 Theory of Action

Nord (1997:16) describes a translator as an intermediary who facilitates intercultural communication across language and cultural barriers. An important advantage of *skopostheorie* is that it allows for the same text to be translated in different ways, according to the purpose of the TT and the commission which is given to the translator (Munday 2001:80).

5.4 Translational Interaction

In describing translational interaction, Nord (1997:18) distinguishes interpersonal and human interactions. She refers to interpersonal interaction as a form of communication and a variety of action, while human interaction is an intentional change of a state of affairs affecting two or more people or 'agents'. Nord further states that an interaction is referred to as communicative when it is carried out through signs that are produced intentionally by one agent, usually referred to as the 'sender', directed toward another agent, referred to as the 'addressee' or 'receiver'. Within a particular culture community, the situations of sender and receiver generally overlap enough for communication to take place (Nord 1997:17).

5.5 Intentional Interaction

According to Nord (1997:19) a translation is an intentional interaction provided that it is, first and foremost, intended to change an existing state of affairs (minimally, the inability of certain people to communicate with each other). She further explains that intentionality may be associated with the translator or, more often, with the person who is the 'initiator' of the translation process. Intentionality may be associated with the translator or, more often, with the person who is the 'initiator' of the translation process. Therefore, translational intention may or may not be similar to the intention guiding the original sender or text producer in the production of the source text.

The intentionality, with regard to the translation of taboo words into isiXhosa, is to investigate a strategy that can be used to overcome the problem of transferring culture-specific terms.

5.6 Interpersonal Interaction

During the communication, which Nord describes as interpersonal interaction, a functional network which involves translators and other people involved in the translation process, plays a key role. The analysis of this network includes the following:

- Initiator and Commissioner

- Translator
- ST producer
- TT producer
- TT user

In this context, we may refer to the client as an 'initiator' who needs a particular text for a particular purpose and for a receiver in the target culture. The client asks the translator for a translation of a text and/or other information that the client regards as a suitable source. This source material has been produced by a text-producer and/or transmitted by a sender for a receiver under the conditions of the source culture (Nord 1997:20).

In the professional practice of intercultural communication, the receivers of both the source and the target texts, in their roles as addressees, are relevant for specification of the respective purposes of the two texts. A brief discussion of other relevant roles is provided below:

i) Role of Initiator and Commissioner

The initiator needs the target text, while the commissioner is the person who requests the translator to produce the target text for a particular purpose and addressee. The commissioner may complicate the translator's task, for example, by requesting the use of specific terminology or text format.

ii) Role of the Translator

As an expert, the translator's role is pivotal in the translation process, being responsible for carrying out the commissioned task and for ensuring the meaningful outcome of the translation process. The success of the translation depends largely on the translator producing target text that adheres to the conditions agreed with the commissioner: functional in the sense that it meets the demands of the translation brief. It is, therefore, imperative that the translator gathers as much information about the target-text addressee, paying thorough attention to sociocultural background, expectations, sensitivity or world knowledge.

iii) Role of Source-Text Producer

The source-text producer is neither an immediate agent nor the sender in the translational action. The text producer is the one actually responsible for any linguistic or stylistic choices present in the text expressing the sender's communicative intentions. The sender is the person, group or institution that uses the text in order to convey a certain message (Nord 1997: 21). In this situation, the translator is the target-text producer who is expressing a source-culture sender's communicative intentions.

iv) The Role of Target-Text Receiver

The intended target-text receiver is the addressee of the translation and is thus a decisive factor in the production of the target text. Nord (1997:22) makes a distinction between the addressee and the receiver of text. A receiver is the person, group or institution that reads or listens to the translated text, whereas the addressee is the person for whom the text producer intends the translated text. The more unequivocal and definite the description of the TT recipient, the easier it is for the translator to make his decisions in the course of the translation process. The translator, therefore, should insist on being provided with as many details as possible from the commissioner.

v) The Role of Target-Text User

The person who finally uses the text is the target-text user. A person can be a source-text producer, initiator and target-text user. In this study, the target-text user may experience problems with the terms that are being translated as these may be seen as normal in the Western culture but as taboo in isiXhosa.

5.7 TRANSLATING AS A COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

Communication is carried out by means of signs which are verbal or non-verbal behaviour associated with a concept or meaning by the producer, the receiver, or both. Translating as a communicative action does not apply in this study because the focus is on taboo words not on taboo acts. On the other hand, signs are conventional and thus culture-specific and have an intended goal.

5.7.1 Intercultural Action

Nord (1997:23) points out that translation takes place in concrete, definable situations that involve members of different cultures, and language is an intrinsic part of a culture. This also proves that culture is not a material phenomenon because it does not consist of things, people, behaviour or emotions, but it is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating and otherwise interpreting them. Göhring in Nord (1997:24) stresses the fact that in intercultural encounters the individual is free either to conform to the behaviour patterns accepted in the other culture or to bear the consequences of behaviour that is contrary to cultural expectations. In the Xhosa culture, even if a taboo is violated by a single person, it will cause harm to the entire tribe.

5.7.2 Text-Processing Action

Translation can be seen as translational action because of the proportion of verbalised to non-verbalised text elements in a particular type of situation which is considered to be culture-specific. This means that while members of one culture may tend to verbalise a particular text part, members of another culture may prefer to use a gesture. This also points out that the functionalist approach is radically different from earlier linguistic or equivalence-based theories whereby the source text is the first and foremost criterion for the translator's decision. A translation is thus a new offer of information in the target culture about some information offered in the source culture and language (Reiss & Vermeer in Nord 1997:26). In the next sections, Vermeer's concepts of *Skopos*, coherence and culture and Reiss's concepts of adequacy versus equivalence and the role of her text-typology within the frame of functional approach to translation will be discussed.

5.8 The Translation Brief

The translation brief specifies what kind of translation is needed and a good brief spells a better translation (Nord 1997:30). It does not tell the translator how to go about their translating job, what translation strategy to use or what translation type to choose (see 3.4). These decisions depend entirely on the translator's responsibility and competence.

Translators cannot pretend that a given source text contains all the instructions about how it should be translated. Every translation should be accompanied by a translation brief that defines the conditions under which the target text should carry out its particular function. It should be clear that the situation in which the source text fulfils its functions is different from that of the target text. We have to consider a certain difference with regard to the culture-bound knowledge, experience or susceptibility of the respective audiences. Equivalence in translation, then, should not be approached as a search for sameness, since sameness cannot even exist between two TL versions of the same text, let alone between the SL and the TL version (Bassnett-MacGuire 1980:29).

Cultural translation errors are related to the question of whether conventions should be adapted to target-culture standards. These linguistic errors are often due to deficiencies in the translator's target language and culture competence. A translator should make a decision as soon as there are two or more possible solutions to a translation problem. They differ with regard to receiver-dependent qualities such as acceptability or comprehensibility. Translations therefore, should negotiate and introduce a cultural compromise by selecting those characteristics common to both source and receiving culture. It is very important that the translator should convey the intentions of the sender when translating the source text into the target language. However, there are numerous obstacles that the translator has to circumvent in the process. To overcome these problems, the translator is compelled to use translation strategies. Unfortunately the functionalist approach, especially in the translation of taboo words, is often criticised for changing or even betraying originals.

5.9 Adequacy and Equivalence

If a source text is produced specifically for translation purposes, it is assumed that the original author has some kind of source-culture addressees in mind. The translator is the receiver of the source text who then proceeds to inform another audience, located in a situation under target-culture conditions, about the offer of information made by the source text. The target text, which is offered by the translator to the target addressee is guided by the translator's assumptions about their needs, expectations, previous knowledge, and so on (Nord 1997:35). If the translation is to be suitable for a certain purpose, it must fulfil certain requirements, which are defined by the

translating instructions. It is not the source text as such, or its effect on the ST recipient, or the function assigned to it by the author, that operates the translation process, but the prospective function or *skopos* of the target text as determined by the initiator's needs (Nord 1991:8-9). The responsibility for the translation will always rest with the translator as the only one who has the competence to decide whether the translation for which the initiator asks, can actually be produced on the basis of the given source text, and, if so, how, that is, by which procedures, strategies and techniques. The translator should offer another kind of information in another form.

Equivalence, on the other hand, is a static, result-oriented concept describing a relationship of equal communicative value between two texts or between words, phrases, sentences, syntactic structures and so on. The *skopos* of the translation, therefore determines the form of equivalence required for an adequate translation. Adequacy does not mean the same as equivalence. Adequacy within the framework of *skopos*, according to Reiss, refers to the qualities of the target text with regard to the translation brief (Nord 1997:35).

5.10 Coherence

The coherence rule states that the TT must be interpretable as coherent with the TT receiver's situation (Nord, 1997). In other words, the TT must be translated in such a way that it is coherent for the TT receivers or correspondence between the source text and the target text, given their circumstances and knowledge. Although translating words which are acceptable in the Western culture poses a problem for translation into IsiXhosa because they are taboo when translated with equivalent terms, those equivalent terms that are being used should be faithful and meaningful to any reader of the target text. Where changes are made, the intentions of the source text should be considered. An explicit translation brief should always be given to a translator.

5.11 Convention and Loyalty

Nord (1997:125) defines loyalty as the responsibility that a translator has toward his partners in translational interaction. For example, if the target culture expects a translation to be a literal reproduction of the original, translators cannot simply

translate in a non-literal way without telling the target audience what they have done and why. It is the translator's task to mediate between the two cultures, and mediation cannot mean imposing one's culture-specific concept on members of another culture community.

By introducing the loyalty principle into the functionalist model, one can ensure that the target-text purpose will be compatible with the original author's intentions. The fact that loyalty is combined with functionality can mean that the translator can attempt to produce a functional target text which is in accordance with the brief of the initiator, and is, at the same time, acceptable in the target culture. This responsibility to both the ST sender and the TT recipient is what Nord calls 'loyalty'.

6. Summary

As indicated in Section 1.4, the theoretical framework that is employed in this study is Christiane Nord's functionalist approach (1991, 1997) which has been discussed above. From the early eighties onwards, a tendency became apparent in translation studies indicative of a departure from a normative and prescriptive approach to translation towards either functionalist approach or a descriptive approach to the study of the subject. Taking equivalence as her basis, Reiss developed a model of translation criticism based on the functional relationship between source and target texts. According to Reiss, the ideal translation would be one in which the aim in the TL is equivalence as regards the conceptual content, linguistic form and communication function of a SL text. She refers to this kind of translation as 'integral communicative performance'.

In Vermeer's approach, translation is a form of translational action based on a source text, which may consist of verbal or non-verbal elements. Other forms of translational action may involve actions like a consultant giving information. For example, any action has aim or a purpose. The word *skopos* then is a technical term for the aim or purpose of a translation. In addition, an action leads to a result, a new situation or even, and possibly to a 'new object'. This is why Vermeer calls his theory *skopostheorie*, a theory of purposeful action. In the framework of this theory, one of the most important factors determining the purpose of a translation is the

addressee, who is the intended receiver or audience of the target text with their culture-specific world-knowledge, their expectations and their communicative needs. Every translation, therefore, is directed to an intended audience, since to translate means 'to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances'. The purpose of translational action is to transfer messages across culture and language barriers by means of message transmitters produced by translators. According to Nord (1997:34) translating means comparing cultures, therefore, translators interpret source-culture phenomena in the light of their own culture-specific knowledge. The main point about Nord's functionalist approach is that, it is not the source text as such, or its effect on the ST recipient, or the function assigned to it by the author that operates the translational process, as postulated by equivalence-based translation theory, but the prospective function or *skopos* of the target text.

CHAPTER 4

THE TRANSLATION OF TABOO TERMS INTO ISIXHOSA

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to consider strategies necessary for the translation of English words which are regarded as taboo when translated into isiXhosa. In implementing these strategies, a translator needs to be mindful of factors that may impact the end result, such as the communicative aspects relating to specific cultural contexts and any relevant theory of equivalence which may, in some cases, lead to dubious conclusions. Equivalence in translation, then, should not be approached as a search for sameness, since sameness cannot even exist between two TL versions of the same text, let alone between the SL and the TL versions (Bassnett-McGuire 1980:29).

1.2 BACKGROUND

Throughout the era of normative and prescriptive approaches to translation, the effectiveness of a translation was assessed in terms of a fixed theory of what constitutes equivalence between two texts. It is also important for a translator to understand the following aspects of the text:

- message contained in the text,
- the sender's intention,
- historical context,
- manner of delivery,
- medium of communication,
- the place of communication and
- the participants involved.

Moreover, the field of translation studies has become a relatively independent discipline with clearly delineated goals, that is, the description of translations and translation processes and the discovery of general rules for the development of models capable of explaining these phenomena.

2. ORGANISATION OF CHAPTER 4

Section 4.2 will provide problem-solving strategies for taboo words in isiXhosa. An analysis of the strategies for the translation of taboo words in isiXhosa is discussed in 4.3 including euphemisms as a strategy of generalisation.

3.1 THE MAIN TRANSLATION PROBLEMS

Throughout history, translators (mainly literary or Bible translators) have observed that different situations call for different renderings. Shifts, in relation to translational analysis have been noticed before, but have invariably been attributed to deliberate distortions, incompetence on the part of the translator, or linguistic incompatibility between two languages. I believe that the more unequivocal and definite the description of the target text recipient, the easier it is for the translator to make his or her decisions in the course of the translation process. The following are some problems that are experienced at word level when the target language has no direct equivalent for a word that occurs in the source text and some common strategies that are used to deal with such situations (based on Baker 1992:10-114).

Common problems of non-equivalence

▪ Culture-specific concepts

A concept that is completely unknown in the target culture, such as religious belief, specific food or a social custom, is referred to as 'culture specific', for example, in the Hindu custom, there are various forms of showing respect, some of which are:

- *Pratuthana* – rising to welcome a person
- *Namaskaara* – paying homage in the form of *namaste* (a short bow that is performed with the hands held together at one's chest, in prayer fashion)
- *Upasangrahan* – touching the feet of the elders or teachers
- *Shaashtaanga* – prostrating fully with the feet, knees, stomach, chest, forehead and arms touching the ground in front of the elders (sign of respect for nobility and divinity that the elders personify)
- *Pratyabivaadana* – returning a greeting.

- **SL concept has no word or expression in TT**

While a word or concept may be understood by most people, the TT may have no word to express it, for example, in the Xhosa culture, words such as *umtsimba* the SeSwati word for a traditional wedding; and *Chlamydia infection*, an infection, caused by a bacterium, more commonly referred to as thrush do not have equivalent words or expressions in the Xhosa culture.

- **SL word is semantically complex**

A single word may express a concept or meaning that is so complex that it translates into a whole sentence. Where a concept becomes important or, due to its topical nature, is often talked about, languages develop a concise form to refer to it: an example is the term *affirmative action* which, when translated into isiXhosa is '*inkqubo yokubonelela abo babekade bengenamalungelo kumbuso wangaphambili*', which literally means, 'a programme to assist those who had no rights under the rule of the previous government'.

- **SL and TL make different distinctions in meaning**

TL may make fewer or more distinctions in relation to the meanings that are attributed to certain words than SL. In African languages, for example, there is no distinction between '*he*' and '*she*' and in isiXhosa, the third person singular pronoun is neutral and does not distinguish between the genders, as demonstrated in the sentences below:

- a) *Mbalekisele esibhedlele, uyagula.* (Rush him/her to the hospital, he/she is sick)
- b) *Uyakuthanda ukulila xa echwayitile.* (She/He likes to cry when she/he is happy)

- **TL lacks a general word**

TL may have specific words but no general word to head the semantic field, for example, the view of AIDS as a predominantly collective gay disease incurs a typical victim-type response when AIDS is perceived by homosexual men as a threat to their sexuality or sexual identity formation (Isaacs & McKendrick 1992:122). Most translators do not translate the acronym 'AIDS'

because there is no general word that provides a more viable translation alternative other than AIDS.

- **TL lacks a specific word**

English has a variety of specific words for the general word house, such as *bungalow, cottage, chalet, lodge, hut, mansion, manor, villa*, etc., for which it may be difficult to find equivalents in other languages.

- **Differences in physical perspective or interpersonal perspective**

Physical perspective is where things or people are physically located in relation to one another or to a place (give/take, come/go). Perspective may also include the relationship between participants in discourse, e.g. Japanese has six equivalents for give, depending on who gives to whom.

- **Differences in expressive meaning**

Although the TL word refers to the same thing as the SL word, it may carry different emotional connotations. This is often the case with words that relate to sensitive issues such as religion, politics, and sex – for example, the word *lust* used to mean simply *pleasure* with no negative or sexual overtones. In more recent times the meaning of *lust* has evolved to refer to a strong sexual desire for someone. Another example is the phrase *to shit* which, in times gone by, did not shame our forebears who never felt embarrassment when using the verb *to shit* because they regarded that as part of nature. The IsiXhosa verbs, *ukunya* or, *ukukaka* which mean *to shit* are now regarded as taboo to the extent that the one who uses these terms is considered ill-mannered or uncouth.

- **Differences in form**

The target language often has no equivalent form, for example, in terms regarded as taboo in the isiXhosa language are very difficult to translate such as: *kaffir* (racist and offensive term referring to black people); *coolie* (similarly racist and offensive term referring to Indians). People from the same racial and language groups also use discriminatory and equally offensive terms among themselves. the *iQabakazi* – the feminine form of *iQaba*, means

'*the uneducated one*¹'. Itan expression that is commonly used by urban dwellers, to refer to a female who is new to the city. It is classist and carries the connotation of someone who is lacking in sophistication. '*Imvimvane*' is the term used for men who hail from the rural areas. More general terms include suffixes such as: *-ish* (*boyish, hellish*) or *-able* (*drinkable, observable*). Such forms tend to be paraphrased, i.e. observable as 'can be observed'.

- **Differences in frequency and purpose of using specific forms**

Even if a particular form has an equivalent in TL, there may be a difference in the frequency with which it is used or the purpose for which it is used. When sexist language encodes stereotyped attitudes towards women, e.g. *a whore, prostitute, wench or bitch* in English for women who falls in love with more than one man. In isiXhosa she is termed *ihule, isifebe, uNontshwaxa, uNopatazana, uNonkwabatshula or uNontoroty* (see 2.5.5 for English back translations). The Old English word that occurs as modern *starve* once meant 'to die'. Its original meaning was 'to die of hunger', and in colloquial language 'to be very hungry', as in 'I am starving'.

- **The use of loan words in ST**

Loan words are often used for their prestige value, and it is not always possible to find a loan word with the same meaning in TL. In establishing *genetic relationships* among languages, words that may have been borrowed and are, therefore, not part of a common inheritance should be excluded. The vocabularies of Modern Japanese and English share a significant number of common words, e.g. karate, beer, computer, hibachi, etc. Most of the isiXhosa terminology is made up of borrowed words from Afrikaans and a few from English, for example:

Kaposi's sarcoma – *iKaposi sarcoma* (*a type of skin cancer which often affects HIV/AIDS patients*).

Ikati – *kat* (*cat*)

Ifestile – *venster* (*window*)

¹ It is a term that originates from colonial times and was originally used to describe the 'uncivilised' who conformed to Xhosa custom rather than Western customs¹

Ilokhwe – rok (dress)

Idyasi - jas (coat)

Idesika – desk

Ihempe – hemp (shirt)

3.2 GENERAL PROBLEM-SOLVING STRATEGIES

In translating culture-specific terms, there will always be gaps, different interpretations and different reception, complexities to be reduced as well as ambiguities to be solved. According to Naudé (2000b:18), authors such as Delabastita (1993), Newmark (1988), Williams (1990) and Baker (1992, 1993) were consulted to set up the following categorisation of strategies:

Transference	The process of transferring a source language item to a target language text unchanged; the source language item becomes a loan item in the target language.
Indigenisation / domestication	Similar to transference but with a slight modification to remove some of the foreignness.
Cultural substitution	Replacing a culture-specific item with a target language item that is likely to have the same impact on the target reader.
Generalisation	Culturally neutral term, a less expressive item or even a more general item to define the source language culture specific term.
Specification (Intensification / explication)	Use of a culturally more specific term, a more expressive item or a more specific item to define the source language culture specific term.
Mutation	Deletion: not rendering the item at all. Addition: adding linguistic, cultural or textual items which did not occur in the source text.
Transposition	A translation strategy involving a change in the grammar from source language to target language.
Translation couplet	A combination of two of the above categories

The translation problems encountered while translating those terms that are considered to be taboo in isiXhosa, as well as the strategies that are employed to deal with these problems are discussed in this chapter.

3.3 STRATEGIES FOR THE TRANSLATION OF TABOO WORDS INTO ISIXHOSA

- **Euphemisms as a strategy of generalisation**

A **euphemism** is a word or phrase, which is used as a replacement for a taboo word or phrase. It also serves the purpose of ‘couching’ or ‘softening the blow’ that is associated with references to frightening or unpleasant subjects. In many societies, the subject of death is treated with awe and, as a result, numerous euphemisms exist to describe it. For example, the English euphemisms used to say ‘to die’ include ‘to pass away’ and the person who has ‘passed away’ is ‘the deceased’.

The traditions and customs of the isiXhosa-speaking people are deeply rooted within the Xhosa society and way of life and, consequently, find their expression through the isiXhosa language. The most important custom is known as ‘*ukuhlonipha*’ which has its ‘*hlonipha*’ language, comprising euphemisms and words that are used to express respect.

In isiXhosa, respect for death is shown by making use of the following phrases:

IsiXhosa	Literal translation into English
<i>Uyibekile inqawa</i>	He has put the pipe down
<i>Uyikhabile ibhekile</i>	He has kicked the bucket
<i>Uye kwantsongwanyawana</i>	He went to a place where you have to fold your feet
<i>Ulishiyile elimagad’ahlabayo</i>	He has left the thorny earth
<i>Usishiyile</i>	He has left us
<i>Uswelekile</i>	He has passed away
<i>Ubhubhile</i>	He has passed away

Death, when it is not accidental or brought about by some unnatural or homicidal cause, is regarded as a natural continuation of human existence since the spirit is considered to live beyond the physical death. Broster (1979:4) points out that death does not complete the cycle of life, since the spirit of the deceased is isolated in a state of transition immediately after the death. The duration of this isolation is determined by the social status of the deceased. When a man has died of old age, the family sacrifices an ox after a period of mourning – or as soon as it is possible for all male family members to be present. The sacrifice forms a part of the ceremony of ‘*ukubuyisa utata*’ (bringing home father). This is the most important of all the sacrifices that are made for a member of the family, and failure to conform with this custom results in the spirit of the deceased remaining earthbound.

The isiXhosa-speaking people believe that the spirits of the departed have power over their own families, controlling everything pertaining to their families. Rain, crops, cattle, wives, children, health and happiness are their bounty. Throughout every sacrifice, strict ritual and the avoidance of any terms regarded as taboo terms are observed, for any neglect or misdemeanour would incur fiery wrath and retribution from the spirits.

In addition to the above euphemisms, children are taught which words and terms are considered taboo as they are growing up and learning the isiXhosa language. These taboo words differ from one child to another, depending on the value system that is accepted and adhered to by the family or social group in which the child grows up. The following are some examples of English euphemisms:

To urinate (with reference to males)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>water the horse</i> ▪ <i>drain the dragon</i>
To go to the toilet (with reference to females)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>make yourself shorter</i> ▪ <i>visit the ladies’ room</i>
To have sexual intercourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>play like elders</i> ▪ <i>make stories under the blanket</i> ▪ <i>slip a length</i>

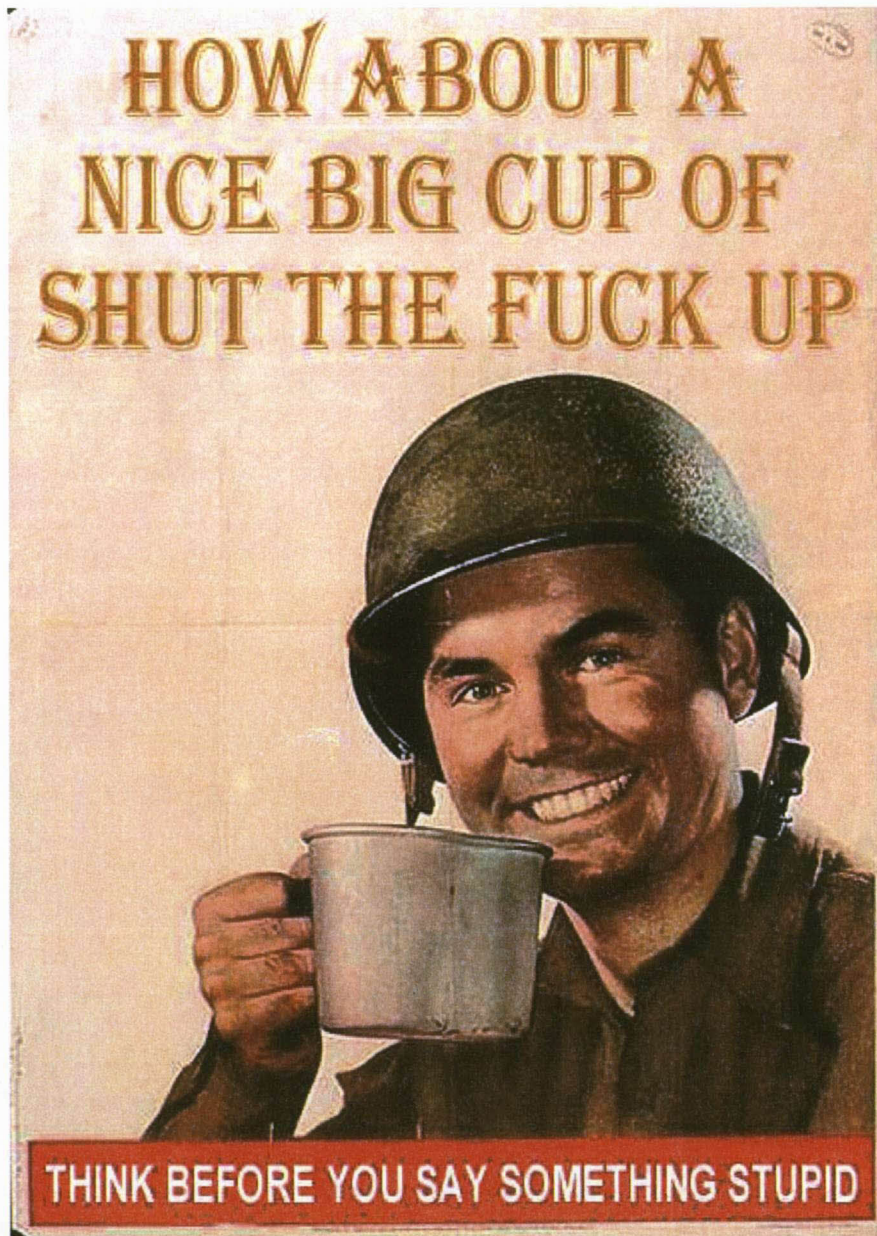
While the above examples do not make much sense when translated in isiXhosa, they may still be used by translators, for example, the expression ‘*make yourself shorter*’ which, translated into isiXhosa is, ‘*ukuzenza mfutshane*’ is understood to mean going

to the toilet. Although this study focuses on taboo terms, these are related to acts of taboo since taboo words emerge as the result of an act of taboo being committed. According to Broster (1979:17), major taboos usually involve the neglect of religious restraints related to propitiatory sacrifices. Another serious misdemeanour, and one that is only rectified by the imposition of a monetary fine and a sacrifice, is that in which an ancestral spirit is addressed or called upon in anger – a frequent occurrence in family quarrels. Most of the sacrifices made to the ancestral spirits constitute a ritual cleansing, done through slaughtering a goat, after which an individual may return to his/her normal life. That is why in the Xhosa culture, any wrong behaviour shames the ancestral spirits, for it reflects badly on their moral and disciplinary powers.

Taboo words in isiXhosa sometimes create social and linguistic limitations in terms of the ability to express oneself and, therefore, need to be modernised to deal with continuous societal changes, including technological changes. In the life of amaXhosa, it is also regarded as taboo for a man to 'hang out' with women, hence the term 'moffie' is used to describe a man whose manner is considered to be effeminate. Language planning in South Africa needs to focus on an effort to create new common regional and national languages or to regulate and improve the existing languages as a basic premise. My observation is that taboos are never merely language problems, but have a direct impact on all spheres of life, making it difficult to pinpoint the context of language problems in a restrictive way. This means that problems encountered in the use of language are also social problems and, therefore, language practitioners should make efforts to use political mechanisms to solve these problems, enabling language problems to be dealt with in a socio-political context.

In translating taboo words into isiXhosa, a very useful option that I would recommend is: **Translation by paraphrase using a related word**. Paraphrases are translated sentences that have the same meaning as the source text, with the possible exception of minor differences in emphasis, for instance, where a translator is asked to translate the advertisement depicted below, which states: "*How about a nice big cup of shut the fuck up*", in isiXhosa, this may be translated to read: "*Kunganjani ukuba ufumane ubuncwane bekofu emnandi nethomalalisayo*". This literally means, "How about a nice cup of coffee that makes you relax". To avoid the "*shut the fuck*

up” part which is a taboo, a translator may use the strategy of generalisation because one of the most important aspects of cultural substitution is the manner in which people are directly addressed. The advertisement referred to is represented below:



Many other examples of shifts involving cultural substitution are likely to have the same impact on the target reader. More commonly, languages tend to have general words (super ordinates) but lack specific ones (hyponyms), since each language makes only those distinctions in meaning that seem relevant to its particular

environment (Baker 1992:23). The source-language word may express a concept that is totally unknown in the target culture or, if known, may be regarded as taboo when translated into IsiXhosa. This creates an opportunity for further complexities to arise. For example, a woman's anatomy is a taboo in most African cultures and translators nowadays are dealing more with this kind of terminology because of the vulnerable state between recently diagnosed patients and those diagnosed during the first stages of the appearance of HIV/AIDS. The following are also problem-solving strategies for these taboo words in isiXhosa:

a) Translation by a more general word

Translation by a more general word (super ordinate) is a strategy to overcome a relative lack of specificity in the TL compared with the SL, for example:

In English: *'You are a whore looking around for sex partners'*.

In isiXhosa: *'unguNondatshaza'* which literally means moving from one place to another in the manner of a gossip who is looking for 'newsworthy' information.

b) Translation by cultural substitution

This is a strategy where the cultural taboo item or expression is replaced with a target language taboo item that does not have the same propositional meaning but conveys a similar impact to the target reader, e.g.

In English: *'Your mother's cunt'*

In isiXhosa: *'Umsunu kanyoko'* which literally means your mother's private parts.

c) Translation using a loan word or a loan word and an explanation

This strategy is particularly common when dealing with culture-specific items. Once the loan word has been explained, it can be used on its own throughout the text, for example:

In English: ELISA (Enzyme-linked Immunosorbent Assay) – a blood test done to find out whether a person has been infected with the virus that causes AIDS (HIV)

In isiXhosa: I-ELISA (*uvavanyo-gazi olubonisa ukuba umntu wosulelwe*)

yintsholongwane ebangela uGawulayo. (Terminology Draft List: 1997:34).

d) Translation by domestication

Paraphrases are sentences which have the same meaning, except possibly for minor differences in emphasis, for example,

In English: 'You are a moffie!'

In isiXhosa: 'Uyimofi', a term used to refer to homosexuals. The use of synonyms may create lexical paraphrase, just as the use of homonyms may create lexical ambiguity. Sentences may also be paraphrased because of structural differences that are not essential to their meaning. In this case, this strategy is used when SL item is lexicalised in TL but in a different form, for example:

In English: Immune system – the body's defence mechanism *fighting* off infections and diseases (Terminology Draft List: 1997:57).

In isiXhosa: *Isinqanda-zifo – isikhuseli-zifo emzimbeni esithi silwe usulelo kunye nezifo*.

Fighting translated as *which fights...*

e) Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words

SL item is not lexicalised in TL but the paraphrase strategy can still be used sometimes, for example, *vagina* (taboo) translated in isiXhosa as, "*ilungu langaphantsi loomama*", and penis as '*ilungu langaphantsi lootata*'.


f) Translation by omission


There are certain words, such as taboo words, jargon or grammatically-bound words which, for sound reasons, one may decide not to translate, for example:

A **picnic basket** (taken from a glossary of gay vernacular in use in South Africa) which means 'shape and size of penis and testicles outlined within trousers, underwear, or bathing suit' (Gordon Isaacs & Brian McKendrick 1992:249) can be translated in isiXhosa as, '*iimpahla zamatalasi ezibonisa amalungu angasese*' – translated as '*a transparent outfit worn by homosexuals*' in English.

g) Translation by illustration

A very useful option where the word that lacks an equivalent in the target language refers to a physical entity, which can be illustrated and if text should remain short and straight to the point, for example:

 for happy;

 for buttocks.

The following is a list of English terms, which are *taboo* when translated into isiXhosa, and recommended strategies that can be used in translating them:

Recommended strategies for translating English terms which are taboo when translated into isiXhosa

English concept	Taboo isiXhosa word	Explanation	Translation Strategy	Translation into isiXhosa and English back translations
A divorced woman	<i>Idikwamzi</i> (shortened as <i>idikazi</i>)	Originally <i>Idikwamzi</i> referred to a divorced woman – from the term ‘ <i>ukušikwa</i> ’ which means to become fed up. It also refers to an unmarried woman who has an illegitimate child. In other varieties of isiXhosa such as isiThembu or isiRharhabe, while the term <i>Idikwamzi</i> is known, it is considered derogatory and insulting. It is used to convey derision of old maids and spinsters, labelling them as figures of fun and ridicule. With ‘amaMpondo’, the word ‘ <i>idikazi</i> ’ is used in everyday life without the negative connotations perceived among other isiXhosa speakers.	Generalisation is a translation strategy that can be used. Translation using a more general word is one of the most common strategies for dealing with many types of non-equivalence.	The term may be translated into IsiXhosa as ‘ <i>Inkosikazi ephelwe ngumendo</i> ’, which means ‘a woman who has lost her marriage’ instead of ‘ <i>idikwamzi/idikazi</i> ’.
A child born out of wedlock	<i>Umgqakhwe / isizananina</i>	<i>Umgqakhwe</i> refers to a child who is born out of wedlock. If the mother of this child marries, she is not allowed to bring her child to her new home. In the event that she is given permission to bring her child to her married home, the child is denied the privileges that a child of the married couple is entitled to. In the event that the step-father passes away, the child is not entitled to inherit anything from the deceased’s estate.	Cultural substitution is a strategy that can be used here. The main advantage of using this strategy is that it gives the reader a concept with which to identify, something familiar and appealing (Baker 1992:31).	The term may be translated into isiXhosa as ‘ <i>Umntwana ozalelwe kulontombi</i> ’ which means ‘a child born when the woman was still at her parent’s home’ in order to avoid using the taboo term <i>umgqakhwe</i> .
An old unmarried	<i>Ujose/uNondindwal</i>	These isiXhosa words refer to a spinster who	Translation by a more	Translating the spinster

woman	<i>inkazana</i> (taboo)	has passed the age of getting married. While some women enjoy their independence and choose not to marry, it is considered disgraceful in most African cultures. As a result, these women are labelled using the above names to devalue them in their society and regarded as unwanted by a man. It is important, therefore, for a translator to be aware of such power imbalances in society as this enables the translator to mediate in order to make text accessible.	neutral/less expressive word	concept into isiXhosa as ' <i>Ibhinqa elingekabonwa lisoka</i> ', meaning a woman who has not been seen by an eligible yet'.
Waste matter discharged from the bowels	<i>Ubunya / ithafa / ikaka / ituwa</i>	Refers to a stool, faeces, waste matter discharged from the bowels.	Cultural Substitution is a translation strategy that can be used: It is often necessary to substitute a culture-specific item with an item in the target language, which is likely to have the same impact on the target reader.	It may be translated into isiXhosa as ' <i>okukhutshwa ngezantsi</i> ', which means 'waste that is discharged underneath'.
Vagina	<i>Ikuku / uNopesana / inyo / igusha</i>	Refers to female reproductive organs (vagina).	Translation by para-phrase using a related word can be used as a translation strategy. This strategy tends to be used when the concept expressed by the source item is lexicalized in the target language though in a different form, and when the frequency with which a certain form is used in the source text is significantly higher than would be natural in the target language (Baker 1992:37).	It may be translated into isiXhosa as, ' <i>umhlaba ongaphantsi/ ongezantsi kwabesifazana</i> ', which means 'an area underneath in women's bodies'.

Penis	<i>Incanca / umthondo / intonga</i>	Refers to male reproductive organs (penis).	Translation by paraphrase using a related word.	It may be translated into isiXhosa as, ' <i>umhlaba ongaphantsi/ ongezantsi kootata</i> ', which means 'a portion underneath in males' bodies'.
Balls	<i>Amasende / amatyhalarha</i>	Refers to male organs which produce spermatozoa (testicles).	Generalisation. This is one of the strategies that may be employed to translate a culturally-specific term using a less expressive term	It may be translated into isiXhosa as; ' <i>amatapile</i> ' which literally means 'potatoes'.
Sperms	<i>Umlaza</i>	Refers to the male reproductive fluid containing spermatozoa (sperms).	Generalisation / Euphemism. Since the Xhosa nation has a paradoxical history of a deep-rooted patriarchal tradition, anything that has something to do with men's private parts is dealt with in a very respectful manner. Therefore, generalisation or euphemism can be used to translate a culture-specific term using one that is less expressive.	It may be translated into isiXhosa as ' <i>amakhwenkwe</i> ', which literally means 'boys'.
To ejaculate	<i>Ukuchama</i>	Refers to anyone who reaches a climax of sexual excitement (to reach an orgasm).	Generalisation	It may be translated into isiXhosa as, ' <i>ukuchitha</i> ', which literally means 'to throw out'.
Sexual intercourse	<i>Ukutyiwa / ukukhwelwa / ukulalwa / ukutshinwa</i>	To have sexual intercourse with a man/woman having an agreement to do so.	Generalisation / Euphemism	It may be translated into isiXhosa as; ' <i>ukulalana / ukudibana ngesondo</i> ' which literally means 'to

				sleep with one another’.
To make love with a woman who has never had sexual intercourse	<i>Ukuqhaqha / ukuqumza iqanda</i>	Refers to a man who sleeps with a virgin. During 2002, South Africa witnessed a surge in the rape of babies and young children. The existence of a myth that an HIV-positive man can be cured if he has sex with a virgin.	Generalisation / Euphemism	It may be translated into isiXhosa as; ‘ <i>ukukrazula</i> ’ which literally means ‘to tear / to break an egg’.
To menstruate	<i>Ukupeyinta / ukuhlamba / ukuya engceni</i>	The process of discharging blood and other materials from the lining of the uterus in sexually mature non-pregnant women at intervals of about one lunar month until the menopause.	Generalisation / Euphemism. In this instance, the <i>hlonipha</i> code in the discourse of rape victims helps them to maintain their cultural identity instead of using sexually explicit discourse. This non-compliance with the legal register of sexual explicitness has implications for police transcriptions of statements, which are very crucial documents when used in rape trials.	The euphemistic term that may be used when translating into isiXhosa is, ‘ <i>ukuba sexesheni</i> ’ literally means ‘to be in time’.
Pubis	<i>Isibumbu</i>	The lower part of the abdomen at the front of the pelvis covered with hair from puberty.	Generalisation / Euphemism	It may be translated into isiXhosa as, ‘ <i>ikuku</i> ’ which literally means ‘vetkoek’.
Foreskin	<i>Ijwabi</i>	Refers to the fold of skin covering the end of the penis.	Generalisation / Euphemism	It may be translated into isiXhosa as, ‘ <i>la ndawo isuswayo emakhwenkweni xa esiya esuthwini</i> ’ which iterally means ‘the portion that is cut when boys are going

				to the circumcision school'.
To be horny	<i>Ukubatywa/ Ukuvukelwa/ Ukuphathwa yimbatyo</i>	A slang which means to be sexually aroused or even lust.	Transposition. This is one of the strategies which involves a change in the grammar from the source text to the target text.	It may be translated into isiXhosa as, ' <i>ukunqwenela umhlaba ongezantsi,</i> ' which literally means 'the desire for private parts'.
A barren woman	<i>Idlolo</i>	An insult that is used to refer to a woman who is unable to bear children. In the Xhosa culture, if a woman cannot bear children for her husband, the husband's brother has sexual intercourse with her. If she still cannot fall pregnant, the father-in-law has intercourse with his daughter-in-law. This will go on until amongst the family members there is a 'man that is man enough' to make the woman pregnant.	Cultural substitution	It may be translated into isiXhosa as, ' <i>inkosikazi engafumani bantwana</i> ' which, literally means 'a woman who is unable to bear a child'.
Pubic hair	<i>Izinza</i>	Refers to the hair, which grows in the pubis when puberty begins.	Generalisation / Euphemism	It may be translated into isiXhosa as; ' <i>Uboya obuphuma ngaphantsi,</i> ' which literally means 'hair that grows underneath'.
To pass away	<i>Ukufa</i>	Refers to someone who is deceased or passed away (to pass away).	Transposition. This is one of the strategies that involve a change in the grammar from the source text to the target text.	It may be translated into isiXhosa as, ' <i>Ukubhubha / ukusweleka / Ukusishiya / Ukugoduka / Ukuhamba</i> ' which literally means 'the

				person is gone forever/ gone home/ has left us'.
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4. SUMMARY

This chapter has focused on the translation strategies that can be used to deal with the problems that are encountered when transferring culture-specific terms. Common problems of non-equivalence at word level and problem-solving strategies for translating terms that are regarded as taboo in the isiXhosa culture have also been discussed. The fact is that what one culture may regard as unimportant, or even non-existent, because it cannot be expressed in words, may be, by the same criteria, considered to be supremely important in another culture. Baker (1992:113) asserts that the importance of the underlying semantic connections, cohesion in the text, and a functionalist approach allow for changes that are deemed necessary to ensure an acceptable and functional translation for the target readers.

Naudé (2000b:18) pinpoints that a category of strategies was set up by authors such as Delabastita (1993), Newmark (1988), Williams (1990) and Baker (1992, 1993) to enable the transfer of culture-specific items which include transference, indigenisation/domestication, cultural substitution, generalisation, specification, mutation, transposition and translational couplet. An analysis of the discourse used which revealed some clear differences in terminology further confirmed the existence of taboo words in isiXhosa. These taboo terms also revealed that language is a powerful tool of patriarchal culture. Euphemisms as a strategy of generalisation and the *hlonipha* custom, which replaces taboo words, still serve to avoid unpleasant subjects in the IsiXhosa culture.

Regarding the main theme, which is the translation of taboo words in isiXhosa, the following strategies were employed:

- **Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word**, for example, an old unmarried woman may be translated as '*Ibhinqa elingekabonwa lisoka*' which means a female who has not as yet found a suitable unmarried man.
- **Translation by cultural substitution** – which means replacing a culture-specific item with a target language item that is likely to have the same impact on the

target reader, for example, waste matter discharged from the bowels can be translated as '*okukhutshwa ngezantsi*' in isiXhosa which means waste that is discharged underneath'.

- **Translation by a more general word** – culturally neutral term, a less expressive item or even a more general item to define the source language cultural specific term, for example, 'pubic hair' which is translated as '*Uboya obuphuma ngaphantsi*' which literally means 'hair that grows underneath'.
- **Translation by paraphrase using a related word** – a strategy which tends to be used when the concept expressed by the source item is lexicalized in the target language but in a different form, and when the frequency with which a certain form is used in the source text is significantly higher than would be natural in the target language.
- **Euphemisms** – this strategy is used to replace terms regarded as taboo in the IsiXhosa culture, for example, to menstruate which may be translated as '*ukuba sexesheni*' in isiXhosa which literally means 'to be in time'.
- **Transposition** – this is one of the strategies which involves a change in the grammar from the source text to the target text, for example, to be horny is translated as '*ukunqwanela umhlaba ongezantsi*' which literally means 'the desire for private parts'.

There are many other issues that still need to be investigated in African languages. We may ask ourselves: 'What is it that is so important about these taboo words?' Why do we have to translate them? What would the isiXhosa speakers do if their taboos are exploited? Some work has been done regarding taboo words but, unfortunately, no comprehensive research exists in the field of translating taboo words in African languages. There is a great need to address this problem because it affects all the African languages of South Africa, not only in isiXhosa. It is, therefore, imperative that a competent and honest translator be used to investigate and develop translation strategies in order to translate these terms that are regarded as taboo in his target

language. A close exploration of our traditions, values and customs will enable language practitioners to introduce new and effective strategies and methods that can be used in the translation of taboo words and terms.

In Chapter 5 a final summary of the study will be provided with some suggestions regarding further areas for research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIM

The purpose of this chapter is to briefly discuss findings and recommendations concerning the strategies for the translation of taboo words into isiXhosa. Most of the problems of inter-ethnic communication affect the non-dominant African language speaking groups adversely. Translators are the people invariably blamed in these inter-ethnic miscommunications, especially with regard to taboo words in African languages.

1.2 BACKGROUND

As indicated in Chapter 1, certain words which are acceptable in the Western culture pose a problem for translation into isiXhosa and other African languages because they are taboo in the event of their being translated with equivalent terms. The object of this study, therefore, is to investigate these problems and suggest translation strategies to overcome them. The issue of language is a very emotive one and requires to be treated sensibly. Translation of terms with a religious connotation is difficult in isiXhosa. Certain terms have a far deeper and richer meaning, which renders translation difficult, e.g. terms regarded as taboo. That is why many words and concepts can only be fully understood in their isiXhosa context, for example: *'ukuhlonipha'*; *'igqirha'*, *'isangoma'*, *'uthikoloshe'*, etc. Within the Xhosa culture, these taboo words or prohibitions cover every facet of life. It is therefore very important to the isiXhosa-speaking people themselves and to the ancestral spirits that each family follow this inviolable code of taboos. If a taboo is violated, the sacrifice of an animal as a symbolic act which purges away that particular sin, sometimes with traditional beer known as *'umqombothi'* will be performed. All of this is a true reflection of the omnipotent power of the ancestral spirits and the fundamental dependence of the isiXhosa-speaking people on them.

1.3 ORGANISATION OF CHAPTER 5

My starting point in this chapter is to discuss the major goal of this study. Emphasis will be placed on taboo words in isiXhosa and their classification. I have also looked briefly on the move from the traditional approach to the functionalist approach; linguistic implications of taboo words as well as the summary of strategies for the translation of taboo words into isiXhosa.

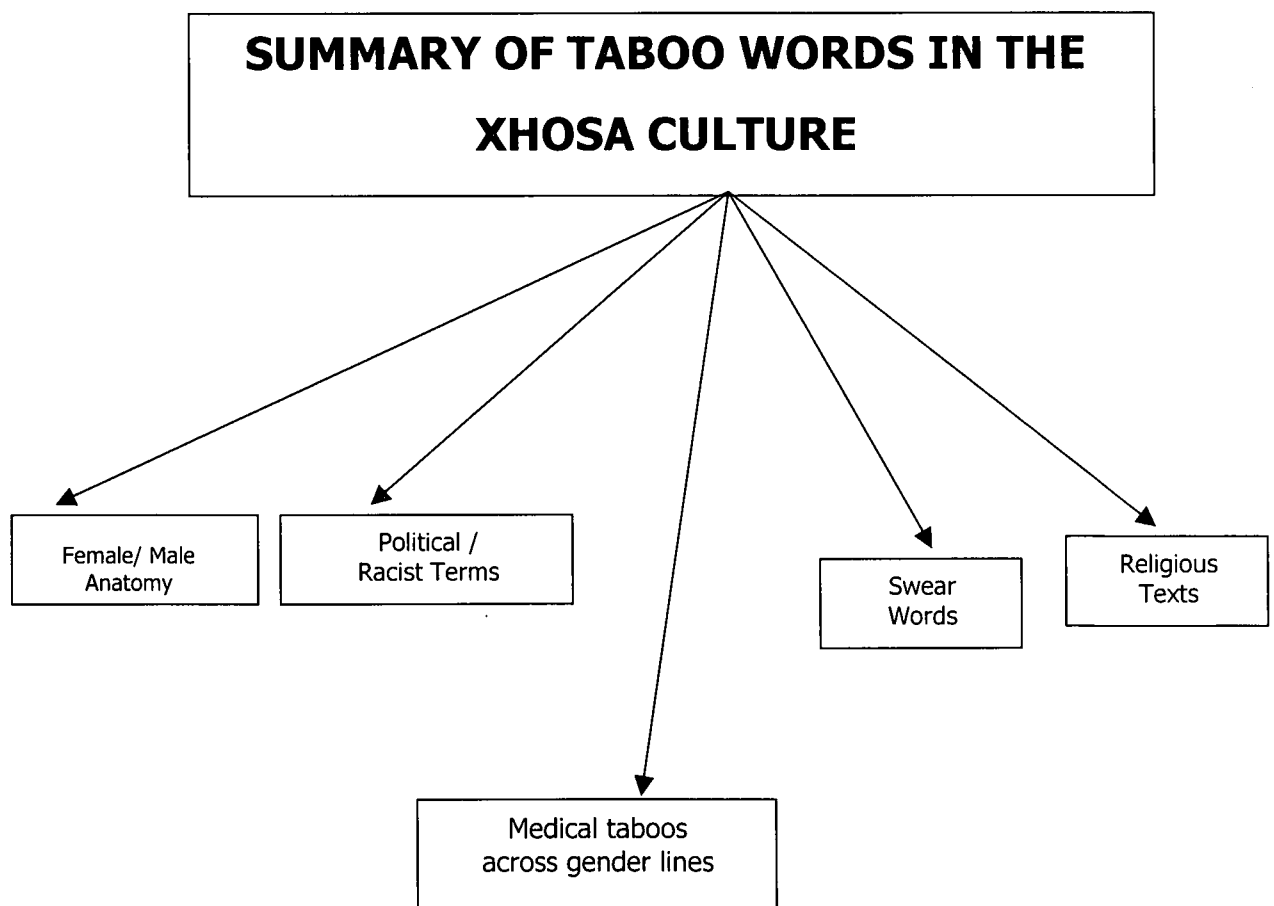
2. MAJOR FOCUS OF THE STUDY

As indicated earlier, the aim of this study is to investigate translation strategies, which may be used to translate terms, or words that are regarded as taboo in the Xhosa culture. People from different communities and cultures will have different assumptions and conventions for translating or interpreting a message which is incompletely conveyed by the language itself. Clarification of the difficulties involved in inter-cultural communication require that a set of preliminary assumptions be articulated, for example, every individual is a reflection of the basic values of his/her culture and cultures are neither right nor wrong, better or worse but they are just different. Problems arise out of differences in cultural perceptions.

Apart from that, the fact that language variation goes *pari passu* with societal differentiation is important in the study of social organization and social change. As time goes by, a language may fail to serve the important societal functions of its speakers, e.g. the translation of taboo words in isiXhosa.

3. CLASSIFICATION OF TABOO WORDS IN ISIXHOSA

An exploration of different approaches that may be used to reduce the overlap that exists in translating culture specific terms was given in Chapter 2. A literature review of existing studies and a general analysis of the exposition of taboos in the Xhosa traditions, culture and customs of the isiXhosa-speaking people is also discussed in detail. Taboos in various languages are also discussed (see Annexure A). Issues such as swear words are briefly discussed (see Annexure B). The following is the summary of taboo words in isiXhosa:



All the terms associated with the above classification of taboo words demonstrate the powerful role played by linguistic choices in enforcing societal norms, even those that are based on divisive principles or beliefs. The conclusion led to the position of

language within culture and the role of translators and interpreters who are unable to circumvent the lack of appropriate terminology due to the culture-specific nature of some terms and the need for them to be well versed in the customs, habits and traditions of both source and target cultures.

4. MOVE FROM THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH TO FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH

As indicated in Chapter 3, there have been major developments in translation theory. A number of models describing the translation process over the past thirty years have been briefly discussed. Equivalence-based linguistic approaches focused on the source text, the features of which had to be preserved in the target text. This paved the way to Christiane Nord's Functionalist Approach (1991; 1997) which will be briefly discussed in the following sections.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TRANSLATION OF TABOO WORDS

In spite of the negative aspects surrounding taboos, they are considered an important element of morality in most African cultures. There are many challenges facing countries like South Africa as far as terminology is concerned as well as languages that are spoken by minority groups which tend to be ignored. In the field of translation, translators and interpreters should be adequately equipped to promote tolerance and respect for different languages and cultures. In so doing, they will give their target groups a high regard for their own languages and culture. In addition, our sexual behaviour causes the spread of HIV/AIDS so, hopefully, talking about sex will break down the taboos and stereotypes as well as the numerous stigmas associated with the epidemic. In the Xhosa culture, anything remotely associated with the digestive system, sexualities, anatomy (including both female and male sex organs and their functions) and death are regarded as taboo when translated into isiXhosa. Translation strategies which may be employed to overcome this problem are discussed below.

6. STRATEGIES FOR THE TRANSLATION OF TABOO TERMS INTO ISIXHOSA

In Chapter 4, the strategies that could be used for translating culture-specific terms are discussed. Attention is drawn to the description and explanation of the translation process within a functionalist framework. An exposition of Christiane Nord's functionalist approach (1991; 1997) as the theoretical framework which allows for changes that are deemed necessary to ensure an acceptable and functional translation is discussed fully. The reason for using this approach is that Nord's model offers a range of strategies which focus on the function and purpose of the target text as the most important aspects of a translation. The priority of the target-text purpose does not mean the source text is completely irrelevant. The source text provides the offer of information that forms the starting point for the offer of information formulated in the target text (Nord 1997:62). As an alternative to equivalence, Katharina Reiss introduced a functional category into her translation model and Hans Vermeer formulated his *skopos* theory in which function or aim (*skopos*) are key concepts (Naudé 2002:51). This *skopos* is contained in the translation brief, which is the set of translating instructions issued by the client when ordering the translation.

Christiane Nord (1997) provides yet another insight in the translation process by adding the concepts of loyalty and convention in order to limit the variety of possible functions or *skopos*. In Nord's view, the concept of loyalty takes account of the fact that the ultimate responsibility does not rest with the initiator, but with the translator, who, in the final analysis, is the only person qualified to judge whether the transfer process has taken place satisfactorily (Naudé 2002:52).

Furthermore, the categorization of strategies as set up by Delabastita (1993), Newmark (1988), Williams (1990) and Baker (1992, 1993) were used to describe the strategies for the translation of taboo words into isiXhosa. Female anatomy or any part of the woman's body is a taboo in the African culture and my most severe headache regards those translators who are becoming victims of this tug-of-war between the source text and the target text recipients.

7. OPEN-ENDED ISSUES AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Although this study is an exploration of an activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar and dictionary in order to apply the conglomerated knowledge of language to change the language behaviour of a group of people and to solve the political and administrative language problems in a society, more research is required regarding the transfer of cultural-specific items.

South Africans seek to accomplish the promotion of understanding between different racial groups and cultures. There is a lot of potential that needs to be tapped and a great deal of hidden capital that need to be unlocked. Racism sickness can be cured. It has been said that racism is a sickness of the mind and is not hereditary. It can therefore be cured. We as South Africans have diagnosed the sickness and we are close to finding the right treatment and stop calling each other names. It is time that we desist from a confrontational posture and, instead, opt for inclusive dialogues to find solutions to our differences. Gender violence is a problem transcending local, national, regional and international boundaries. It affects women from different cultures and races. In addition, reports from health workers indicate that the HIV-positive status of either the man or the woman is usually blamed on the woman. The scourge of raping children is shocking and brutal. It is said that it is a belief held by 30% of all South Africans that having sex with a baby or young child can cure Aids and is at best based on anecdotal evidence. This may sound as if I am out of topic but through this misunderstanding between different cultures that I have just mentioned above originates taboo words. On a positive note, one of the ongoing challenges in this important work of translating documents into different languages is to ensure that information is disseminated to all the people of South Africa in their own respective languages. Although this seems a very misanthropic paragraph on which to end, perhaps most language workers, translators, interpreters, lexicographers, terminographers, etc, will consider using my research in the near future.

ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A
TABOO WORDS IN VARIOUS LANGUAGES

JAPANESE TABOO WORDS

The following are examples of taboo words in Japanese:

Japanese slang - a part of The Alternative Dictionaries collection.

b

baka (*adj*)

stupid. *Adjective. Pointing at someone and saying "baka" is like telling someone that she/he is an idiot.*

bakayarou

"asshole" . *Literally "you deer-horse"; the term "baka" means "crazy" and is composed of the Chinese characters for "deer" and "horse", supposedly because a creature such as a "deer-horse" is absurd and therefore stupid.*

bukkoroshite yaru zo (*phrase*)

I'm going to kill you. *Literally it means I'm going to hit you to death.... do not use when unarmed*

c

chipatama (*noun*)

penis head

d

debusen

one who is physically attracted to fat people

g

gaisen

a person who is physically attracted to non-Japanese people -*pejorative*

garisen

one who is physically attracted to thin people

k

kuso shite shinezo!

Shitting - *Not a nice thing to say....*

kuso

shit

kusobaba

old fart (female). *Literally "shit old woman".*

kusojiji

old fart (male). *Literally "shit old man".*

m

musei (*noun*)

a wet dream - "*mu*" is the chinese character for 'dream'; and "*sei*" is the chinese character for 'sperm'; "*seishi*" is the whole japanese word for sperm

o

omonkuu (*action verb*)

oral sex (female) "*omon*" means honorific gate, and "*kuu*" is the verb 'to eat' like an animal eats.

A LIST OF TABOO WORDS IN CHINESE

Chinese slang - a part of The Alternative Dictionaries collection.

b

bi1 (noun)

vagina, *Cunt*. Very commonly used yet very offensive.

c

cao4 (verb)

have intercourse with - *Equivalent of the English word Fuck: 'Cao4 Ni3 Ma!' (Fuck your mother). It can also take an organ as the object: 'Cao4 Ni2 Ma Bi1!' (See Bi1.) This word only describes the action of a male. Its subject is usually 'I' and omitted. This is still the most offensive word in Chinese. It is, however, less offensive if used without an object.*

chou1 ni3 ma1 de bi1

Suck your mother's cunt. *Common in Taiwan, of unknown frequency in China. Not recommended if unarmed.*

d

diao3

penis, *Dick*. Could be used to prefix another noun to form a compound noun: 'Diao3 Ren2' = *asshole*.

g

gan4

fuck - *indicating a sexual intercourse*

gun3 dan4

to leave here quickly (a saying by someone who is tired of another) - *verb*

h

huai4 dan4 [noun]

villain, wastrel, possible criminal. *literally: bad egg.*

hun2 dan4 [noun]

bastard, child of uncertain ancestry. *literally: mixed egg*

j

ji1 ba (noun)

penis, *Cock*. The most common term for penis. Often used as a pure expletive in sentence: 'Che3 ji1 ba dan4' = *'Bullshit'*.

ji1ji1

penis, *Pee-pee or wee-wee.*

n

nu nu (3)

Tits, *Pronounced "New New" A very cute way of saying breasts.*

w

wan2ba1 dan4

"turtle-egg" something like a cuckold. *BAD.*

A LIST OF TABOO WORDS IN FRENCH

French slang - a part of *The Alternative Dictionaries* collection.

Some taboo words engender euphemisms which themselves begin to take on taboo qualities, sometimes with the original word either disappearing or becoming acceptable. There have been ebbs and flows in taboo usage followed by periods of restraint, whether enforced by state power or by social agreement.

a

allumé (e) (adj.)
drunk . lit: lit up

b

baiser

to fuck. *This sense has almost replaced the earlier one of "to kiss", which in contemporary French is "embrasser". Do not use "baiser" to mean "to kiss" if you don't want to be misunderstood!*

bander (verb, intransitive)

to have a hard-on, *bander is commonly used for a bow drawn taut to let the arrow fly. Somehow the erect penis, hopefully hard, may have a similarity to a bow - just as in "tirer un coup" it is similar to a loaded gun. bander is not used with a direct object, but it can certainly be followed by a number of metaphors: bander comme un cerf (hard as a deer), comme un tigre (like a tiger). A particularly popular African wood with definite (and sometimes dangerous) aphrodisiac properties is known as "bois bandé". It is likely that in an intimate setting Abélard might have said to Héloïse "je bande pour toi" (i have a boner for you), and in the same setting she would be proud that he is "un bandeur", but in normal social intercourse it would not be considered appropriate to use any of those terms. However, the reverse would be quite possible: "débander", i.e., literally to become limp again, is also used metaphorically for "to chicken out". "Alors, mec, tu débandes?" - "Are you chicken?"*

BCBG (noun phrase, used as an adjective, both genders)

prim and proper (literally). *Prim and proper translates easily into bourgeois, upper middle-class, excessively formal, conservative, and, by and large, stuffy. French society hangs on to a large number of formalities that make the appearance of individuals (in terms of the language they use, the clothes they wear, the company they keep, the attitudes they affect) incredibly important. The proverb "l'habit fait le moine" (you judge the monk by his clothes, i.e. the book by its cover), although it can also be used in the negative (l'habit ne fait pas le moine) has some truth for most people. Female politicians, in particular, are expected to look very BCBG if they want to be successful... otherwise, they might be considered akin to fishmongers, using vulgar language like the first female prime minister, Edith Cresson, who was judged more by her appearance than by anything else... negatively, of course. Even though she was, on the whole, very BCBG, and only mimicked popular forms of speech.*

BCBG

Used to describe something very chic. Acronym for "*Bon chic, bon genre*". Originally used to describe high fashion, or the ultimate in good taste. Now often used disparagingly to describe pretentious "yuppies".

bigornette (noun; fem)

cocaine/horse, *litt.* translation: a fight. *Prendre de la bigornette.*

bite, bitte

cock, prick "*Bitte*" has the literal sense of "bollard".

bloblos (noun, feminine, plural)

large, fat, drooping boobs. The word can be considered somewhat vulgar - except to males drooling on big-chested women who obviously have not chosen the artificial firmness of silicone. In fact, "bloblos" is a vulgarizing variation of a word found commonly in children's language, "lolos", the source of milk, commonly known as "du lolo". Songwriter Serge Gainsbourg made ample use of "les lolos de lola" in his songs about dreamgirl Lola Rastaquouère (obviously not his wife, Jane Birkin, considering herself the most flat-chested actress in show business).

bordel (masc. noun)

chaos, shit; literally 'brothel'. better when preceded by 'putain de'

bossier (v)

to work. Very commonly used expression referring to working at one's job.

bourré,e

pissed, drunk. [buRe] A very commonly used variation of "ivre"

branlage

wanking (noun), masturbation

branlette

a wank, an act of masturbation

branleur, branleuse (noun)

wanker, insignificant or stupid person, mildly offensive

brouter le cresson (verb)

to perform cunnilingus. *Literal translation: "to graze the watercress."*

c

caca - poo, doo-doo. Found in certain non-slang combinations such as "caca d'oie", a type of green.

cailler (v)

to be cold. *Esp. used in: Ça caille!: It's cold, or it's freezing! and, Putain, je me caille!: Shit, I'm cold!*

casser la gueule à quelqu'un (phr.)

to beat the shit out of someone. *lit: to break someone's face Ex: Je casserai la gueule à Jean -- I'm going to beat the shit out of Jean.*

cette putain de machine

this fucking machine - can be used in any phrase

charbon (noun, masculine)

coal, "*aller au charbon*" is possibly to go down underground to mine it (which was common in several parts of France) or go to the cellar to bring some for the stoves, as was common until the 1940s in many places. Borrowed from the 19th century, the expression "*aller au charbon*" was used by former prime minister Raymond Barre, a very non-political politician recruited for his supposed economic skills, when president Giscard d'Estaing forced him to be a candidate in a district of Lyons - a town where he became an essentially absentee mayor a few years later, French politics being a mysterious interplay

between local (i.e., unimportant) and national (i.e., supernatural) politics. "Aller au charbon", somehow, could have meant: going down to the level of "les charbonniers" (the coal-people), i.e. the vulgum pecus, me, you, and all the other voters who should have been flattered to have the president-proclaimed best French economist as representative.

chatte

pussy. Refers to the female genitalia.

Chauve à col roulé (noun phrase, masculine)

The bald one with a turtleneck. A large number of French males being uncircumcized, the analogy is obvious between the uncapped penile head with the folds of the foreskin pulled back under the tip, and a bald man wearing a turtleneck. Chauve should be pronounced somewhat like "shove" in English.

chiasse

the runs, the trots. *Diarrhoea*

chier

to shit. Also used in "tu me fais chier" ("you make me puke").

chinois (noun, masculine)

the Chinaman - i.e., a penis. Is it because the opening at the tip is somewhat more like a slit than an actual hole? Whatever the cause, our Chinese comrades are often put to good use with the metaphor "se polir le Chinois" (to polish the Chinaman), for the very sweet act of giving yourself pleasure.

chiottes

the bog (UK), the can (US)

cigare (noun, masculine)

dick. Commonly used in phrases like "couper le cigare" (to circumcize, in kids' slang), "fumer le cigare" (to give a blowjob). The analogy can be pursued further in the latter case, as some women will not only be able to smoke the joint, but will also "avalier la fumée" (swallow the smoke, literally, obviously the semen). The comparison between the penis and a cigar can even be found in more literary circumstances: in a scene of the novel *Le Temps des Anges* by Swiss-French ewriter Catherine Colomb, a banker cuts the tip off a Cuban cigar with his teeth...and thinks about a Jewish friend of his.

cirer (verb, transitive)

to shine (shoes, floors). a common verb that was used in a cryptic way by the first female prime minister of France, socialist Edith Cresson, when she answered during a scrum: "la bourse, j'en ai rien à cirer" (the stock exchange, i don't have any use for it). It didn't help her political career, which was quite short, and convinced the French, who deep down are quite conservative, that she was too vulgar for the job. Especially when she accused the British of being usually gay, and the Japanese of being bastards.

clair comme dans le cul d'un negre

clear as negro's ass

clito (noun, feminine)

clit. Apart from medical journals, none uses the complete form "clitoris" for what most females consider the center of pleasure (unless they had the misfortune of coming from some African country where it's considered in poor taste to keep it). A young lady will not hesitate in requesting a reasonably good lover to give the little toy a tongue bath, as in "lèche-moi le clito, mec" (lick my clit, man). Some men will respond to such a request by "descendre à la cave", literally going down into the basement.

con

cunt. *Refers to the female genitalia.*

cunt, bastard, wanker, etc. *Insult towards a man. Female form: "conne".*

connard

cunt, bastard, wanker, etc. *Insult towards a man. Female form: "connarde".*

connasse

cunt, bitch, etc. *Insult towards a woman. No male form.*

couilles

balls, bollocks. *Testicles.*

cramouille (noun, feminine)

wet slit. *Commonly used when for some reason a male wants to use a slightly unpleasant noun for the genitals of a female - hopefully one he knows well, unless he really despises her. It insists on the wetness of the slit that graces women's bellies, as "mouille" indicates...as in "elle mouille" (she's getting wet).*

cul

arse (US ass), bottom. *Not as strong as in English as this word is also used non-offensively to mean the bottom of an object.*

d**dans les vignes du Seigneur**

to be drunk. *lit: in the vines of the Lord.*

de merde

bloody, fucking. *Used after a noun as an intensifier. Eg: "putain de merde!" ("fucking hell!")*

doudounes (noun, feminine plural)

tits. *There are numerous ways to call what the breasts of females. "doudounes" is a nice, relatively recent one (the 70s, the phonetically repetitive form probably influenced by the rise of creole words in European French). Other include: "les roberts", "les nénéés", "les nichons". Swiss writer Alexandre Voisard, obsessed with breasts, even wrote a hilarious short story about "le club des Robert", where the double-entendre obviously comes from the fact that Robert is a common first name, but also known to all as a tit.*

drague (noun, fem.)

looking for sex partners. *Literal translation: dredge. Gay slang for "cruising", "Faire la drague": go looking for sex partners. Used exclusively by gay men, not by straight men looking for women.*

déconner (verb)

to trick, to jerk around. *Commonly used. Example of popular use: "Sans déconner!" meaning "No kidding!" or "No shit!"*

to trick, to jerk around. *Commonly used. Example: "sans déconner!" ("no kidding!" or "no shit!")*

e**emmener Popaul au cirque** (verb phrase)

to take Joe Blow to the circus. *Popaul (also known as Popol) loves the circus. Except Popaul looks a bit already like the pink trunk of a tiny elephant - in fact, just like a dick. For the circus, well...it's usually hidden at the junction of a lady's thighs. Needless to say, Popaul enjoys the circus immensely...just like kids watching clowns and tigers erupt in laughter.*

emmerdant (adj)

intensely annoying. *Example of use: "Que tu es emmerdant!" ("You really piss me off!" (ie "You annoy me intensely"))).*

enculer

to bugger, to fuck. *Refers to anal sex only. Derived from "cul" (qv).*

enculé

bastard, cunt, etc. *Insult used towards a man. Derived from "enculer" (qv).*

enfoiré

bastard, shit, etc. *Same sense as "encule".*

Enlève ta croute que je swingue dans l'pus (*phrase*)

Take your scab out, I'll fuck in the pus. *It will shock literally everyone within hearing distance. It is used as a comic sentence said to a girl from a man (or a lesbian).*

f

fille

a prostitute. *"Fille" is the normal word for "girl" or "daughter" but only if it is used with some kind of descriptive word as in "ma fille" (my daughter) or "une jeune fille" (a young girl). This piece of information might be of some importance if you should visit France. Not every dictionary mentions this fact!*

fil de pute/putain

sonofabitch

flic (*noun, masc*)

police constable, cop

folle

queen. *Term for a gay man, especially one who is effeminate. Literal meaning: "madwoman".*

foutre (*noun, masc.*)

sperm, "cum". *Derived from the verb "foutre": to fuck. Gay slang for shooting cum on someone during sex. "Donne-moi ton foutre" = Give me your cum. "Je veux lecher ton foutre" = I want to swallow your cum.*

foutre (*verb*)

to bugger up, to screw up. *To ruin, to spoil. Examples of use: "On est foutu!" ("We're done for!", "We're finished!"); "La voiture est foutue" ("The car is knackered/buggered/fucked (US)" (ie beyond repair)).*

to fuck. *Rarely used except in "va te faire foutre!" (qv). The preferred slang is "baiser" (qv).*

g

gerber (*verb*)

to puke, barf, hurl

god (*e*), **godemichet**

dildo

gouine (*feminine noun*)

dyke, A lesbian.

grogniasse (*fem. noun*)

woman. *synonym to pétasse, pouffiassse, greluce and femme. Not very nice, but in France, it should not be enough for receiving a slap.*

j

jouir

to come. *Used in the sexual sense*

k

keuf (*n.m*)

cop. *Urban language but don't say that to a cop...*

1

la putain de ta mère

Your mother is a whore. as "fils de pute"

laisse be'ton

Let it drop! [lEs'beto~] Verlan version of "laisse tomber"

les Anglais (noun, masculine, plural)

the Redcoats (the Red Flag, etc...). French, as any other language, has numerous periphrastic and euphemistic expressions to indicate female menstruation, a phenomenon that our male-dominated societies, until recently, did not consider dignified enough to even mention in society. The image of blood leads automatically to "les Anglais ont débarqué" (the Redcoats have landed), which proves how much the French loved the English. Other potential phrases include "Ma tante Rose a débarqué" (Aunt Rosie's arrived), "j'ai mes fleurs" (i've got my flowers - roses, probably), "j'ai mes ours" (i've got my bears), or the flat and very BCBG "je suis indisposée", equivalent to "I'm sick" in English and "Ich bin krank" in German. To be fair, let's admit that Tampax and other tampons certainly changed the outlook on periods: until then, most women had to wear big chunks of linen between their legs, and male children were inevitably exposed to bloody rags in chamberpots or other sanitary fixtures, certainly reinforcing negative visions of menstrual blood.

livrer aux chiens (verb phrase)

Used to wish someone tremendous good luck. Abbreviation for the phrase "Merde A La Puissance Treize!" which is translated as "Shit to the thirteenth power". Origin unknown. Used as a friendly term. Example: a friend of yours is about to take an exam. You would say "MALPT to sacrifice to raving dogs. the end of the Mitterand régime, after 14 years of presidency for François Mitterand, were definitely marred by an endless list of financial scandals, both left and right. Several politicians even went to jail. Mitterand's last socialist prime minister, an unpleasant and ambitious yes-man who had become a reasonably competent but politically cloutless Finance minister, Pierre Bérégovoy, took the sound beating of the socialists in 1992 as his personal defeat...and felt threatened when it was revealed that he had not only been involved in shady deals to please the president's friends, but also for personal gain (primarily, an apartment in a luxury district of Paris, symbol of success for him, as the only member of the socialist elite who really had no advanced degrees and a popular origin). He committed suicide, and, in his funeral eulogy, the president launched into some stinging words against those who had "livré aux chiens" (thrown to the dogs) the "honor" of Bérégovoy. He meant, primarily, journalists.

m

MALPT! (Expletive)!" to wish him well!

maquereau (noun, masculine)

pimp. although the official word is "proxénète", noone but the cops and the courts uses it. A pimp is "un maquereau", and, when female, "une maquerele", even "la mère maquerele". Un maquereau is of course, literally, a fish (mackerel). See also "merlan" et "morue", to see how seafood impregnated French popular language, probably because fishmongers (particularly the female) were considered to have as colorful a language as

mule drivers: "un langage de charretier" (a cart-driver's vulgar speech) is no better than "une langue de poissonnière" (a female fishmonger's speech).

mec, un (noun, masc.)

guy, dude, bloke. Said to be the Verlan version of "homme." How reversing this word produces "mec," I don't know. It's very common, found in print and rap music as well as conversations.

melon (noun, masculine)

an equivalent of : a damn Arab! A melon is obviously grown in hot, Mediterranean climates. The metaphor is therefore easy to understand. There are numerous words for the group (albeit 5,000,000 strong) that racist French people despise as much as American racists despise(d) niggers at one point: "les bougnoules", "les bicots", "les ratons" - and, when they are of Arab origin and French citizens (the nightmare of fascist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen!), "les beurs", "les petits beurs", and their female counterparts, "les beurettes".

merde (noun, F.)

shit

merdeux

crap(py), shit(ty) (adjs)

merlan (noun, masculine)

hairstresser. another word of maritime origin. Not to be confused with *un maquereau!*

meuf, une

a woman, une femme [moef] This is the Verlan version of "femme". The syllables are reversed, and "eu" is added

morue (noun, feminine)

a low-level whore .*morue* (originally cod), like "merlan" or "maquereau", is a word referring originally to fish. "la morue" was obviously the most common fish, from the Middle Ages on (the only one you could dry, salt, and keep for all those periods when you had to eat fish). furthermore, unwashed female genitals (and, from the 16th to the 19th century, washing was not a priority of most French people, rich or poor) definitely tend, after a few days, to smell in the not-so-refined way of not-so-fresh fish, be it cod or any other...

Mouffi ou Moufflarge

A real fucking dick like a son of a bitch!!!

moule (noun, feminine)

vulva. Commonly used. More descriptive (the female external genitals look like an open mussel, and somehow smell like it) than insulting (like *con* or *cramouille* for instance). This term has of course led to a lot of humorous double-entendre, as in the late 19th century popular song "à la pêche aux moules, moules, moules, je veux m'en aller maman...". To be pronounced somewhat like "mool" for English speakers.

ménage à trois (noun)

threesome. This term enjoys very popular usage in the States; pronounced "may-naj-sha-twa".

n

nique ta mère

fuck your mother. very common in the suburbs, especially among migrant population. Can also be abbreviated as "Ta mèreŠ"

noune (common noun)

vagina, female genitals. (*Pronounced as noonn*) commonly used as the word referring to the female genitals. Used in a replacement for vulva in a normal non formal conversation.

o

oignon (noun, masculine)

onion - in fact, the ass or the asshole. *The reason for the analogy is probably that they're all round-shaped. L'oignon is therefore the equivalent of "le cul", and, just like it, we can consider the whole or the part: "lui carrer dans l'oignon", in slang, is to shove it in her (or alternatively his) asshole.*

p

papa - dad

parachuter un senegalais (verb)

to take a dump, crap, shit. *Local slang used in Bretagne. Literally, "to parachute a Senegalese."*

Pede

Homosexual applied to men only. *Very common use.*

pipe (noun, f)

blowjob. *Faire une pipe: To give a blowjob*

pipi

pee, wee (-wee). *"faire pipi": "to do/have a wee(-wee)/pee"*

pisser

to pee, to piss. *More colloquial than offensive in French. Also used in senses such as "son nez pisse du sang" ("blood is pouring from his/her nose")*

poilu (noun, masc.)

a man who is a stud, a real hunk. *Literal translation: hairy, shaggy. Gay slang for men with hairy chests or with moustaches or beards.*

polichinelle (noun, masculine)

a puppet - in this case, a duck. *although "un polichinelle" will be used in an amused way to indicate a kid, the full original expression is "elle a un polichinelle dans le tiroir", i.e. the equivalent of "she's got a duck in the oven"...in other words, she's pregnant. Just like periods were only referred to in an oblique way, well-bred people did not say about a woman (until the 1950s) that she was pregnant, except maybe for country folk who might have used "elle est grosse" as for animals. "Elle est dans une situation intéressante" was quite common until the 1940s. "Elle attend un bébé" would even have been too crude for children: they might have known that "les bébés" were not born in "les choux" (cabbages), or brought by "les cigognes" (the storks). Between males, however, crude speech was required...and "elle a un polichinelle dans l'tiroir" was, and still is, a common way to indicate that a lady is pregnant.*

pouffiasse (n. f)

bitch, whore. *Very rude : use it to talk about some (bad) girl but never say it to the (bad) girl herself !*

poulet (n. m)

cop (litt. : chicken). *Cops know this word but hate it !*

pousse-crotte (masc. noun)

push-shit. *homosexual - for men only :-)*

prendre son velo

plonger (dans l'eau) // to dive into the water (Didier est ce vraiment bien serieux??)

putain

whore, tart, hooker. *Also used as an insult towards a woman.*
 bitch, cow, etc. *Derogatory term for a woman.*
 bloody hell!, fucking hell! *As an interjection.*

pute

bitch, cow, etc. *Derogatory term for a woman. Short form of "putain".*
 Whore. *Short form of "putain"*

pédale (f), **serin** (m), **grande folle** (f), **tapette** (f), (all nouns)

They are synonyms of queer, gays, homosexual. *Commonly used words for homosexuals. The word in parentheses refers to the gender. Note that the "grande folle" refers more to a drag queen.*

pédale

queer, poof. *Variant of "pede" (qv).*

pédé

queer, faggot. *Derogatory term for a gay man.*

péter (verb)

to fart. *When conjugated, this verb takes the grave accent in the "je/tu/il/elle/on/ils/elles" forms, but NOT in the "nous/vous" forms, e.g., "Je pète" but "Vous petez." The verb "répéter" has an acute accent on the first syllable and should be pronounced that way; otherwise, the unwary foreigner will utter "Repetez, s'il vous plaît," which means "Please fart again" instead of "Répétez, s'il vous plaît," i.e., "Please, repeat [that]."*

péter plus haut que [son] cul (expression)

to have an inflated opinion of oneself. Literally, to fart higher than [one's] asshole. *Mon prof pète plus haut de son cul. = My teacher's opinion of his own abilities is exaggerated. See "péter."*

q**queue**

prick, cock. *Literal meaning: "tail" (cf Latin "penis" meaning "tail").*

r**ramoner** (verb, transitive)

to sweep the chimney - i.e., to screw. *the in-out movement of the penis into the vagina or the rectum is of course a natural metaphor for the movement of the chimney-sweeper's brush, as it goes up and down the chimney at the end of its rope or long rod. The phrase "en avant, Simone, c'est moi qui ramone!", although playing on the rhyming sounds of Simone and ramone, does not necessarily, however, indicate intercourse: it's basically a way to say "let's go!" with a little phonetic twist. Where the French use "ramoner", Acadians use "râper" (to grate), which has little to do with a tougher quality of genitals due to the Maritime climate of Eastern Canada, but the movement of "va-et-vient", coming and going, associated with the grating of potatoes for "la râpure". See Acadian/Cajun dictionary for additional details.*

s**salop / salaud**

bastard

 salope

bitch, slut

se branler

to wank, to masturbate. *Literally "to wobble oneself".*

se palucher (verb, reflexive)

to give yourself a hand job. *This one is easy: most verbs relating to male (and sometimes female) masturbation, unless they are elaborate metaphors (see "chinois" for one) are reflexive verbs, the very example of the poor definition French grammars give of reflexive verbs: an action performed by the subject upon himself. The most standard verb is therefore "se masturber", followed by "se branler", but "se palucher", based on "paluche" meaning hand, comes close as a common form for what priests and conservative psychologists came to call l'"auto-gratification" (self-gratification) during the 1950s.*

service trois pièces (noun phrase)

three piece combo. *It isn't hard to figure out what the three pieces are: the prick and its two balls. It is another version of "la veuve et les deux orphelines", i.e. the normal male genital apparatus. The word "service" in this case is a metaphor borrowed from table vocabulary (utensils, tea or coffee cup with cream and sugar).*

t

tante

queen. *Derogatory term for a gay man.*

teuf (f.)

party. *This is the Verlan version of "fe'te". The syllables are reversed, the final "e" is dropped and "eu" is added in place of "e".*

tirer (verb, transitive)

to pull or to shoot. *The most common regular meaning of "tirer", i.e. to pull, can be found sometimes in popular phrases like the reflexive "se tirer la queue" (to pull on your putz). Most common, however, is the metaphor of a weapon shooting. Men are known to be fond of "tirer un coup" (to shoot their load), usually in an amorous battle on female battlegrounds. "Tirer" is sometimes used alone; it can also be used with other objects, like "tirer sa crampe" (literally, shooting to end your penile cramps). A bedroom may be referred to as "un champ de tir" (a shooting gallery). An unhappy pregnant lady may very well use it in a cynical way : "Oh, vous, les mecs, vous tirez votre coup, et vous vous foutez du reste" (You guys only want to shoot your wad and don't care about the consequences).*

trick (noun, masc.)

a man with whom a gay man has had sex. *This word was adopted directly from the American slang "Trick" with the same meaning. Another example of "Français". The word is used extensively by Renaud Camus in his novel, Tricks.*

tringle (feminine)

hard-on. *An erection. Used in the phrase "avoir la tringle" ("to have a hard-on"). Literal meaning: "rod".*

tringler (verb)

to fuck (see tringle)

to fuck (see tringle)

trique (noun, feminine)

a boner - *la trique is a whipping instrument: "des coups de trique" could only be erotic in a sado-masochist context. Unless we take the word, as is taken metaphorically here, as in "la trique" (a fuck), "avoir la trique" (to be horny as hell), the obvious reference being to the hard and yet somewhat flexible qualities of the erect virile appendage. The same idea of a hard instrument, as in "rod" in English, appears in a word phonetically quite similar to "trique" :*

"la tringle" (a curtain rod), the verb "tringler" being commonly used as a transitive verb: "il l'a tringlée" (he fucked her), "se faire tringler" (to be fucked).

trou du cul (abrev : trou duc')

asshole. Said of a (male) person you consider as ridiculous or stupid. Handle with care!

turlute (noun, f)

blowjob

v

va t'faire enculer chez les Grecs! (verb phrase)

go get fucked up the ass by the Greeks! refer this one to the verb "enculer" (to fuck up the ass), but consider it primarily of use between males: ancient Greeks were considered the ultimate paederasts, valuing highly the man-boy sexual relationship (women being there for reproductive purposes only). no wonder, then, that when the French want to get rid of a real pain...in the ass, they're sending him to the Athens of antiquity!

va te faire foutre!

fuck off! Literally "go and get fucked!"

veuve (noun, feminine)

widow - a dick reduced to being wanked. "La veuve" has several meanings in French, the two better known apart from its original meaning (a woman left alone because of the death of her husband, a common occurrence during the many wars of French history)being: a) the "guillotine", the machine made to cut heads at the time of the French 1789 Revolution, i.e a widow-maker; and b)the penis of a lonely man, reduced - like a widow - to solitary hand pleasures. Usually, "la veuve" can also be known as "la veuve poignet" (a widowed wrist, obviously the instrument of solitary bliss). She usually has two children, obviously fatherless, "les deux orphelines" (the two orphans), i.e. the poor testicles reduced to producing lonesome semen. Sometimes, however, a member of the female sex (or of any other persuasion) will come to the help of the poor triad and make "la veuve et les deux orphelines" as merry as can be.

viande a pneus (driving expression)

meat for tyres. pedestrian. Pretty obvious if you have crossed a street in Paris.

y

y'a du monde au balcon (verb phrase)

what a set of knockers! French females are usually rather petites, and the ideal standard for tits remains the champagne cup - a rather small format, as opposed to the ample breasts found on American women, for instance. "Y'a du monde au balcon" indicates that she certainly has an ample chest to greet males with...It is somewhat analogous to "Es gibt Holz vor der Tür" (there's a pile of wood before the door) in German. There are unfortunately less refined ways to indicate that ample knockers do not correspond to the French small-tit standard: "c'est une vraie vache (laitière)" (she's a real cow!).

é

étron

turd. Used in the literal sense of a piece of faeces.

A LIST OF TABOO WORDS IN SWAHILI (KISWAHILI)

Swahili slang - a part of *The Alternative Dictionaries* collection.

i

ishia

move, proceed. *Used when telling someone to go, eg. at crosswalks, lines, or any time there is a short period of waiting.*

m

manyanga

cute, sexy girl

A LIST OF TABOO WORDS IN AFRIKAANS

The following is the list of taboo words in Afrikaans. These words although they were completely unacceptable only a few years ago, in the Cape Flats and Mannenburg area in Cape Town are used in everyday life without any opprobrium attached.

f

fok jou

Fuck you. *This is a literal translation from English. The common word for 'to fuck' in Afrikaans is 'naai' or 'pomp'.*

j

jou ma se poes

Your mother's cunt. *Very common insult amongst the Cape Coloureds.*

m

moffie (noun)

gay, homosexual. *Very common, even used in South African English: jy is 'n moffie, you are a moffie.*

p

poes

cunt, name for a woman's private parts. *It can also be used to insult someone. Much like the English word cunt. The insult usage will be: jou poes - you cunt or: jy is 'n poes - you are a cunt*

s

sit jou kop in die koei se kont en wag tot die bul jou kom holnaai

Put your head in a cow's vagina and wait until a bull penetrates your anus. *Once heard at a fishing port in Cape Town*

stokperdjie

hobby. *Dutch: "stokpaardje"*

t

trek draad (split intransitive verb)

masturbate. *Literal translation: pull wire. Example: Hy trek draad.*

A LIST OF TABOO WORDS IN THE ALTERNATIVE SWISS GERMAN DICTIONARY

NON-SEXUAL TERMS

The following terms are non-sexual but they are still regarded as taboo.

a

alk (*masc. noun*)

abbrev. for alcohol *derived noun*: 'alki' (*an alcoholic*). expressions used in the urban Zurich region, maybe also others

b

bisle (*verb*)

to pee, to piss - 'papi, ich muess go bisle!

brunz, brunzen (*masc. noun, verb*)

to piss, to piss

burghölzli (*noun*)

house of the insane - *name of a psychiatric clinic*. example: if you think somebody is really crazy, you say as a statement 'Burghölzli eifach!' (B. one-way!). related expressions: 'vom gälbe wägeli abholt werdä' (to be picked up by the yellow little car) or 'em gälbe wägeli aalüütä' (to call up the small yellow car)

böögg (*noun*)

bogey (the green slimy thing up your nose) synonyms: *schnuder-böögg, schnuder-nase*

c

chabis (*masc. noun*)

female breasts *lit. 'chabis' means 'cabbage' (german 'Kohl')*.

nonsense, bullshit example; 'chabis useloo' (to let out cabbage) means to talk

bullshit

chatz (*fem. noun*)

a pretty lady *lit. 'cat'*. example: 'das ich e chatz!' (what a lady!). used in a positive sense

chiis, chiisä (*noun, verb*)

cash, money (*noun*) example: 'häsch gnueg chiis?' (do you have enough money?)

to vomit, to throw up (*verb*) *lit. 'chiis' means 'gravel' (german 'Kies')* example: 'muäsch chiisä?' (are you going to throw up?)

chlapf (*masc. noun*)

car *lit. 'bang'*. 'schönä chlapf!' (nice car!). 'ä chlapf haa' (1. 'to have a car'; 2. 'to be drunk')

chlöibi (*n. noun*)

money, cash *lit. 'tape' (region Zurich)* example: 'bruuchs chlöibi?

chnopf (*masc. noun*)

child, kid *lit. 'button'*

chörblä (*verb*)

to throw up, to vomit - *etym. 'chorb' (german 'Korb') means basket. But maybe derived from the stronger verb 'chotzä' (german 'kotzen')*

d

- d' lampe fülle** (*sent.*)
get drunk *lit.* 'to fill the lamp'
- drägg** (*noun, feminine*)
shit - Usually used in conjunction with something else, as in "Schießdrägg" (a variant of the German "Scheisse", i.e. shit) or in Bernese dialect "Bäredrägg" (bear shit), a normal occurrence in a town which has fed bears in a downtown pit for the last 900 years.
- dä löffel abgää** (*expr.*)
to die *lit.* 'to give away the spoon' (german 'den Löffel abgeben')
- dä schniider haa** (*expr.*)
menstruation days *lit.* 'to have the cutter'. example 'si hätt dä schniider' (she has got her days)
- e**
- e chappe aahaa** (*sent.*)
be drunk *lit.* 'to wear a cap'. example: 'häsch e chappe aa ?' (are you drunk ?)
- en (suurä) schtäi machä** (*expr.*)
to look unhappy, unfriendly *lit.* 'to make a sour stone' (*lit.* german 'einen sauren Stein machen')
- ex !** (*expr.*)
bottoms up ! (empty your glass in one go) there is also a verb 'exä' for this way of drinking
- f**
- FIGUGEGL** (*expr*)
abbrev for *lit.* 'fondue is good and gives you a good mood' the abbreviation itself has become a 'standing expression' now. the full text is 'fondue isch guät und git e guäti luunä'
- fuer** (*fem. noun*)
party (region Bern). 'fuer' (pron fu-er'), german 'fuder' normal meaning can be translated as 'a load' example: 'wo isch ä fuer ?' (where is a party?)
- föhn, föhnä** (*noun, verb*)
army gun (noun) an expression quite widely used in the army
fart (noun)
to fart (verb) *etym.* 'Föhn' is the warm wind coming from south
- für d' fuchs** (*expr*)
in vain, for nothing, with no use *lit.* 'for the foxes' .example: 'er hät die ganz arbet für d' fuchs gmacht' (he did the entire work in vain)
- g**
- goof** (*noun*)
kid, child - often used with a 'negative touch' example: 'd goofe am hals haa' (*lit.* having the kids at your neck; having to care for the kids)
- gopfertami!** (*sent.*)
damned! *etym.* 'god-shall-damn-me'. used as a curse. very short version : 'tami !'
- gopfertori!** (*sent.*)
damned! *etym.* derived from 'gopfertami'.
- gschmöcksch de töff?** (*expr*)
do you understand? do you see the problem? *lit.* 'do you smell the motorbike?'
synonyms: 'gsehsch de pögg?' (do you see the puck) 'tschäggs es?'. If you dont, say: 'ich verschtöh nur bahnhof!' (*lit.* 'i understand only railway station!', it's all a mystery to me)

gummi (*masc. noun*)

condom *synonym: 'pariser'*

guuge, güügele (*fem. noun, verb*)

a bottle of beer (*noun*), to drink alcohol (*verb*) *example: 'er güügelet' (he is drinking 'around') the verb means drinking in a sense of 'drinking to be tipped'- always a little but never really drunk. the noun has also alot of other (different) meanings*

gülle, güllne (*verb*)

to drink alcohol - 'gülle' (*noun*) is the liquid part of from farm animals excrements which the farmer brings out to the fields (in german 'Jauche'). Also the noun is sometimes used with the meaning of 'booze'. verb is more common (Basel/Zurich/Lucerne). *example: 'geschter oobig simmer go güllne gsi' (yesterday eve we have been out drinking)*

h

hamburger (*masc. noun*)

young soldier in his first service after the basic service - a common army expression

huerä, nuttä (*fem. nouns*)

see above 'huerä' used as *adj. in similar meaning like 'fucking' or 'damned'*. *example: 'huerä gueti schow!' (fuckin' good show!)*
prostitute, hooker

hödi (*noun*)

the light motorcycles that teenies ride - *synon. 'töffli' etym. probably from the noise it makes. 'hödi-buebe' or 'töffli-buebe' (hödi-boys) are the teenies in the black leather jackets*

höhlä (*verb*)

to empty (a bottle) *derived from adj. 'hohl' (hollow). region Zurich*

i

im fass haa (*expr.*)

to understand, to know (by learning) *lit. 'to have in the barrel'. example 'häsch s im fass?' (do you understand this?)*

k

kackeria (*noun*)

toilet - *like pizzeria, cafeteria,...*

l

lappä (*masc. noun*)

100, 100 Franc-bill - *etym 'lappä' equals the german 'Lappen', a towel maybe used to clean the table or the floor examples: 'er hät uf de Autobahn zwee Lappe druff gha' (lit. he had on the highway 2 'lappä' (=200 km/h)*

lämpä (*noun, pl.*)

trouble, problems - *example: 'wottsch lämpä haa?' (are you lookin for trouble?)*

lööli (*noun*)

idiot - *example: 'bisch en lööli gsi!' (you have been an idiot!)*
the sign for 'driving student' - *this sign is a white L on blue field*

p

pizza (*noun*)

the result of vomiting - *'ä pizza leggä' (lit. 'to put a pizza') means to throw up*

r

rüde, rüdä, rüdig (*adv*)

very (pron with long ü) (region Lucerne only). etym. from german adj. 'rüdig' which is an animals disease. example: 'rüde gross' (very big)

s

s chalb machä (expr.)

to joke lit. 'to make the calve'. example 'machsch s chalb?' (are you kidding?)

schafseckel (noun)

schiffe (verb)

to piss, to rain etym. probably from 'schiff' (ship). example: 'ich mues go schiffe' (i have to go to piss)

schiissi (fem. noun)

toilet etym. 'schiissä' (verb) (german 'scheissen') means to shit'. a rude expression for the toilet.

schlampae (fem. noun)

slut, bitch *du bisch ae schlampae*

schnore (noun, verb)

mouth, to chat examples: (noun) 'heb d' schnore zue !' (shut up !) (lit. 'keep the mouth closed!') (verb) 'er schnoret die ganz ziit' (he's chatting all the time)

schtangä (fem. noun)

glass of beer, normally 3 dl original meaning of 'schtangä' (german 'Stange') is 'pole'. But that is not important here! to order 2 more: 'no zwee schtangä bitte!'

schtute (fem. noun)

a pretty lady lit. '(female) horse' (german 'Stute')

schtäi, schtutz (masc. nouns)

money, cash lit. 'schtäi' means 'stones'. used in pl.

schwudi, schwuppel, schwuchtlä (nouns)

gay derived from 'schwul' (gay).

schyss (masc. noun)

shit, excrement

schyssdrägg

shit, piece of shit cognate of German "Scheissdreck," used of a person: signifies someone held in low esteem. Note also "schyssdräggzüegli", essentially meaning a campfollower but in the special context of the Basler Fasnacht referring to people who march in the Fasnach parade without belonging to one of the official local clubs.

schysse! (expletive)

Shit! Exact cognate of German Scheisse

schällä (fem. noun, verb)

testicles, balls expression for a kind of bell (german 'Schelle') example: 'a dä schällä chratzä' (to scratch the balls) the verb means just 'to ring'

seckel (noun)

testicles etym. connected with sack (bag) saeckli (small bag) usage (noun) *du bisch en seckel* (verb) *ver-seckeln* to betray, to cheat, to bullshit someone

seich (masc. noun)

piss usage (verb, noun): 'seichen' to piss, to rain 'so en seich !' what a shit !

siech (masc. noun)

type, guy (noun) (pron: 'si-ech'). etym: original old meaning of 'siech' was 'sick'; linked to german 'Seuche' (disease) usage 'du bisch en sibesiech'

(*'sibe'=7*) (you can more than others) *'tumme siech !'* (stupid asshole !)
insulting in combination with various adj

stink (*masc. noun*)

shit excrement. not used as an expletive or insultingly. Frequently used with children. *"Hesch a Stink gmacht?"* = "Did you make a mess?"

süffel (*noun*)

quick drinker, slammer examples: *'bisch en süffel!'* (you are a slammer !).
there is a verb *'suufe'* (german *'saufen'*)

t

tschau Sepp! (*expr.*)

a way how to play cards lit. *'bye, Johnny!'*

tschugger (*masc. noun*)

policeman, cop syn: *'schmiär-lappä'* .the expression for police is *'tschuggerei'*
or *'d schmiär'* . (*'schmiäri'* is the grease you use to lubricate machinery)

tschäggsch es? (*expr*)

do you understand? you got it? etym. from english *'to check'*.this expression is
widely used in the urban Zurich region

tubel (*noun*)

a total ignorant, idiot etymology unknown. the word itself is probably very old

u

uuf-riisse (*trans. verb*)

to pick up somebody lit. *'to tear open'*. noun *'uuf-riss'* example *'bisch uf em uufriss?'* (are you trying to pick up somebody) *'er hät eini uufgrisse'* (he has picked up a girl)

uufgschtellt (*adj.*)

open, optimistic, fresh, dynamic, interesting lit. *'put-up'* (lit. german *'auf-gestellt'*). used to characterize a person .(very common region Zurich)

w

warme, der (*masc. noun*)

homosexual *'warm'* (*adj*) means the same in English

z

zäigä wo dä Bartli dä moscht hollt (*sent.*)

to show you who is the boss-in-command lit. *'to show where Bartli goes to get the cider'*. *Bartli* is a name (*dimin. of Bartholomy ?*).example: *'ich zäig der wo dä Bartli dä moscht hollt !'* (i am the boss here!)

ä

ä chlapf (aff,siech,chäib) haa (*expr.*)

to be drunk lit *'ä chlapf haa'* means *'to have a bang'*.using *'siech'* or *'chäib'*
instead of *'chlapf'* is stronger. *'aff'* means *'ape'*.

ANNEXURE B: AFRIKAANS AND ISIXHOSA SWEAR WORDS

Afrikaans swear words	
Skommelaar	a very aggressive term referring to a man who does not have the capacity to persuade a woman to go to bed with him.
Naier	referring to a person without norms and values pertaining to sexuality.
Moerskont	instructing a person to go back to his mother's womb.
Donner / Neuk	to assault.
Pispoes	someone who has a problem of urinating in bed.
Vuilgat	refers to a person who does not take a bath.
Jags	refers to someone who has a sexual desire.
Bovok	means "do not upset me".
Jou naai sal draai	means "I will assault you".
Boeber	sperms
Hoinaier	means 'sodomy' – to sodomise.
Kruppel poes	discriminatory term used for people who cannot use their sexual organs.
IsiXhosa swear words	
Isifebe / ihule	a woman who sleeps around.
Gqwirha	a witch – specifically a woman who practices witchcraft.
Itutu / isela	a thief.
Imenemene	a gossip (can also be called, 'ibhedengu, ulwimishe').

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