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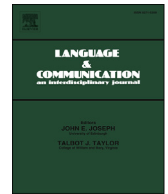

Language planning, security, police communication and multilingualism in uniform: The case of South African Police Services

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ABSTRACT

The virulence of global conflicts and conflicts between different ethnolinguistic groups makes language, now more so than previously, a central issue within the state security apparatus. Police are at the forefront of law enforcement, making language and language planning an integral component of police communication. The centrality of language is more pertinent in complex multilingual contexts like South Africa. The sociolinguistic and discourse analysis of the security in South Africa makes an important contribution to policing to the extent that it adds social and linguistic dimensions, critical-theoretical and sociological approaches relevant to multilingualism, language policy and planning in security contexts over and above conventional security research, which, to date, has been dominated by psychological and anthropological approaches. As a result, this article explores ways in which language and language planning can address security issues in a multilingual context, focusing on the case of South Africa and the South African Police Services. The objective is to analyze multilingualism in relation to security and to draw implications for sociolinguistics of policing studies, and conversely the implications of security studies (and security, policy) for sociolinguistics and multilingualism. This article builds on the limited literature on the sociolinguistics of security and at the same time situates security at the nexus of sociolinguistics and multilingualism in South Africa. The article maintains that while it is true, to a degree, that multilingualism enhances security, the significance and value of multilingualism may be exaggerated especially if language is viewed as disembodied practice. Unless multilingualism is embedded in other semiotic practices that embrace ways in which both historical and contemporary communication in security are framed; it will remain at the periphery of police communication.

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1. Introduction

The main aim of this article is to explore perceptions about language, multilingualism and police communication from the viewpoint of the public and the police themselves. We then compare what the public expect of the police with regard to language and communication practices with what the police's assume is expected of them. We explore issues related to police communication and security, with a special focus on the South African Police Services' (SAPS) in the context of South Africa's policies around multilingualism. Even though there is a robust tradition of research into language planning in relation to

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multilingualism in South Africa (Heugh, 2008; Kamwangamalu, 2002; Makoni, 2011; Stroud, 2001), research at the nexus between language and discourses of state security is limited. Research into police communication in South Africa has largely been concerned with exploration of the degree of trust between the police and local African communities). The findings in most of these studies has shown that trust between the police and the public particularly in Black communities tis complicated by the intractable legacy of apartheid evidenced by the Black communities' nickname of the police as amahata (harassers) which is in sharp contrast with terminology used to describe gangsters.[1] In a context where perceptions about the police are negative, communication is integral in overcoming such stereotypes and creating positively valorized relationships between the public and the police. In order to unpack some of the challenges police communication pauses in such environments, it is necessary to develop a nuanced analysis of communication embedded in a context in which we analyze how the police are formally framed complemented with what their language needs are in a local context as articulated by the communities they serve.

In addressing these issues, the present article is organized as follows: first, we focus on the nature of communication within policing after which, the article will turn to the various ways in which the police represent themselves in their own annual reports. The specific focus in this analysis will be the cover of SAPS of 2012 annual report. In particular, the analysis will examine the design of the cover of the SAPS to capture the formal representations and discourses associated with the police. The rationale in this part of the analysis will be to glean some insights into how the police view and understand themselves and their relationships to the public. In the second section, the focus would be on security with the aim of establishing the adequacy of the police's knowledge about language and cultural knowledge from the perspective of local Black community members in a town hall meeting. An analysis of the language and cultural knowledge of the police is conceptually feasible in a town hall meeting because the town hall constitutes a cultural and language space in which participants can be analyzed. In the third and final section, we turn to an analysis of five interviews with the police at one police station. The objective of the analysis was to explore the cultural knowledge and language practices the police feel they need in order to carry out their professional obligations. The study was aimed at comparing whether what the local communities feel the police should know about language and cultural performance is comparable to what the police themselves feel is necessary in order to carry out their obligations.

1.1. *Communication and policing*

Communication between the police and the public in complex multilingual contexts requires a high degree of linguistic dexterity. The equation of language = communication (also referred to as a conduit metaphor of communication (Harris xxx)) in which language is encoded by one speaker and decoded by the hearer at the other end of the communication may not be adequate in describing communication between the police and civilians in multilingual contexts. Urban multilingual contexts such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban, where many languages, including languages *of* the state (South Africa's own multiple official languages) and those *in* the state (those from different parts of the world that have become part of South Africa due to migration), jostle for space The South African Minister of Police recently captured the centrality of communication in the delivery of services by SAPS when stating this; "Our view is that effective communication should not be seen as a function and responsibility of the police leadership and management only, but that it should be the responsibility of each and every police officer in the force." Womack and Finley (1986) also underscore the Minister's position when they refer to communication as "[…] the central most important commodity that the officer has at his [or her] disposal" (p. 14). However, meaningful communication depends upon mutual recognition of the linguistic resources (i.e. verbal and nonverbal) of police and those of the clients. Research and law enforcement agencies have reiterated that one of the primary factors in crime prevention is the capability of civilians and police to work together (Bayley, 1994). Yet residents in many communities, including those in South Africa, have negative images of local law enforcement agencies and are reluctant to report to or cooperate with them (Hajek et al., 2006; Sunshine and Tyler, 2003). In Black communities, for instance, civilians are suspicious of the police and view their fast moving cars, loud sirens as aggressive, and an act of intimidation. While for the police, fast moving cars and loud sirens, as semiotic systems, communicate the fast-paced nature and seriousness of their task, this is perceived differently by some of the communities they serve. These diverse and incongruent frames of reference suggest that even if there was a common language between the civilians and the police, communication challenges would persist.

In addition to this, gaining an understanding of the role of accommodative practices and compliance in police–civilian encounters in South Africa is complex because of racial, ethnic, and xenophobic tensions that have arisen due to an increase in the number of African migrant communities. If communication is considered to consist of encoded and decoded language, then communication is not likely to succeed, because it is always going to be difficult to determine the intentions of an individual. When a socially embedded communication orientation is adopted, a more realistic perspective emerges regarding the impact of communication on security and policing. That is, a reorientation of communication perspectives results in a change of understanding of policing in which individual interpretations of the context are important. Socially embedded communication, which is to say *socially realistic* communication, is elusive, untidy, and always provisional. If communication is always indeterminate, concerns by police clientele that their reports are not understood accurately are

[1] While, in township parlance the police are referred to or *de hatas* (in Afrikaans) gangsters and/or gang members are referred to as amagents (gentlemen). The police are therefore conceptualized as people who harass local communities in contradistinction to gangsters who are positively valorized as gentlemen.

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inevitable. Paradoxically, the *more* realistic the communication between the police and the clientele, the greater the likelihood that there will be multiple interpretations of the context.

1.2. Language for Specific Purposes

Research into communication within the police force falls into multiple strands, the most common of which is the 'language for specific purposes' or the 'language in uniform' (de Silva Joyce and Thomson, 2015: page number). This strand consists of a police perspective in which the emphasis is on the *perceived* needs of the police and other paramilitary institutions and army language needs. Sadly, such perceived needs are largely determined by professional linguists and not by either the police or the lay people directly impacted by the analysis. In fact, most of the research on South African policing has focused on training of South African police that, as the findings indicate, is devoted to control, defensive, and weapons techniques. Even when the studies emphasize communication, there is limited research into what the local communities expect of the police in their interaction with them. What is therefore lacking is a perspective of police communication from the viewpoint of local communities (Hajek et al., 2006, 2008, Buur, Jensen, and Stepputat, 2007) or the civilians. It is this gap, which this article seeks to fill by exploring a predominantly informal Black community located in Khayelitsha in the Western Cape.

The research reported in this article differs from the language for Specific Purposes strand of police and military research in two ways. First, the emphasis is on how the police feel about the adequacy of their language and cultural relevance of the language and cultural relevance of what the police know about the strengths and limitations of their cultural and language knowledge necessary to conduct their professional work. Second, lay people's experiences of their needs is central to the analysis.

2. Police administrative structures and communication

The South African government is increasingly dependent upon SAPS because of changes in the political and military global contexts and the position of South Africa therein. South Africa has one of the most advanced economies in Africa. Because of its economic advancement, the political conflict and unrest in other African countries (e.g., Congo, Rwanda, Somalia), it has attracted a large number of immigrants, both White and Black. However, the latter has been a target of xenophobic attacks and have attracted a great deal of local and government attention.

The influx of migrants from other African countries has also complicated relations between the SAPS and civilians. The structures of policing differ substantially depending on the colonial legacy and heritage of each of the African countries. For example, the structure and role played by the Police in former French colonies (e.g., Ivory Coast, Senegal) is different from the structure and role of the police in Anglophone Africa. In Francophone, countries such as the Ivory Coast and Senegal police structures are centralized and hierarchical in nature. The main objective of the police in ex-French colonies, on the one hand, is to safeguard and protect the state (Mouhanna, 2009), while on the other hand, the police in former British colonies is ostensibly to provide services and protect the rights of the public. In fact, in South Africa the use of the term 'services' is predicated on this assumption. This influx of immigrants, especially from the neighboring countries has complicated the whole concept of policing to the extent that the police have become militarized.

Even though South African borders are some of the best policed in southern Africa, many Africans find their way into South Africa (see Fig. 1). The porous borders of states surrounding South Africa (e.g., Botswana, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe) have created an ideal situation for criminal activity, political mischief, and radicalization. A closer look at the immigration issues, show how the boundaries are para-militarized and subjected to the logic of security, technically producing a 'hybridized space.' The idea of 'space hybridity' results in:

> "*The creation of para-military space has entailed the design and deployment of border regimes, not just in the sense of borders between sovereign states but also in terms of complex assemblages that allow for distinction between legitimate and illegitimate flows of people and resources.*" (Kienscherf, 2012: 1).

Nonetheless, many different types of policing exist in South Africa, including national, community-based and private firms. The proliferation of non-state policing forms reflects a form of '*privatization of security*' (Beasley-Murray) and community policing, differ in terms of structure and objectives. There are differences in types of policing categories, but there are also variations of policing even within the same type of policing. Even if the importance of communication is emphasized in, an analysis of the police lay people's language and cultural requirements when dealing with statewide police may exhibit significant differences. It is therefore plausible that the needs and expectations which South African Black communities have for the state-wide police is markedly different from their expectations of the needs of other types of private security agencies.

In this article, I am exploring local African communities' expectations about the nature of cultural practices and communication by the SAPS. Typically, SAPS personnel are constantly moved from one location to another and therefore do not work for a sustained period with the same group of police and in the same locality. The constant movement from one location to another may render it difficult to adequately learn the variety of languages by the police in their neighborhood and cannot fully take advantage of the linguistic support from their peers because the police may not be familiar with each other thus cannot readily exploit each other's knowledge. The constant movement from one location to another may either discourage the police from learning or investing into language learning beyond a rudimentary level. Language learning requires an investment in terms of time that the police may not have. Yet language learning is important in policing because most police are deployed in contexts in which the languages spoken are not their first languages, rendering it important for

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them to learn the language or the variety of language spoken in that area. Language learning also creates an additional burden on people in an extremely stressful profession marked by high staff turnover. In a policing context, the limited amount of time police have to dedicate to language learning is counterbalanced by the innovative and creative ways in which they address and solve social and linguistic problems. The police may create new words, expanding or narrowing the meaning of words, or creating idiolects.

2.1. Analysis of a front cover SAP Annual Report (2012)

An analysis of the cover of the SAPS 2011 Annual Report reflects the discourses used to frame elitist language practices of SAPS, discourses that, according to Lo Bianco (2009), may form the basis of data to frame and interpret their language policies and practices. The language policies and practices in the case of police analysis include an analysis of verbal, non-verbal, and visual aspects of the reports (see SAPS, 2012 Annual Report cover design below).

Fig. 1. SAPS 2011 Annual Report cover design.

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The cover design of the annual police report of 2012 encapsulates the complex images of SAPS. The police officers are in a helicopter, pushing or jumping into a police vehicle, and attending a funeral to show their vulnerability, in addition to the representation of a police officer holding a crying baby to showing the caring and "maternal-like" instincts of female members of SAPS. In light of such a characterization, the color blue signals calmness (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006), and reflects a peaceful relationship with the public rather than a combative one. This calmness is achieved through a visual, multimodal metaphor of a blue hand squeezing the word **"**crime" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006; Pablé and Hutton, 2015). SAPS has been sensitive to its image as a militarized institution; hence, in an attempt to rehabilitate its image, it has created new discourses to frame itself. For instance, SAPS was initially known as the South African Police Force (SAPF). The change to SAPS was intended to signal a shift from being aggressive and forceful to people-centered, providing much-needed "services" to citizens. In addition, several terms of art within the police service have been changed to align with this new image. For example, members of *Riot Control* changed this name to *Riot Management*, and *Riot Control Units* are now called *Internal Stability Divisions.* All of these changes as reflected in the 2012 cover of the SAPS annual report were deliberate and part of a strategic move to position SAPS as a people-centered organization rather than a forceful paramilitary entity, which was its iconic image during the apartheid era. On the one hand, efforts to project an image of openness is undercut by military metaphors such as Internal Stability Discourses, Internal Stability Divisions. Furthermore, efforts to create an image of openness, however, are undercut by discourses whose meanings are exclusive to the SAPS subculture (a form of *anti-language*; see Halliday and Hasan, 1991). Police anti-language is a form of socialization and linguistic training that is an integral part of police subculture.

The terminology used by the SAPS in their reports also suggests the policing terms did not emerge spontaneously from the ground; they are products of carefully planned language use, bits of discourses popularized by SA Language Management Unit on policing: *war on crime*, *combating crime*, *crime combats*, *crime fighting*, or physical terms such as *tackling*. All these terms do suggest a very aggressive stance towards crime. Use of terms such as '*combat*', '*war*' and '*fighting*' do not conjure images of providing general service to the public but rather suggest a militarized approach to crime prevention. In fact, *a sword and shield* approach takes place when SAPS conceptualizes its approach as *hunting down criminals everywhere*, while *preventing crime*, *squeezing crime*, and religious discourses that describe *crime* as *evil* that needs to be *pushed back*. SAPS members become "my family-together pushing back the frontiers of evil" (the title of the SAPS, 2011 Annual Report; Bruce, 2010), The terms can be found in the South African Police Service strategic plan to combat crime at Bophekhang/Muvhango in Vanderbjipak Benevaliaon/L.K. Semeya 2012.

Another layer of communication procedures within the police, and one that is also found in military or quasi-military operations, are the secret names used to describe police operations, especially in investigations that involve highly placed politicians or sensitive information related to organized crime activities such as drug dealing and smuggling. In such contexts, language is used to protect the interests and security of the police as well as to maintain the integrity of the investigation. The following are names of recent covert police operations conducted by SAPS against People Against Gangsterism and Drugs in South Africa (PAGAD), an Islamist vigilante group (see next section): *Operation Lokisa Ditokomane* (Sotho, meaning correct the errors in your identity document), *Operation Recoil*, *Operation Saladin*, *Operation Good Hope*, *Operation Crackdown*, and *Operation Lancer.* Other operations, against a right-wing extremist group, were code-named *Operation Zealot and Operation Hopper.* Given the sensitivity of the police, the operations were coordinated by SAPS. From a linguistic perspective, the names reflected SAPS' perspective toward the far-right Afrikaner group *Boerang* as a terrorist group. Even though the names of such operations are initially high-level secrets, when the mission is completed successfully, the names become public knowledge. From a language planning perspective, the use and creation of these codenames is a form of top-down discourse planning.

3. Security in the context of multilingualism, language planning and police communication

Security can be defined at several levels. As citizens of states, individuals grant to states the responsibility and the right to exercise the regulated use of violence (for example, through the police or the military) to maintain stability and peace, and to respond to threats. Unfortunately, despite the urgency of addressing conflict situations, the concept of security has many complexities, relating not only to actual violence but also to matters like public health, food security, refugees, and, indeed, the regulation of words. 'Security has become a veritable obsession in both the USA and Europe' (Kienscherf, 2012: 1) including in South Africa as well as the entire African continent. One way in which states are able to maintain their security is in their efforts to exercise a monopoly of violence. A monopoly of violence and its relationship to the state is "not a unilinear process" (Englund, quoted in Buur et al., 2007: 13), but one as crucially reliant on language and discourse as on acts of violence.

The concept of *human security* redirects attention to the level of the individual and to human and citizenship rights, and away from the state. From a language perspective, linguistic citizenship becomes a relevant concept here, with its whole apparatus of language tests, classes, nativist language discourses, and so on. This also includes discursive struggles around definitions of security practices and the rights that underlie them, the ways crimes and policing powers are defined; legitimation and de-legitimation of discursive terms (e.g., "terrorists" versus "freedom fighters") and contributing to language development, and "tribal" tensions between cultures, languages, and/or local varieties of African languages including English and Afrikaans. As a result, a further equation in the form of "(language = communication = security) is made further problematic by the polysemy of the middle term of the equation" (Liddicoat, 2008, p. 148). Communication is construed as

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socially embedded, a dynamic interchange that creates and may sustain people's sense of self over time, and their membership in human collectivities. In communicating, it is feasible that police may integrate aspects of the situation they find themselves in, including the on-going behavior of themselves and other police, with reference to their own past, present, and anticipated experience, in ways that are not knowable in advance. In this sense, "meaning is always 'now'" (Toolan, 1996: 125), and is never closed: "Our interpretation [...] is always provisional and subject to revision" (Pablé and Hutton, 2015).

4. Language preference, crime, communication, community, and context

In order to understand the language demands and expectations of African communities in the Western Cape, South Africa, I conducted a study in a local township, specifically Khayelitsha, which is predominantly Black. The police serving the area are multilingual and multiracial. I collected data through a focus group discussion made up of 12 participants, 6 male and 6 female, from 25 to 70 years. There was a deliberate effort to diversify the people in the focus group by including deaf people as well. There were two deaf people. One research assistant who could sign communicated with members of the focus group, the focus group was carried out in the township hall, which is used predominantly by members of the local community as a site of recreation and religious services. All the participants were Black, and all were multilingual in Xhosa, English, and Afrikaans. The focus group discussion was video-recorded, with questions managed by two local graduate students, supported by two other research assistants whose responsibilities ranged from taking down notes to clarifying questions. The video-recorded conversations and subsequently transcribed.

The focus group began by asking participants what they felt about their general experiences with the police and what they felt were challenges when communicating with the SAPS. A focus group was used because some of the issues might be regarded by some individuals as extremely sensitive in their context characterized by extreme xenophobia on the part of some (mostly White) police, and so may regard discussing issues about police communication in a group rather than as individuals safer.

4.1. *Analysis of town hall meeting comments*

Issues of language were clearly important for members of this focus group, who felt that the police should learn to communicate in a number of different African languages in order to provide 'service' to diverse linguistic communities but so were cultural issues of respect.

Speaking men who were addressed in Tswana felt their masculinity compromised unlike women.

At a broad level, the public feels it should be mandatory for the police, particularly Whites, to learn (Black) African languages because "some of us are not perfect in English." There was no uniformity in how the men and women reacted to the use of English. Some women who had spent most of their lives working in kitchens even though they were 'not perfect in English' did not have any strong objections to being addressed in English, as this is the language that white people use. The participants also felt that the police were corrupt and assigned crimes to members of the community even if they had not committed a crime in order to solicit bribes. Participant (describe an anecdote which supported the ways in which the police attributed crimes to an innocent person.), reflecting ways in which in practice distinctions between policing and committing crime is narrow and difficult to sustain.

The following are some examples of focus group members' preoccupations, anxieties, and fears. Some were more dissatisfied with how the police were communicating, while others were more satisfied. The responses were valuable because of the increasingly violent role SAPS play in South African society. The responses were classified into three categories: (i) language and culture, (ii) language and audiovisual media, and (iii) interpreters.

5. Responses, language and culture

- All officers should be encouraged to learn a wide range of African languages, particularly White Officers because we are not perfect in English or Afrikaans. They should also be able to communicate not only in Xhosa but also in sign languages.
- An interpreter must be used to make sure the correct statement is taken down. It will also be useful to use interpreters with more knowledge and exposure to policing procedures.
- Policing will be better if the community is allowed to register complaints in their language and not forced to speak languages they do not understand.
- Communication with the police will be better if they are guests on radio talk shows and distributing pamphlets and posters written in Xhosa.
- All things are coming right as far as I know; the police are on the right track. Everything is on the right track except that we have to wait a long time to be served.
- People of all races must be available in the office so that we can communicate easily.
- Officers should address people in their own language.
- The police are rude they must greet people first.

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- Officers should allow the community to register complaints in their languages and not force them to speak a language they do not understand.
- Communicate in Xhosa, as we are not perfect in English and Afrikaans.
- Police officials should speak all official languages.
- Police should learn African languages.
- Police should be able to use Xhosa in verbal and written communication.

5.1. Language and audiovisual media

- Police should communicate information through the radio and posters on street corners.
- Posters should be in Xhosa.
- Police should provide relevant information by means of pamphlets, community meetings, and announcements on radio station.
- Flyers in different languages can make the public aware of services rendered by the police.
- Police should be guests on radio talk shows.

5.2. Interpreters

Interpreters and sign language interpreters should be available at all times.

- Interpreters should be available at all times.
- People's services as volunteer interpreters should be enlisted.
- Because of the limited number of professionally trained interpreters, there is an increasing tendency to use other police officials when interrogating detainees, particularly if one of the languages spoken by the police officer is more or less the same as that of the detainee. However, some major problems may arise. There might be differences between lexical items in varieties of the same language. In other cases, the language may not have lexical equivalent of terms based
- SAPS should concentrate on people that are neglected, for example, blind and deaf people and must have sign language interpreters.

6. Policing and militarization of language learning

Demands that the police learn the language (or variety) used in the locality they are working are a challenge for the police (as it is for military establishments deployed in unfamiliar localities). Learning local and especially non-standard languages, particularly in diverse multilingual contexts, is a complex process, given the absence of substantial language teaching materials and lack of clarity regarding the goals of language learning. For interpretation services to be effective, interpretation has to be done by professionally trained interpreters and not be dependent on ad hoc arrangements, including family members or other untrained individuals who might not be sensitive to the complexities of legal language. Even if the police and the clientele use the same variety, and even if interpretation services are provided, communication problems still occur because of the sociocultural dynamics within which the police and its clientele are embedded in the administrative contexts of "social reality" (Hajek et al., 2008).

6.1. Policing gangsterese

Both the police and members of the local communities felt that language learning is important for the police to be able to carry out their professional duties. There was one important difference though between what the police and local communities felt should be the object and target of language learning. While the local communities expect the police to learn local languages, the police's objectives on language learning were much more specific and perhaps much more sensitive to the prevailing contextual climate in Khayelitsha in Cape Town. The police were much more interested in learning the language varieties and multilingual practices used by gangs and proto-gangs,[2] Vuras and Vutas in Colored communities in Cape Town such as the Americans, the Brits, Hard Living, gangs 26, 27, and 28. Proto-gangs (Vuras and Vutas) are still in their young relative to super-gangs such as 26, 27, 28, Hard Living (HL) and others. Policed communication is therefore in this study approximates the language of gangsters. Policed communication from the perspective of the police would ideally have a language variety, which approximates the language of gangster. The interest in learning the language of gangsters was promoted because Western Cape suffers from high levels of gang participation and violence.

Both male and female policemen express interest in learning and using the language and discourse practices of the female gangs the Vato Babes and Voora Babes. The police felt this would be helpful in their policing in Cape Town a city characterized

[2] Proto gangs are gangs that are not yet fully formed.

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by a wide spread use of gang. If policed languages included language used by Vuras and Vutas 'babes' it means distinctions between conventionally policed language and the varieties spoken and used by female gangs.

Interests in learning language of gangsters was complimented by the fact that each gang may speak and use language varieties differently as a marker of their identity. Learning local gangsterese is further complicated by the radical changes in ways in which gangsterese radically and quickly changes for example, the use of language by the vato gang may be different from that of the Vutas, and even in the same gang, for example, the use of language by members of the Vutas who have been in prison may be different from that of members of the same gang, (lets say the Vutas who have not been in prison). There would also differences in the language practices of the Vuta babes from that of male Vutas.

6.2. *Police communicative styles*

The public may be critical of police communicative styles that they regard as rude, abrasive and arrogant. For example, there is a cultural principle that "The police must learn to greet first"; in other words, the public often views police communication as abrasive and expects the police to accommodate to the public's communication style (Barker et al., 2008; Cartwright and Jenneker, 2005; Killian et al., 2010). In Nguni languages, greetings are a central part of an opening of any form of interaction. It is necessary to initiate a conversation with a greeting otherwise, for without a greeting, the speaker assumes is an aggressive and impolite posture; at least from the viewpoint of the other individuals addressed, rendering it difficult for a conversation to take place. It is conceivable that from the perspective of the police, niceties such as greetings waste their time because of their heavy schedules, and compromise "police effectiveness." Speed in dealing with individual cases might be necessary, given the large number of individuals with whom the police interact (Womack and Finley, 1986).

The public as police clientele in the town hall focus group above were expressing frustration at the inability of the police to be sensitive to their discursive practices. It is in this sense necessary for both the police and the public to understand the role of complex accommodative practices, such as trust and compliance, in police–civilian encounters. This situation is rendered even more complicated because of racial, ethnic, and xenophobic tensions that have arisen, in part, because of how African immigrants are viewed by the general South African public.

7. Conclusion and implications for language planning

In this article, I identified some features characteristic of police communication in contexts in which policing is at the nexus of crime and policing language learning. In this paper, I have also shown that while both the local communities and the police in Khayelitsha feel that the police should learn local languages, there are significant differences on what each group identifies as local languages that are to be learned. The differences are however, that the police are much more interested in learning very specific varieties of language, in this case a version of language that could be loosely referred to as gangsterese as this is a code for obfuscating meaning in order to avert law enforcement. Learning of gangsterese is, however, complicated by the fact that varieties of this form may vary between gangs, and even within the same gang as follows:

(i) Using old terms in new ways (ii) creating new terms.

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