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Where Have All the Ideophones Gone? The Death of a Word Category in Zulu

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1.0 Introduction

Phonological features, even contrastive ones, may come and go in a language. Languages and their speakers vary as to whether they use non-contrastive features to encode social or other non-linguistic meaning. One use of such features is to distinguish regional or social dialects. For example, the distribution of Canadian Raising of the upgliding diphthongs of English sharply demarcates the border between the United States and Canada (Chambers 1989). This distribution coincides with a number of other isoglosses, including the treatment of /æ/, which will be [a] on the northern side of the Niagara Peninsula and something like [ɪɛ] on the other. Sub-national regional differences are also encoded this way. In the United States regional varieties in the eastern part of the country differ as to the presence of post-vocalic [r], and in New York City the distribution of the variable (r) also reflects social stratification (Labov 1966).

In addition to changes attributable to internal factors (cf. Milroy 1992), individual sounds and even features may arise in a language due to contact with groups speaking other languages The presence of clicks in Southern Bantu, for example, has long been known to have occurred because of the interaction between Southern Bantu speakers and the click-using Khoisan peoples, e.g., Herbert 1990. In addition to simple expansion of a target language's inventory, contact may lead to restructuring. The well-known borrowing of words with the alveopalatal /ʒ/ from French (into English) helped establish a phonemic voicing contrast for English fricatives in general (e.g., Clark and Yallop 1990:133-134).

It is also common for the lexicon to be variable and for its shape to be correlated with these same factors. Lexical proliferation often takes place around items of high (sub-)cultural salience For example, among the !Xóõ, traditionally hunters and gatherers of the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa, one finds a plethora of terms for hunting instruments, edible plants, and animal parts, some not distinguished in English (Traill 1994). Such South African urban varieties as *Tsotsitaal* and *Isicamtho*, spoken by young township males with associations to criminality, contain a great number of synonyms for 'women' and 'money' (Childs 1996). Similarly, in college slang large part of the lexicon can be assigned to just a few semantic fields (Eble 1996:44).

Other social factors such as sex and class also play a role in determining an individual's lexicon. Frequently remarked gender-based differences, e.g., Lakoff 1973, represent one such skewing. Another factor is social standing. The conservatism and stiffness of upper class speech can be opposed to the naturalness of the speech of the interior classes (Kroch and Small 1978). The main force of the prestige factor in such situations is to inhibit normally operant processes of language change ("change from below") at the upper end of the socioeconomic continuum. The same factors are at work, for example, with respect to nativization patterns, which are also

resisted by the elite. The elite has no allegiance to local values and is inclined to follow and adopt external norms (the source of "change from above"). I show in (1) a borrowing from French into American English.

(1) The prestige cline of nativization of French *croissant* 'crescent roll' in North American English (cf. a comparable cline in Johnson, Flemming et al. 1992)

Standard French [kʁwa'sɔ̃]

Class/Prestige

High

American English   [kʁ̥wa'sɔ̃]
[kw̥a'sɔ̃]
['kw̥asã]
['kw̥asãt]
([kɹ̩esn̩'ɹowl])   Low

As one moves up the socioeconomic scale, speakers will more closely approximate the native French version.

One's profession may also lead to a locally well developed lexicon or specialized vocabulary in the area of one's profession, e.g., legal gobbledygook or jargon, as represented by the quote in (2).

(2)   If we could rid linguistics ... of jargon by the year 2000, we might shorten the
time for doctoral training appreciably and achieve the wide general attention that
scholars, certainly the scholars in the physical and biological sciences, seek
(Lehmann 1987:B3).

More controversial is the transfer of syntax through borrowing. In response to a claim denying such borrowing, Morris Goodman surveys five introductory textbooks produced within the last twenty years and finds that "none of them questions its [borrowing's] validity as a possible explanation of syntactic change" (Goodman 1993:70). The one text that seemed to adopt a contrary position goes on to state that syntactic borrowing is possible, even adducing a case of the introduction of a relative clause construction from Kannada (Dravidian) by a dialect of Konkani (Indic) (Lightfoot 1979:383 as referenced in Goodman 1993:71). Thomason 1993 makes a similar point in its criticism of the relexification research initiative (Lefebvre 1993), showing that even word categories can be transferred from one language to another.

No single language, however, has been documented as variably possessing a word class, i.e., some speakers have it, others don't. It is, however, abundantly attested that languages vary as to the number and robustness of word categories, e.g., Shopen 1985. Despite the fact that all languages have nouns and verbs, other categories are not universal. For example, the West African language Kisi has a regular process for creating adjectives from verbs but has only a score or so of underived adjectives. Languages such as Dyirbal and Igbo have only a limited number of adjectives with no regular process for augmenting the class (Dixon 1977). Some languages have

no adjectives at all; Quechua and Mojave adopt the strategy of using nouns and verbs to convey meanings usually handled by adjectives (Schachter 1985).

But within a language no word class varies categorically as to being present or absent, and this same generalization holds diachronically To my knowledge never has a (non-functional) category been documented as disappearing, or even a functional category as disappearing through any non-phonological process, i.e., the usual process of phonetic erosion at word edges or by what has been called "grammaticalization", e.g., Hopper and Traugott 1993. This is the process whereby what was once a word becomes a clitic becomes a bound morpheme becomes an inflection, the "Morphology-as-Frozen-Syntax Principle" (e.g., Givón 1971; cf Bybee 1985) This process may then proceed to syncretism, as in the noun class systems of many African languages, and disappearance, as with the English case system.

But for lexical categories, nouns, verbs, adjectives, and the like, such a scenario has never been enacted for the word class as a whole. What I will claim below is that a word category in a South African language shows the sort of synchronic variation that is associated with language change, which variation may be signaling the category's incipient disappearance

Such is the interpretation of an assessment of the knowledge of ideophones among Zulu[1] speakers of South Africa. That the knowledge of ideophones is unevenly distributed among Zulu speakers is relatively uncontroversial, and the data show this clearly What is perhaps more controversial and even unsettling is the diminution and projected extinction of the word class among young urban speakers and even among the population as a whole. The conclusion is that the paucity of ideophones in the speech of a native Zulu speaker signals a renunciation of a traditional Zulu identity and portends language change and perhaps language shift. Unfortunately, for other languages involved in shift, e.g., Gal 1979, or even death, e.g., Dorian 1981, no comparative documentation exists.

The closest comparable situation comes from Dorian's work on East Sutherland Gaelic. She maintains that it is not expressive language that suffers in language death Speakers may have restricted grammatical and lexical abilities but an 'excellent sociolinguistic or communicative competence' (Dorian 1981, as discussed in Dressler 1988:189). The Zulu facts suggest the opposite, that ideophones, clearly constituting part of the expressive component, diminish in importance and number.

In addition to the importance of this study for issues in language change and language contact, it has some more localized relevance, specifically, for speakers of Zulu and for those who have allegiance to the language as a mark of identity in all of its ideophonic glory. When I presented this paper before a South African audience, which included many speakers and teachers of Zulu (the concept of the "linguistic market" Sankoff and Laberge 1978 is relevant here), the audience unanimously opposed the claims made here. Audience members claimed, "Our language isn't changing!", despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Thus, this paper may also have relevance to those interested in language policy and planning.

The first step in the discussion is to demonstrate that ideophones constitute a word class, a relatively uncontroversial claim for Southern Bantu. The second is to show that native speakers of Zulu do not share equal knowledge of ideophones and how this knowledge correlates with social factors. Measured knowledge of ideophones is evaluated against the social factors of age, sex, education, residence patterns, and rusticity, a parameter to be elaborated below. The conclusion is that just as for pidgins and creoles (Childs 1994) the knowledge and use of

ideophones serves as a reliable barometer for language typing and language change, and perhaps for language shift and death.

2.0 Ideophones as a word class

The question as to whether ideophones constitute a unique word class cross-linguistically is a vexed one, even when the inquiry is restricted to Sub-Saharan Africa. It can be answered only on a language-specific basis (Samarin 1978, Childs 1994, but cf. Moshi 1993 for a 'universal' definition). Many of the differences in analysis have to do with the criteria invoked, be they phonological, semantic, syntactic, or functional, but may also be attributable to real cross-linguistic differences. In addition to treatment as a unique word category (e.g., Courtenay 1976), ideophones have been analyzed variously as a sub-category of adverbs (Childs 1995) and of verbs, a "non-verb verbal", (Marivate 1985) or as a subcategory of multiple word categories (Newman 1968). This last conclusion, of course, means that ideophones constitute no separate category at all.

In (3) is shown the type of features that have motivated a phonological criterion, the one most commonly invoked and the one felt to be central by most investigators.

(3) Phonologically odd features of Kisi ideophones

1. Raised or lowered register (F_0 or pitch range)
2. Rapid modulation or exaggerated range of register
3. Phonation: breathy voice, creaky voice, voicelessness and whisper
4. Duration: overly short or long
5. Rate: faster or slower than normal
6. Being set off from the rest of the sentence by a pause
7. Using phones not belonging to the regular phonemic inventory, lacking regular phonemic oppositions
8. Violating the phonotactic constraints of the language

Other criteria have been used as well. I sketch some of them in (4) and will elaborate on several of the less transparent. With regard to the morphology of ideophones, Maduka 1983-84 has identified non-concatenative partials of great productivity in the ideophonic subsection of the language (cf. Bolinger 1949). When I state that ideophones are often introduced by a "dummy verb" in point 2, I refer to a semantically bleached verb along the lines of English *say* and *go*. With regard to the last point, the closeness of ideophones to non-linguistic communication has long been recognized anecdotally, but has recently been demonstrated experimentally. In an revealing study of Japanese ideophones, Kita found tight synchronization between ideophones and gesture (Kita 1994). I obtained comparable results in a quasi-replication of the study with Zulu speakers. As an example of how this synchronization is realized, one can sight the common observation that ideophones dealing with offensive smells are accompanied by nose gestures, e.g., Venda *thuu* (nose held with the thumb and forefinger, facial muscles tightened)

(4)   1. Morphology: Reduplication, phonaesthemes (non-concatenative and otherwise)

2. Syntax: restricted to clause-final position; introduced by a dummy verb, often severe or tight selectional restrictions or collocations

3. Semantic: underscoring the meaning of the verb, intensifiers; often involve a direct appeal to the senses, usually sight, concrete imagery

4. Pragmatics: expressive function confined to only some types of discourse

5 The accompaniment of ideophones by gesture

These same criteria can be invoked when characterizing the ideophones of Zulu and of Southern Bantu in general, for these languages form a closely related group (Lanham 1960). Their specific characteristics in these languages have been amply detailed in Fivaz 1963, von Staden 1977, and the earlier grammars of Doke's . All writers agree with Doke's original (1930) classification of ideophones in a separate class (Doke 1930), a treatment I will follow here

Ideophones, then, comprise a phonologically marked and semantically expressive word category with identifiable morphosyntax and special pragmatics. They are found in most languages of Africa and in many languages of Asia and America (Childs 1994 contains a review). The first sentence in (5) features a Kisi sentence with an ideophone (it and its gloss are underlined), the second an ideophone from Zulu (one actually used in the study), and the last two contain English equivalents.

(5) *mà   cò   wɔ̀   fùlàá   ꜛwélé-wélé˩ màà pèè   wáà ó pèmbù   téèŋ*
     it   is   still   come   IDPH   like spring stay to hill   between
     'It (my breath) still <u>rushes forth</u> like a spring emerging from the hills.'

   amehlo alentombi   athi <u>baka baka</u>
   eyes   girl   say IDPH
   'The eyes of the girl <u>fluttered</u> provocatively (= She batted her eyelashes) '

   The town was laid out all <u>higgledy-piggledy</u>.
   Tucker ran away from his creditors <u>lickedy-split</u>.

This section has shown that ideophones constitute a separate and unique class. The criteria that have been used are drawn from all parts of the grammar, but the criterion that is most obvious is the phonological one. I now turn to the research design that was used to evaluate ideophone knowledge.

3.0 Research design

This section sketches the experimental design used to assess the ideophone knowledge of Zulu speakers. After briefly describing the design, I turn to the results and provide some discussion.

3.1 The instrument

Subjects' knowledge of ideophones was measured by means of a questionnaire administered, in most cases, by a native speaker who was encouraged to "help" subjects as much

as possible. After an initial warm-up period, during which subjects were put at ease and answered various demographic and personal questions, the interviewer familiarized subjects with the overall aim of the study, and were told that they should not be disturbed if they did not know all the ideophones they were given. In fact, no one knew all of them. Subjects were asked to perform three separate linguistic tasks, their success on each task depending on their knowledge of ideophones.

Task 1 consists of verbal stimuli describing a phenomenon to which an ideophone might refer. This part is referred to as the 'Description' stimulus in the discussion which follows. The descriptions were developed on the basis of cross-linguistically frequent ideophones and on the basis of universally common concepts. Descriptions that could evoke onomatopoeic ideophones were systematically excluded from this first task. Examples of all three tasks are given in (6).

Subjects were first of all asked if they knew of an ideophone that could be used to describe the given phenomenon. They were then asked to create several sentences in which the ideophone could be used. A subject would receive a score of "0" for no knowledge, a score of "1" for some knowledge (if the subject knew the ideophone but could not use it in a sentence), and a score of "2" if the ideophone could be used in several sentences.

In Task 2, the 'Ideophone' stimulus, subjects were provided with a Zulu ideophone by the interviewer and asked to perform in the same way as for the Description task, being scored on the same basis.

Task 3, 'Sentence' ideophones, featured a set of sentences containing attested Zulu ideophones. Again, scoring was done on the basis of "0" for no knowledge, "1" for some knowledge, and "2" if the ideophone could be used in a sentence.

(6) Tasks used to evaluate subjects' knowledge of ideophones

Part 1: Description

1. (be) white, e.g., snow, a bleached piece of white cloth, milk
2. (be) black, e.g., as on an overcast night when no moon or stars are present

Part 2: Ideophone

1. *bhu* beating (as a carpet, or a fire with branches)
2. *bhuu* issuing in numbers, rushing out, swooping down; buzzing (of flies, bees, etc.)

Part 3: Ideophones in sentences

ŋgithe   ngizihlalele   memfu   abantu
be   appear   IDPH   people
'As I was sitting by myself people <u>suddenly appeared</u>.'

umshaye   boco   ikhanda
dent   IDPH   head
'He <u>dented</u> his head.'

3.2 The interviewers

Three interviewers were used, the first being the principal investigator ("tc"), and the other two Zulu-speaking university students. One was a male second-year student ("tv") and the other a female third-year student ("yh"). Interviewers recorded their first interviews, which despite the unnaturalness of the task produced no audible or reported anxiety on the part of the subjects, except in the subjects interviewed by tc (and in tc). The effects of the interviewer were considerable and significant. Because the interview factor was so significant, only the results of 'tv' are reported here [2]

3.3 The subjects

Sixty subjects were interviewed [over 100 in the full study], not all of whose results could be used, primarily because of the interviewer factor. The results of only thirty-nine are reported here. They represent a relatively heterogeneous sample of native speakers of Zulu accessible to the interviewers.

With regard to sex, there were 22 females and 17 males. The histogram in Figure 1 represents the distribution of the subjects as to age.
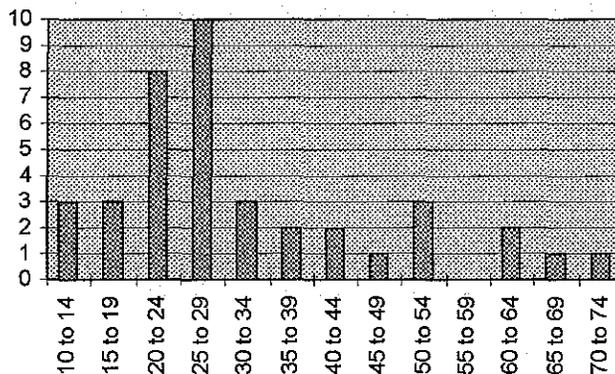

Figure 1: Distribution of subjects as to age

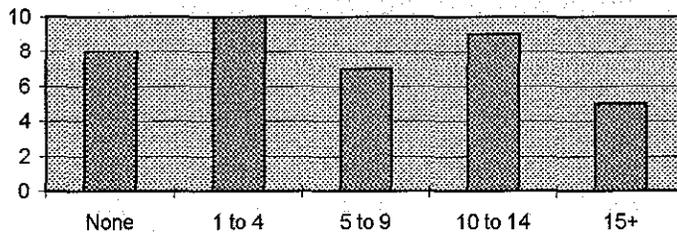Figure 2 shows their distribution as to years of schooling.

Figure 2: Distribution of subjects as to education

The next two features, "Residence" and "Rusticity", are attempts to capture the importance of urbanness to ideophone knowledge specifically because preliminary interviews unequivocally suggested that this factor would be crucial.

Residence is determined solely by an individual's residence history, i.e., where a person has lived and for how long. The index was calculated on the basis of the four-way division used by a national survey company (AMPS 91) and published in *Stat-Pack 1992*.[3] These divisions are given in (7) with example areas from the study given after each descriptor. The formula used to calculate the index of Residence is given below those scores in (8) (split residence, e.g., a migrant worker, received split scoring).[4] Thus the higher one's Residence score, the more urban an individual, at least in terms of residence patterns.

(7)   Score   Descriptors and examples

      4   **Metro**: Pretoria and Johannesburg area, Durban
      3   **City / Large town**: Newcastle, Ladysmith
      2   **Small town / Village**: Greytown, Howick
      1   **Rural**: Blauboch, Charlestown

Residence ("R" in the equation below) is computed by added an individual's birthplace score to each product of the years at a place times the place's score calculated for each residence. The sum is then divided by the subject's age.

(8)   Calculating "Residence"

$$R = \frac{\left(S_{birthplace} + (Yrs_\alpha \times S_\alpha) + (Yrs_\beta \times S_\beta) \dots \right)}{Age}$$

S   = Score of a residential area (see (7) above)
Yrs = Years at a residential area

Note that some of these residential areas have changed over the lifetimes of some of the older subjects. Scores were assigned to each individual's residence for the size of the town at the time of the individual's residence there. This index revealed that roughly half of the subjects have lived most of their lives in a large town or small city.

The final parameter, 'Rusticity', also requires a word of explanation. The residence index allows quantification of an individual's residence history but says little about that person's orientation towards the city and country (Mitchell 1987). Rusticity attempts to quantify that orientation. Of all the demographic and social factors, urbanness or its opposite, 'rusticity', is the hardest to quantify. What this index seeks to represent is the extent to which an individual possesses a traditional and rural rather than a modern and urban identity, a notion first developed in the South African context with the concepts of "Red" (traditional cause they daubed themselves with mud) and "White" Xhosa (Mayer 1961).

Besides using information gleaned from the demographic questions, information comes from the more strictly ethnographic and open-ended questions, on which subjects were

encouraged to expatiate. Subjects were asked about their participation in traditional Zulu practices, e.g., whether *lobola* ('bride price') is paid, whether *hlonipha* (the linguistic behavior,[5] literally 'respect') is practiced and how extensively, etc. They were then asked about their future commitment to such practices: Would their children follow these practices? Subjects, especially those falling into the first, most rustic category given in (9), often gave spontaneous (and enthusiastic) support for such practices. In addition, subjects were asked about the languages of their parents, their spouses, and children. On the basis of these factors, interviewers and the principal investigator assigned each subject to one of the three categories given in (9). Each represents a prototype category, i.e., not all members can be expected to possess all of the listed characteristics.

(9)   3 Rural/traditional: Socio-cultural: Traditional Zulu; Linguistic: Monolingual; Residence: Resided only in rural Zulu areas; Education: None; Occupation: Farming, housewife, day labor.
2 Town/Transitional. An individual going through the process of becoming urbanized (rarely does the reverse occur). Urban with some ties to traditional life in the country, or rural with some ties to urban life: Socio-cultural: Zulu ties but fading; Linguistic: One European language (including Fanagalo[6]), perhaps an urban vernacular; Residence: Mixed; Education: Primary but not beyond secondary; Occupation: Slightly skilled, formal or informal sector.
1 Urban. Totally or predominantly urban orientation, minimal ties to village and rural life· Socio-cultural: Zulu-ness unimportant, materialistic and status-conscious; Linguistic: Multilingual with urban vernacular and a European language; Residence: Resided only in city; Education: Secondary or beyond (/prison); Occupation: Non-farming, skilled, formal sector employment, perhaps criminal.

The subjects fall into a relatively bipolar distribution with regard to this feature.
I now turn to the results, concentrating on the importance of age in determining ideophone knowledge.

4.0 Results

Sex / Gender. Females knew more ideophones than males but the difference was slight, 71.3% was the score for females and 69.6% for males. These differences were not statistically significant. Virtually all subjects report that women use ideophones more than men. The actual difference between men and women may thus be in performance rather than knowledge. That is, men and women may know ideophones equally well; women may simply use them more than men (cf. Ottenheimer and Primrose 1989).

Age. The correlation here was positive and statistically significant (0.439). The results show a positive correlation between ideophone knowledge and age.
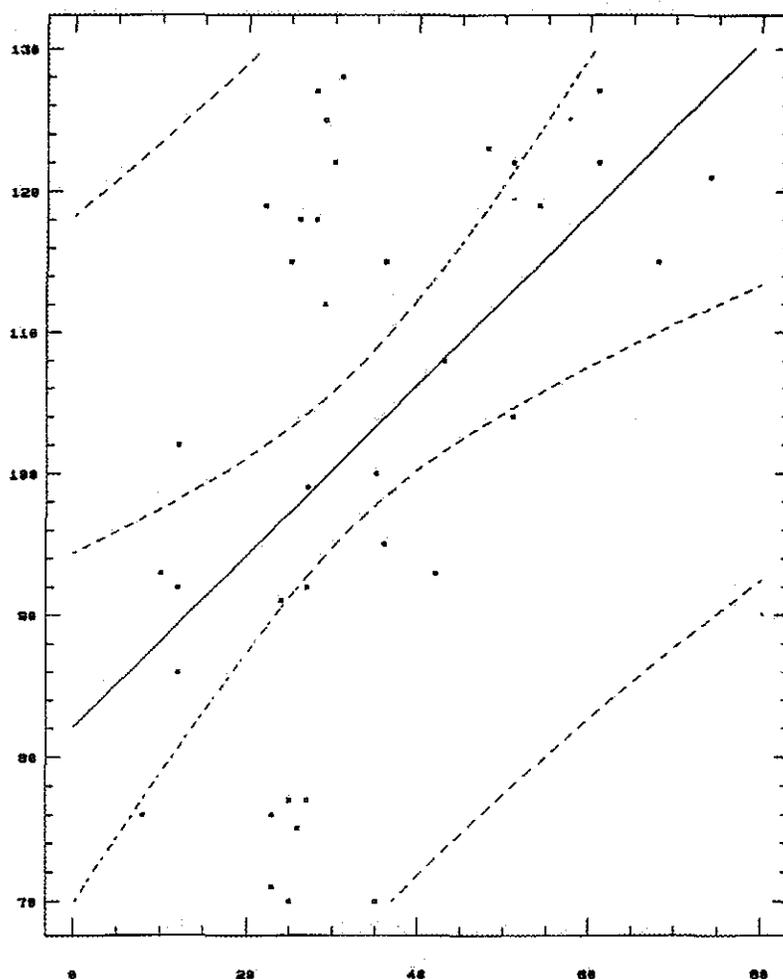
Figure 3: Ideophone knowledge and age

One interpretation is that knowledge of ideophones increases with age. Alternatively, one could see the results as pointing to a decrease in knowledge of ideophones among the young This seems the more likely explanation on the basis of questions put to subjects.

Education. On the basis of interviews, education or formal schooling was expected to correlate negatively with knowledge of ideophones. More highly educated people were predicted not to know as many ideophones as their less educated counterparts. Education, as measured by number of years of formal schooling (actually, highest level reached), shows only a slight non-significant negative correlation (-0.19). More years of schooling thus means slightly less knowledge of ideophones on the part of Zulu speakers.
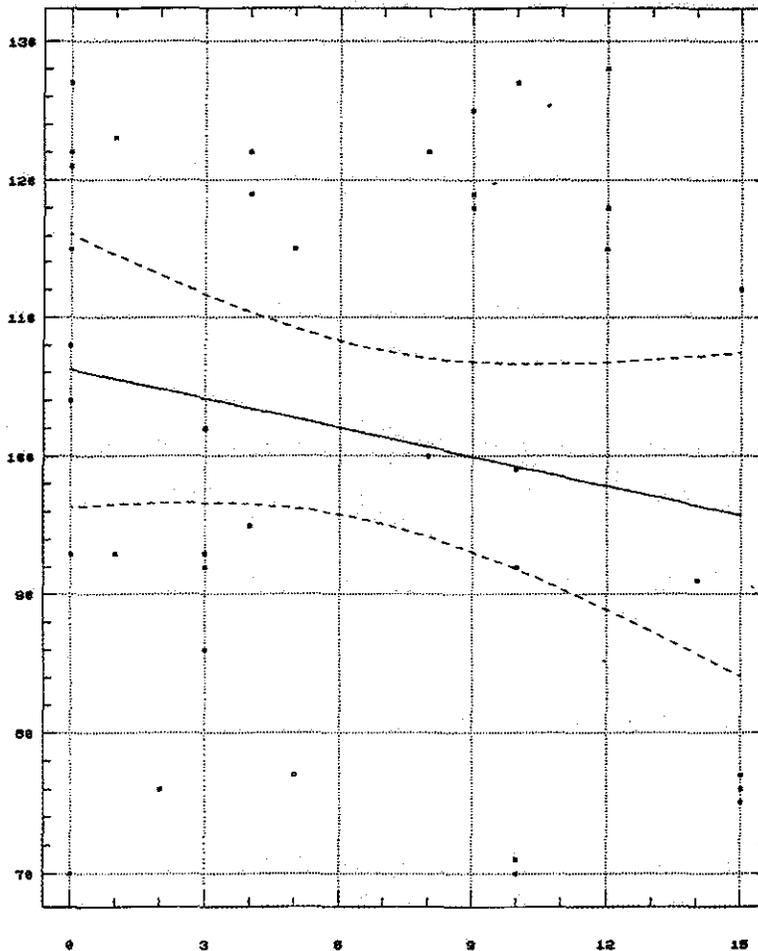
Figure 4: Ideophone knowledge and education

Interestingly, ideophones are explicitly taught during Standards 5 and 6, when most of the children are roughly thirteen or fourteen years old. Ideophones are considered a part of speech as any other and form part of the curriculum devoted to grammar. Black students in South Africa have been taught in what's called their "mother tongue", even in the cities where one's first language is a moot concept at best. Studies by Estelle Doctor and her co-workers at the University of the Witwatersrand show that Pedi (Northern Sotho, another Bantu language of South Africa) ideophones are acquired only slightly before this age (Doctor 1992)

Residence patterns. Ideophone knowledge had no significant correlation (-0.035) with Residence.
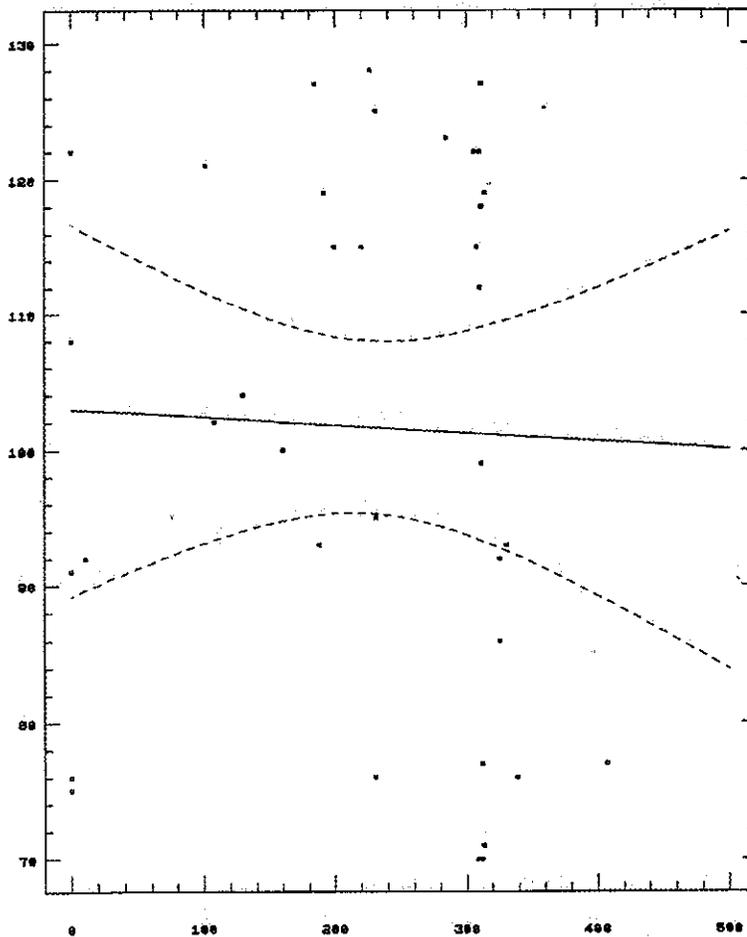
Figure 5: Ideophone knowledge and residence

The expectation here was that city dwellers would not know ideophones as well as people who live in the country. On the basis of the findings above, however, one's physical residence makes no difference as to ideophone knowledge.

Rusticity. Although the factor of Rusticity did not reach statistical significance, as represented by the display in Figure 6. Although there is a slight increase in knowledge with an increase in Rusticity (here rated as a whole number integer), the differences between the three ratings are not significant.
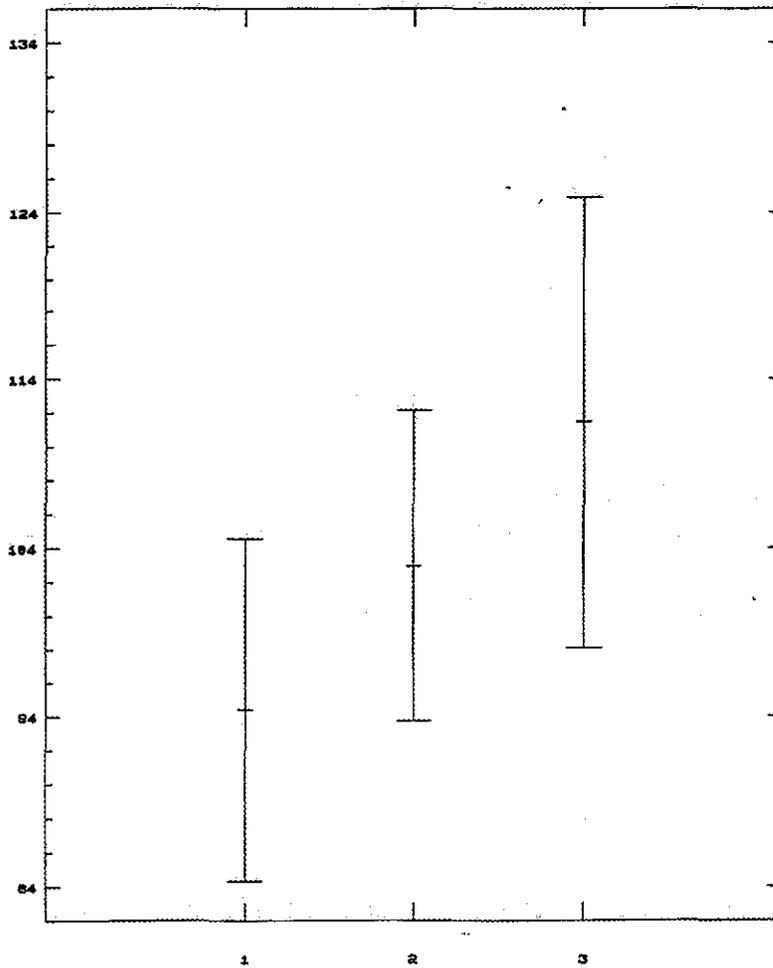
Figure 6: Ideophone knowledge and rusticity

This finding thus only weakly supports the opinions of native speakers but may also show the relative unimportance of rusticity as a determinant of the distribution of linguistic forms.

5.0 Discussion

Before discussing the implications of these findings, I need to point out potential sources of error and discuss why they do not affect the results

5.1 Sources of error

One source of error is the non-randomness of the population sample Subjects were chosen primarily for their accessibility. Although several research forays were made into the countryside by the interviewers, most of the subjects had an indirect connection with the university. Colleagues, associates, friends, fellow travelers, and family members constitute much of the sample, but it is not expected this bias would affect the results in any significant way.

The role of linguistic features in determining ideophone knowledge is also relevant and was not controlled. Part of the original design was to elicit ideophones violating Zulu phonotactic constraints. This turned out to be quite a significant factor when the subjects were elderly rural women evaluating ideophones with [r], as represented in (10).

(10)   Ideophones with [r] violating Zulu phonotactic constraints (/r/ is not a phoneme in Zulu)

bhrr, drr, mbrr	birds flying
mprr, ntrr, trr	birds flying high with upward sweep; airplane or missile
prr	birds flying high upwards, airplane or missile flying
grr	buck scampering
phrr	horse blowing (with lips vibrating)

These ideophones were firmly rejected and claimed to be impossible Zulu words by these speakers.

Many of the phonologically aberrant ideophones were at least partially iconic, which status may have also influenced the results. I group representative examples into three categories as to their degree of iconicity in (12).

(11) Ideophones categorized as to degree of iconicity

Onomatopoeic:	*bhobhobhoo*	cry of the bush-shrike
	bhebhebhe	noise made by a goat ram
	hl	hissing, sizzling, fizzing
Sound symbolic:	*bhə*	hitting in the small of the back
	cha	dripping of water, babbling of brook
	nci	small
	Examples with syllabic trilled [r] in (10)	
Non-iconic	*tshu*	pitch blackness
	mhii	approbation before a diviner

It is not clear how iconicity affects subjects' ability to recall ideophones for arbitrary associations are just as real to (naive) speakers as non-arbitrary ones (Bolinger 1949:231).

One linguistic feature that likely affects recall is derivational relationships, i.e., whether or not an ideophone is related to other words in the language. In Zulu, as in many other Niger-

Congo languages, ideophones are most closely related to verbs (Marivate 1982; cf. Childs 1989), but may also be related to words belonging to other word categories, as shown in (12).

(12) *nwabu* IDPH slow
   nwabuzela VERB creep, crawl; move with a weak gait
   (cf. *-nwabu* NOUN chameleon)

   q(h)wa IDPH of something very white
   iqhwa NOUN snow

The examples in (13) show ideophones with no derivational relationships. It should be pointed out that Zulu has many ways of deriving words from ideophones, so that the words given below may easily be converted into verbs or nouns.

(13) *wuu* fat
   tshu very dark

It is assumed that ideophones with established cognates would be more easily accessed than those without such associations

Neither of these factors appears to be important. A statistical analysis was performed on these factors and neither iconicity nor the presence of derivational relationships was found to be significant for determining ideophone knowledge.

Task factor was also unimportant. As expected, subjects score lowest (59.9% known) when given only descriptions and score highest (81.3%) when presented with ideophones in sentences. The percentage of positive responses for all subjects is 64.9%.

These results may have been biased, however, by two facts. First of all, the descriptions seek to elicit the most cross-linguistically common ideophones, which would presumably be more easily accessed than uncommon ones. Secondly, Task 2, the ideophone-only stimuli, consists solely of phonologically aberrant ideophones. For example, some of them have stress on the final syllable, as shown in (15); elsewhere in Zulu stress falls on the penultimate syllable.

(14) Final stress in Zulu ideophones (Fivaz 1963:15)

  kikikii   uttering shrill cries of pleasure
  mbimbimbi sound of a bubbling spring

Phonologically aberrant ideophones may not be so accessible as those that conform to the phonology of the language proper. These two facts could widen the gap between scores on Task 1 (Descriptions) and the other parts of the questionnaire, but they should not affect the overall results.

5.2 Implications

At the beginning of this paper I suggested that ideophones may be facing extinction and that their demise would be the first documented case of a word category disappearing from a language. This point needs elaboration and some buttressing with social facts which will help to understand why this is the case.

From a mathematical standpoint, perhaps merely as a thought exercise, one can fit a curve to the graph in Figure 3 to predict when this extinction will occur, i.e., at the intercept of the y-axis. This is assuming, among many other things, that the decrease in ideophone knowledge is a (non-age-graded) linear function.[7] The formula is given in (16). When Knowledge is extinct (K = Ø), Age will be 135 (Age = -135.58). What this could mean is that someone born 135 years from now will know no ideophones. With an average life expectancy of sixty-five, 200 years from now (135 + 65, in the year 2192 when those speakers die), there may be no Zulu ideophones.

(15) $K = a + b(Age)$ (Knowledge = 82.12 + .6 (Age))

These calculations are predicated on the assumption that Zulu progeny will continue to speak Zulu, an assumption that requires some discussion. Because of all the code-switching, code-mixing and even code creation that is now taking place in South Africa as a result of urbanization, e.g., cross-ethnic marriages, urban students increasingly cannot pass exams on and in Zulu (see note 10) At least one urban variety of Zulu, Isicamtho, is said to be, and speakers self-consciously try to make it, unintelligible to rural speakers (Ntshangase 1991). Thus its speakers deliberately eschew the language, but because of its importance for toughness or for confirming one's manhood[8] or because it's the only language they've got, Zulu forms the basis for their own code. To make Zulu a non-Zulu variety, they resort to various means, the most important for this study being the elimination of ideophones from their speech.[9]

This pattern is found with comparable varieties, creole-like urban vernaculars. When such varieties are lexified by an indigenous lg "the direction of historical change is not decreolization toward the lexifier but rather continued innovation away from the lexifier, symbolizing the relatively high status of the urban, modern pidgin or creole, as opposed to the rural, low-status lexifier" (Gilman 1993:396). This is exactly the situation with Isicamtho, a Zulu slang of the townships; divergence from Zulu is crucial as its speakers eschew the rural identity, epitomized by ideophones (Childs To appear). Thus language change among one sector of the population, or even language shift, depending on one's interpretation of the status of Isicamtho, may be the larger phenomenon to which the loss of ideophones belongs (v Thomason and Kaufman 1988). I return to this point below.

All respondents maintained that ideophones are disappearing in the speech of the young, especially the urban young. Although self-report data on linguistic usage is not always reliable (see, for example, the inaccurate reporting of males and females in Norwich (Trudgill 1972). This trend is shown not only by findings here but also by the fact that (Standard Zulu) ideophones must be explicitly taught in the schools before they are known to urban speakers (and they are forgotten soon after!).[10] It is likely ideophones form no part of the urban identity so desirable to the young (Labov 1994:22).

Elsewhere (Childs To appear) I have argued that ideophones mark local identity (Labov, e.g., 1966) basing myself on, among other things, the detailed work of Samarin among the Gbeya

(Samarin 1991). This study demonstrates that ideophones are shared increasingly as individuals belong to smaller socio-geographical units, culminating in a comparison of the "sharedness" between mother and child. Ideophones are avoided just because they serve to mark local identity. The identity that they mark is decidedly rural and has even taken on associations with the white apartheid government, particularly since the Zulu-speaking administrators of the language boards are considered to be government stooges. Furthermore, because ideophones are taught, ideophones are associated with the schools, another agent of the white apartheid government, and the abhorred Bantu education, at the root of the Soweto "Uprising" and subsequent slaughter in 1976.

The final fact that must be considered, a more linguistic one, is the specific fate of ideophones in urban Zulu, particularly in Isicamtho. The expressiveness of ideophones is exploited, albeit somewhat attenuated, but the form is not: cognate forms exist but not as ideophones. The process has been called "de-ideophonization" (Marivate 1982; Mfusi 1990); thus it is the word class qua word class that is deliberately eschewed. I give some examples of the change in (16).

(16)   Examples of "deideophonization" (Mfusi 1990· 39)

   ukugidla   'to sleep' from *gidli* for falling heavily
   ivum   'car' from sound of moving car *vu-u-um* [onomatopoeia]
   mca   'beautiful, pleasant, delicious' from *nca* of abundant harvest

We must now return to a consideration of larger social facts, ones which bear not so directly on the fate of Zulu ideophones but more broadly on Zulu itself.

The bold prediction made above may never have a chance to be tested because of the massive urbanization in South Africa, the most highly urbanized country in Africa The formation of new Zulu varieties or even language shift, as mentioned above, may occur before the projected disappearance date of 2192. One reason for this belief is the rapid urbanization that is taking and has taken place in South Africa along with concomitant changes in identity. There are no precise figures for Zulu urbanization but figures for the Black population in general are available. The display in (17) shows that roughly half the black population is rural, and half of the remainder (25%) lives in large metropolitan areas.

(17)   Residential patterns for Blacks in South Africa (*Stat-Pack 1992*:sa91-urb14)

Designation	Population (thousands)	Percentage
Metro	4,039	25.0%
City/large town	1,959	12.1%
Small town/village	1,493	9.3%
Rural	8,642	53.6%
	16,133	100.0%

The figures in (18) show the trend towards increasing urbanization of Blacks in South Africa.

(18) Level of urbanization· Blacks 1985-2000

1985	39.6%	
1990	44.5%	(estimated)
1991	50%	(preliminary figure)
2000	75%	

If these trends continue the population will soon be almost completely urban (well before 2192), a state which may have already been achieved according to many reports. Urbanization is an important factor in language shift, and the high rate of multilingualism found in South African cities is the necessary precursor for shift, e.g., Fasold 1984.

Predicting when speakers will shift, however, is not an exact science, nor is predicting the death of a word category. Brenzinger 1992 illustrates in some detail how no one (socio-)linguistic factor is individually predictive One immediately thinks of the relatively non-predictive but nonetheless suggestive social factors involved in language shift (and language death, see Dressler 1988) One could certainly add apartheid to the list in (20); almost all of these are pertinent to the status of Zulu. For example, Zulu has many English borrowings particularly in the speech of educated urbanites. With regard to domains (Fishman 1971), a Zulu teacher has to use an urban Zulu or even Isicamtho when teaching "Zulu" students Zulu.

(19) Causes of language shift and maintenance (Fasold 1984)

Changes in the physical or emotional environment: migration, industrialization, school language and other governmental pressures, urbanization, prestige, small population, etc.
Precondition: bilingualism, an 'exposure to risk'
Leakage: Domains reserved exclusively for shifted-from language change to shifted-to language
Directionality of borrowing exclusively from language being shifted to.

On the basis of the evidence adduced here, then, it seems productive to add the loss of ideophones to a list of potentially diagnostic factors, although the issue may be a broader one involving expressive language in general, especially that encoding local identity in particular. Certainly the weakening of networks that has taken place in African cities allows for little of the norm enforcement found in strong networks (Milroy 1980, Milroy 1992).

6.0 Conclusion

That ideophones signal a rural and traditional identity for Zulu speakers cannot be disputed. That urban vs. rural, educated vs. uneducated, and young vs. old speakers wish to disown that identity also seems plausible. It is their shunning of ideophones, likely because of their absence in the target culture, that signals this change in identity. In the same way marked variants or expressive language encodes a certain identity (the focusing of Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985), so may the absence or avoidance of such forms signal a denial of that identity (e.g., Rickford 1986).

In summary, the survey facts, coupled with an assessment of pertinent sociohistorical facts, point to the early demise of ideophones as a viable word class in Zulu. Ideophones, then, besides serving an expressive function also allow for the assessment of language vitality (Giles, Bourhis et al. 1977). Further studies will shed light on the relationship between expressive language, language change, and language shift. We can certainly add to our list of possible outcomes of language contact the extinction of a word category. It is likely that only the more lexical and less grammatical categories could be affected in this way (v. Thomason and Kaufman 1988, Rickford 1993). Certainly there are no syntactic repercussions to the loss of ideophones; it is more like a massive slice out of the lexicon, albeit one with identifiable morphosyntactic and other features.

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Notes

[1] Zulu is spoken in the Republic of South Africa and belongs to the Nguni group of languages of Southern Bantu (Niger-Congo).

[2] The results of tc were excluded because he did not speak Zulu and because his results differed dramatically from tv's when separate ratings for the identical speaker were compared Both interviewed the same subject on occasions three months apart (tc after tv). The subject's score was significantly higher (and likely more valid) when interviewed by tv (a native speaker of Zulu).

[3] The *SA Stat-Pack* is a privately published compilation of graphs and statistics assembled annually from government and business publications.

[4] The index is thus something of an integral sum with birthplace being given extra weight What is likely the most important period of residence, however, is the period during which an individual is socialized, probably around adolescence.

[5] The practice of *hlonipha* denotes a battery of respectful behaviors performed asymmetrically in such relationships as young to old and wife to husband.

[6] Fanagalo (also Fanakalo) is a European pidgin lexified primarily by Zulu It is used downwards for giving orders, in asymmetrical power relationships, the typical environment being in the mines (e g , Mesthrie 1989).

[7] Admittedly this formula has problems. When one extrapolates the other way, i e , backwards in time, one can see the problems. It suggests that the knowledge of ideophones N years ago would be .605663 times (an adult's age plus those many years), a number that could soon rise to astronomical proportions.

[8] Interestingly, male speakers of other Bantu languages find that Zulu has great appeal and instrumental value. Thus, for example, speakers of Thonga are actively shifting to Zulu (Webster 1991). These speakers, however, are typically migrants who likely speak an urban variety with few ideophones. Nonetheless when they return home, they use ideophones in their speech (Mathumba 1991 pc), the one instance of ideophones being borrowed on a significant scale.

[9] Others include speaking very rapidly with concomitant articulatory undershoot and massive borrowing from Afrikaans, often via Tsotsitaal, and English (Childs 1996).

[10] Problems abound in the teaching of 'Standard' Zulu in the schools, e.g., Herbert 1992, because students speak a distinctly urban variety without many of the features of the rural variety on which the tests are normed (R. Mfeka 1992 personal communication).