Module Overview -- Getting started

Start here & then click on Next to open up the sections.

0.1 Welcome to the module

Welcome to the module, *Language through an African lens*. In this module, we look at the process of language learning and use from an African languages perspective.

This module is a signature module. It is set on NQF level 5 for 12 credits in the field of Communication studies and language within the sub-field of Language.

It is useful to those of you who need to develop competencies in interacting successfully in a multi-cultural society. These competencies include the ability to demonstrate sensitivity to your own language usage and that of others and interact across cultures with knowledge and respect. It enables you to understand the culturally diverse South African society better, and empowers you through this understanding to contribute to reconciliation and to improving interpersonal relations in the country. The purpose is to improve your knowledge of each other in pursuit of creative co-existence, effective cross-cultural communication and nation-building.

On completion of this module you should be able to demonstrate linguistic and cultural diversity awareness and sensitivity in order to enhance personal relations in day-to-day situations. You should be able to interact across cultures in a respectful way while appreciating your own linguistic and cultural background in relation to the languages and cultures of others.

There are no prescribed works for this module. You should feel free to read and use the resources referred to. The myUnisa website is of fundamental value for this module. You need to visit this site for AFL1501 frequently -- try to come online at least once a week. You will need to participate in the discussions that may arise and get the necessary feedback from the lecturers on topics such as online activities, assignments, discussion forums and the final portfolio project. All of these will be explained in the next sections.

*We wish you success on your journey!*

Click on Next to move on to the next section.

0.2 Module Information

How this module is organized

This module will be useful to students who want to develop competencies in interacting successfully in a multi-cultural society. These competencies include the ability to demonstrate sensitivity to one's own language usage and that of others. It also helps us to interact across cultures with knowledge and respect. For this reason, many students who are majoring in subjects like Psychology, Criminology, Sociology, Health Sciences, Communications, Social Work, Political Science often take this module. And, of course, many students who study languages will take this module.

Listen to the audio clip which gives you an overview of the module [You can also download and listen to the audio later by clicking on the link "here" underneath the media graphic]:

Click [here](https://my.unisa.ac.za/) to download the audio file

By exploring some of the languages spoken in the country (as well as their associated folklore, popular culture, modern spoken idiom and literature), our method is to gain access to beliefs, customs, values, interpersonal attitudes and perceptions. These are then connected to a number of central concepts in the typical life-world of South Africans which are often cause for misunderstanding. These central concepts are the basis for the Units in this module:

- Unit 1: Language as a process
- Unit 2: How language signifies attitudes and world-view
- Unit 3: Language and identity
- Unit 4: Language and interpersonal interaction
- Unit 5: Ubuntu - Self and Other
Purpose of this module

Students who successfully complete this module will be able to demonstrate linguistic and cultural diversity awareness and sensitivity in order to enhance their interpersonal relationships in day-to-day situations. In addition, successful students will be able to interact across cultures in a respectful way while appreciating their own linguistic and cultural background in relation to the languages and cultures of others.

The module is delivered via myUnisa, the Internet, peer group interaction, and community engagement in some of the activities. Lecturers and teaching assistance will interact with students on myUnisa and via email.

Outcomes of the module

For this module, there are four outcomes that we hope you will be able to accomplish by the end of the course:

- **Specific outcome 1**: Demonstrate awareness and sensitivity of linguistic and cultural diversity in order to enhance personal relations in day-to-day situations.
- **Specific outcome 2**: Demonstrate respect for diversity within a multi-cultural society as expressed through language.
- **Specific outcome 3**: Interact across cultures in a respectful way.
- **Specific outcome 4**: Appreciate own cultural background in relation to the cultures of others within a multi-cultural society.

Click on Next at the bottom to go on to the following section.

0.3 Studying this module online

How to study this module online

At the time of registration, you received a tutorial letter 101 in print hard copy. (It is usually also available on myUnisa, under Additional Resources if you want to read it online.) This is the only tutorial letter that you will receive in the post, regarding this module. All of the rest of your study materials and activities will take place online, with myUnisa, email and the internet.

This module will only be offered online. This means that there are some changes in the way we teach, and some changes in the way you will learn. In this section, we will start to explain some of these differences.

Overview of the online tools

Here are some of the tools we are going to use on myUnisa to guide you in your studies:

- Home page / Welcome
- Announcements / email notification
- Schedule
- Learning Units
- Discussions: This is an online discussion forum
- Additional Resources
- Online Assessment
- Course Contact
- Questions and Answers
- Blogs

If you click on the links above, it will take you to some general information about that tool.

Inside the **Discussions**, there are several discussion forums where you will be asked to discuss ideas and post your discussions online. It is the place where you publish your Discussion assignments, i.e. Assignments 1, 3 and 5. See the instructions in the assignments on how to do it. As part of this space, we also give you a place to give your answers or discussions on the different activities we encourage you to do throughout the learning units.

Remember, these discussion forums are public places and everybody will be able to see your answers and discussions.

You can ask questions with the **Questions and Answers** tool. If it is a good question for everybody, your TA will publish it for the whole group.

Other tools may be activated at a later stage, depending on what the lecturers and the teaching assistants want you to use for specific activities.

Click on **Next** at the bottom of this page to move on to the following sections.

0.4 Orientation to the module
This section gives you an orientation to how you will learn in this module. We have set up a few activities so that you can make sure you know how to use the tools and complete the activities for this online module.

**Getting started with *Language through an African lens***

We want you to practice some of the skills you will need in this module. We call these Ice Breaker activities and they will not be marked, and will not count toward your Year Mark for the course.

1. Ice Breaker 1: Introduce yourself to your group in **Discussions**
4. Ice Breaker 2: Reflect on what you want out of the course by posting in **Blogs**
6. Ice Breaker 3: Take the **Online Assessment** survey: "Online Orientation"

*Click on Next to read the instructions for these Ice Breaker activities.*

**Ice Breaker 1: Getting to know you**

**Who are you?**

One of the first things we want you to do is use the online discussion forum tool and share something about yourself. Go to the discussion forum by clicking on the **Discussions** tool, which is located at the top left of this webpage.

In **Discussions**, click on the Forum - Unit 0: Introduce yourself - Getting ready to study this module online. Go to the topic "How to introduce yourself here" and follow the instructions.

- Tell us something about yourself. Where are you from? What is your mother tongue? What other languages do you speak and/or write?
- How do you think - by using language?
- What other languages do you see or hear or use around you everyday?
- What are your personal goals for this module? What do you hope to get out of it?
- Do any of these photos portray your life? Why or why not?

![Image of people in a workplace]


By the end of the first week, you should also read at least 2 other people's introductions and respond to their messages by just clicking Reply in their Posts.

**Assessment Criteria:**
These are the assessment criteria for Discussion Assignments. You can also find a copy of the Rubric for "Assessing Discussion Forums" under Additional Resources. You can print it out to see how your discussion will be assessed for this Assignment.

- **Quality of thoughts and posting:** We are interested in your interpretation of the things you read and do -- do not give us our words back. This is copying and no marks will be received.
- **Relevance of discussion and quality of reply:** Remember, this is a formal assignment and you need to take it seriously.
- **Personal contribution to the discussion:** You need to give your own opinion and support it with facts and examples.
- **Understanding of contents and context:** We want to make sure that you read and understood the contents and can make sense of it.
- **Response to others:** You will need to go online a few times in order to respond to some of the Discussion posts from your classmates.

Click on Next to read the instructions for the next activities.

**Ice Breaker 2: Reflection**

**Reflecting on what you learn**

As part of your learning in this course, we also want you to reflect individually on what you learn, as you go along. For this purpose, you need to think about what you learn and how important it will be later in the module or course, or for the qualification you want to acquire.

**Why reflection is important**

Reflection is one of the most important skills for learning; you need to think about what you learned, and you need to think about how you learned it. In fact, this is the first part of your final Portfolio for this module.

This is why in every Unit of the module, you will have an activity to reflect on your learning in that section. The following questions might help you to get started:

- What did you learn?
- What is the impact that this learning has on you?
- Does it change the way you feel about the course?
- Does it change the way you will study in this course?

In order to give you some practice with this, we want you to do a written reflection in the Blogs tool. If it does not work then just use an ordinary Word file.

[Graphic source: http://www.acslaw.org/acsblog/all/student-writing]

**How to use the Blogs tool for this module**

2. Go to the Blogs tool.
4. Click on 'Add blog entry' link at the top to start your blog.
6. Give your blog entry a title.
   - You could use something like "My language story" or "Studying online for the first time" These are just example titles.
   - Your name will automatically show next to this blog entry.
8. Then type your reflection inside the text box provided.
   - It's a good idea to put the date on your blog because you will add several entries, and the blog automatically puts the most recent entry at the top.
10. After the text box, you are asked to "Choose who can see this entry".
   - The default setting of the blog is ticked: "This entry is publicly viewable"
   - You should NOT change this because this is the only way that the lecturer can read your reflection and give you credit for participation where applicable.
12. If you are not quite finished, you can click on the 'Save Draft' button but no one else will be able to read your blog until you click on 'Publish entry'.
14. When you read someone else's blog, you can comment on it by clicking on the "Leave a comment" link at the bottom of the blog.

**Questions for your first blog, Ice breaker 2**

2. In your Blog, you can tell us what you learned when you read the online Discussions where you and your classmates have introduced themselves in the first Ice Breaker.
4. Will this have an impact on your view of the course?

You can also read someone else's blog and leave them a comment. To do this, just click on the "Leave a comment" link under the blog you have read.
Click on Next to read the instructions for the next activities.

Ice Breaker 3: Take a Survey

Getting to know all about you

One of the other tasks for this module is the online assessment done through the Online-Assessment tool.

In order to practice these skills and to make sure you know how the tool works, we want you to answer a few questions for us. Later on, we will share the answers to these questions so that you will find out more about the other students in your group.

2. Click on the Self Assessments tool in the top left hand panel and it will take you to a survey using this tool.
4. The survey is called “Online Orientation” because we want to know about your experience.
6. When you click on it, you can start answering the questions.

[Graphic source: http://www.connect2youth.org/Pages/SocialJustice.html]

Remember, this activity is for practice only and is not for marks. It will not count toward your Year Mark for this module, but it will help you make sure you understand the different online tools and activities.

Thank you for sharing with us!

Click on Next to move on to the following section.

0.5 Assessment in this module

Note that there can be many other activities, both online -- in your blog, in self-assessment, in discussions -- and in your community, where you will be exploring the concepts and ideas from this module.

Assessment Plan

This is where we set out the assessment plan for the module. We also have included the deadlines and activities in the Assessment Plan file, uploaded under Additional Resources, in “Unit 0 Resources”. This document is suitable for printing so that you can see when you should begin your activities and assessment tasks in this module. We use colour to help you understand the plan.

The graphic below is an example of what your Assessment Plan looks like, but you need to go to Additional Resources and look in Unit 0 for the Assessment Plan for the specific year and semester.
The colours help you understand the plan:

- **The blue tasks are the Ice Breaker activities** in Unit 0. These activities are not for marks.
- **The green rows are the Portfolio activities.** You should start them early in the semester, but they are only due at the end of the module.
- **The light orange rows are the formal Assignments for this module.** These due dates will also show in your Calendar.

Here is a break down of the formal portfolio activities and Assignments, as they occur in the semester.

**Unit 1: Language as a Process:**

First Portfolio Activity: *Reflection in the Blog: Your language story* – Do now and keep for your portfolio

- Assignment 01: Discussion Forum - Linguistic identity and Linguistic environment

**Unit 2: How language signifies attitudes and world-view**

- Assignment 02: Assignments - Mirror and reflection

**Unit 3: Language and Identity**

Second Portfolio Activity: Build your Family Tree written assignment -- Portfolio

- Assignment 03: Discussion forum - Names and kinship
- Assignment 04: Assignments - Social or Cultural event

**Unit 4: Interpersonal relationships**

- Assignment 05: Discussion forum - Folklore, proverb & idiom
Unit 5: Ubuntu (Self and Other) -- Preparing the Portfolio

- Preparing for your final Portfolio
  - First Portfolio activity
  - Second Portfolio activity
- Putting it all together
  - Add an Introduction
  - Relook at Assignment 04
  - Conclusion: Your Final Reflection
- See Unit 5 for more detail....Portfolio

Your Year Mark for this module

- Weighting in the course: **Year Mark & Portfolio**
  - 80% year mark for assignments in each unit.
  - 20% final Portfolio (40% subminimum).
  - *[Note, this will take the place of the typical final examination for this module]*

Why we don't have an exam for this module

- Your final assessment task is called the Ubuntu Portfolio and is the focal point of this course. Ubuntu means that 'we are because of other people'.
- Therefore in your final portfolio, you are expected to reflect on your own language use and how language serves as a tool to get to know yourself and other people.
- The purpose of the final portfolio is to show how Ubuntu is reflected in language use in your own life.

There will be more details about the Portfolio, throughout the module.

*Click on Next to go to the following section.*

0.6 For Success in this module

To be successful in this module, especially because it is an online module, you need to adhere to some basic principles. We call these the Rules of Engagement:

**Rules of Engagement**

- **Participate:** We need to see that you are online, so you need to do the activities -- write something in the online Discussions (even if it's not perfect), try the activities, explore the website. We give you some guidance in the assessment plan and on the *Schedule* so that you can keep up with all the activities in the module. Follow the Schedule, as much as you can.
- **Sharing is important:** A big part of this module involves interactive learning -- *heutagogy*. We ask you to share a lot about yourself, about your own language use, about your culture, your family, your religion, etc. You need to be willing to share these stories with your classmates in your group. However, you will never be expected to share private information or information that makes you uncomfortable. So, share what you want to share and help us to learn from each other.
- **Don't be afraid to try:** When you are participating online, we don't care about being 'perfect'. Of course, we expect you to use good academic language -- even in your emails and online discussions. This is NOT an sms or Mxit or Facebook... Be formal and remember that you are 'speaking with' your lecturers, teaching assistance and classmates in your group.
- **Be open to other opinions:** An important part of this module is learning about other cultures, religions, political views and languages. So you will probably read and hear things that you may not agree with -- that's okay. We don't all have to agree on everything in this world. In fact, it's important that we learn how to work with, how to deal with and how to live with people who we don't always agree with. This is a fact of life in South Africa... and in the African contact, in general. *You always see things as you are -- and not as they really are.*
- **Be polite:** Be careful not to insult other people, accidentally, by what you say online. For example, readers will think you are being rude if you type **EVERYTHING IN CAPITAL LETTERS or BOLD!!** Remember the power of language -- this is the whole point of this module! If you are worried that you don't know the rules for online politeness, you can visit the website on *Netiquette* here [http://www.albion.com/netiquette/index.html](http://www.albion.com/netiquette/index.html)
- **Ask for help:** Don't be afraid to ask questions if you don't understand something. You can ask your Teaching Assistants and you can ask your lecturers if you have problems with anything in the course. Go to *Questions and Answers* and ask a question -- it may even help us to help other students, too.
More support

For additional support in this module, we have provided you with a multilingual glossary with many of the key concepts and terms in Zulu and Sepedi/Northern Sotho and English, with short definitions.

You will find this as a pdf file under Additional Resources > Unit 0.

If you get lost, you can always check the glossary. Also, if you disagree with our definition or translation, you can send in your comments.

- Make use of the Questions and Answers tool to ask us the question about the glossary. Just click on "Ask a question" and we will get email. If we agree with you, we will publish it to the whole class, so other students will be able to see it.

If you prefer written text take note that you can print each Unit by using the printer icon to the right in the Learning Units.
Unit 1: Language as a process

Conservation of the self is preserving or maintaining who we are, how we are organised and how we adapt to our relationships and patterns of behaviour. Whenever we use language, we therefore reflect who we are in terms of our own frames of reference and blue prints. This is done when we view language as a process in terms of identity of the self, the speech situation, and the process underlying the language of survival and coordination.

1.0 Overview of Unit 1

Conservation of the self is preserving or maintaining who we are, how we are organised and how we adapt to our relationships and patterns of behaviour. Whenever we use language, we therefore reflect who we are in terms of our own frames of reference and blue prints. This is done when we view language as a process in terms of identity of the self, the speech situation, and the process underlying the language of survival and coordination.

Unit 1 is about Language as a Process

To get started with studying the content for this course, take a look at the website called "The languages of South Africa" put up by the South Africa Info organisation. Explore the website and see what you can find out about South African languages. Right click and choose Open Link.

- http://www.southafrica.info/about/people/language.htm

We know that there are many different languages in South Africa, even more than the 11 official languages mentioned on this website. Think about the languages you hear around you every day, and answer these questions:

- Where do you place yourself, according to the lists on the website? How do you fit in?
- Where do the other people around you fit in, in terms of language?

For more information about the languages of South Africa, you can also read the Wikipedia entry online. Right click on the web address [URL] here and choose Open Link:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_South_Africa

Some important keywords for this unit:

- conservation, linguistic identity, linguistic environment, speech situation, language of survival, self-reflection, recursion, misunderstanding and difference.

*Click on Next to go on to the next section.*

First Portfolio Activity (Portfolio): Reflect & Start your Portfolio

First Portfolio Activity: Reflect on your own language background

Submit with all Portfolio activities in your Final Portfolio

Check your Assessment Plan document under the Additional Resources for Unit 0. You will find a document for semester 1 and a document for semester 2 which will have suggested start dates, and due dates for each assignment. Make sure you look at the document for the correct semester.

This activity makes up 20% of your Portfolio mark
Think about what you have read so far about language as a process, different South African languages and the purpose of language. Use the Blogs tool to build on to your initial reflection in the Ice Breaker activity, and answer these questions:

[Don't forget to start the new Blog entry with the date -- this is important so that you can find this at the end of the module.]

Put a title for this Blog entry -- First Portfolio Activity: My Language Story, date...

2. What is your background, in terms of language?
4. What language is your "mother tongue", the language of your heart?
6. What other languages do you know?
8. How did you learn these other languages?
10. How do you use these languages?
12. Do you agree that all the language(s) you know, and how you use it (them), reflects who you are -- as a person?

Good luck!

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

1.1 Language as a Process

Language as a Process

- To what extent does your background and culture, i.e. your frames of reference, influence the way you use language to communicate with other people?
- Have you ever noticed that you use different words and registers of language in the same situation when you speak to different people?

Imagine yourself (The man sitting at the desk in the pictures, on the left) in the following situation and fill in a question that you would pose to the person greeting you.
Good Morning

Good Morning Ella

Morning

Morning Jabu
Thinking about the pictures

2. Was there any difference in the words you used?
4. What do you think caused you to use the specific words in each case?

Now, in each of these situations you as a person need to ‘survive’, i.e. you need to say something in such a way that it fits the speech situation. You do this by, for example, asking a question, i.e. you use language to interact with the other person. However, the questions that you ask vary from situation to situation. Your attitude is different for each speech situation and these differences are then expressed in terms of the language that you use.

I am sure that different people filled in different questions above. Why? Is it because we have different attitudes towards the persons appearing before us? The answer should be related to the fact that each one of us has a specific identity that need to be preserved to enable us to survive linguistically within each specific speech situation. We also need to be able to adapt within the different speech situations. This ability enables us to change the question that we ask in each speech situation. We also reproduce certain words or phrases within similar situations. The first reaction is to say: “Good Morning”. This works within the speech situation and is used over and over again. The way a person answers the telephone in the same way over and over again is an example here. We all therefore adhere to the basic human need for the conservation of identity (the self), adaptation and reproduction in every speech situation in a specific linguistic environment.

In terms of linguistic identity every individual has an idiolect. It is a variety of a language and grammar, or words, idioms, or pronunciations that are unique to an individual. The grouping of words and phrases is unique, rather than an individual using specific words that nobody else uses. An idiolect can easily evolve into an ecolect — a dialect variant specific to a household. Forensic linguists can use idiolects to decide if a certain person did or did not produce a given piece of writing (or transcribed speech). While often passing unnoticed in speech, some idiolects, particularly unusual ones employed by famous individuals, are immortalized in the form of nicknames. A famous example is the nickname of Willie Mays (“the Say-Hey Kid”), who frequently used "say hey".

In each speech situation the meaning of words are of crucial importance when we communicate. Words are the tools or instruments that we use to communicate. Dictionaries are useful aids for looking up the meanings of words. Take any dictionary for another official language than English or Afrikaans and compare the meaning of the basic words that are used to greet, e.g. Dumela/Dumelang (Setswana). You will find that they are often translated in terms of English as ‘Good Morning’ or ‘Hallo’. Can we really translate these words directly into English as ‘Good Morning’ or ‘Hallo’? Does the use of these words to greet indicate a difference in attitude in terms of the language user in relation to a specific culture? Does the etymology of a word still play a part in the modern use of the word?

As for the use of language as a medium of communication, a significant distinction needs to be drawn between the user of the language (addressee) and the receiver of the language (addresser who receives and interprets the message: hearer/reader). The use of language is on a different level for each of these language users. The s (shorthand for speaker/s and writer/s) uses language to get a message across to h (shorthand for hearer/s and reader/s) that needs to receive and interpret the message. As for h a significant distinction can be made between a receiver (a person who receives and interprets the message) and an addressee (a person who is an intended receiver of the message). A receiver might be a bystander or an eavesdropper, rather than an addressee. What happens when we think? Do we speak when we think? Is there a speaker and a hearer?

One thing is however certain, whenever we use language, we reflect who we are. This also includes how we are organized and how we are adapted to our relationships and patterns of behavior. The understanding of other peoples’ attitudes and worldviews can only be generated from within their own internal frames of reference. Language is the medium by means of which people present their frames of reference, their unique blueprints and maps of the world, their attitudes and worldviews.

The question is now: “How does language come to serve such important functions; how does it acquire the power to shape interpersonal
and inter-group transactions, blueprints of the world, and maps of reality?” In other words, how do we express our own imprinted attitudes and world-views through language?

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

Activity 1.1: What do you think of this article?

Instructions: Follow the instructions and answer the questions for this activity in Discussions.

Activity 1.1: Respond to the article

Read the article Unit 1 par. 2.6.1.2. - So how do we see each other?

Go to the Discussions tool and share your answers to these questions in the forum 'Unit 1 Discussions' under the topic 'Response to the article'. Also share some of your comments on other student's views. NB: This activity is NOT for marks, but will help you to get your ideas ready for the Portfolio and for the Assignments.

- What did you learn from this article in terms of language diversity?
- Is it about the coordination of actions among humans and their environment?
- Does this mean that humans have to interact and communicate in order to understand one another?

Yes, they certainly do!

It is during this process of interaction and communication that language usage plays an important role. During this interaction process humans need to adhere to basic linguistic cooperative principles when they use language to interact. They need to give the right amount of information, they need to try to make sure that the contribution they make is true, they need to be relevant and be perspicuous (avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be brief and be orderly).

Note: This activity is NOT for marks, but will help you to get your ideas ready for the Portfolio and for the Assignments.

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

Assignment 01 (Discussions)

Instructions: Use the online Discussion forum to submit this assignment.

Assignment 01

Year Mark: 20%
Tool: Discussions

Check your Assessment Plan document under the Additional Resources for Unit 0. You will find a document for Semester 1 and a document for Semester 2 which will have suggested start dates, and due dates for each assignment. Make sure you look at the document for the correct semester.

How do you upload this Assignment? Go to the Discussions tool, by clicking on the tool in the left hand panel of this webpage. Click to open up the Forum 'Assignment 01'. Follow the instruction given by clicking on the forum Assignment 01 and get the topic 'Assignment 01' (Graded in: 1 Assignment 1). Click on it and click on Reply in the window Assignment 01 by J LE ROUX. Type or paste your assignment in the message block and when you are satisfied scroll down to Publish and click on it. Your assignment is now submitted.

Do not create your own topic. We can only assess submissions under the topic 'Assignment 01'.

Do not copy any text or even one sentence from other students or from the internet or from any other source. It is plagiarism and will be punished with a 0% mark for the assignment. All statements that are not your own should be properly referenced.

Assignment

Go to Unit 1 in Learning Units and read it. Go to 1.6 Winding up Unit 1 and study it and make sure you understand it. It is the key to your answer as you need to interpret linguistic identity in terms of the explanation given in par. 1.6.
Against the background of this information, do the following:

2. **Discuss** your 'linguistic identity' with reference to a specific speech situation in a linguistic environment you choose, e.g. when you are with friends or at a taxi rank or with colleagues at work or even when you are at home with your family. Reflect on the distinctions you draw when you speak to different people in the speech situation with reference to the view: "Whenever we use language, we reflect who we are" - see par. 1.6.

4. After publishing your discussion leave the site and come back later or the next day.

6. Go back to the topic "Assignment 01" and read the discussion of two of your fellow students. As a response, compare the linguistic identities of these students with reference to your own linguistic identity in terms of creating misunderstanding when we do not adhere to the language process.

8. **Make sure** all your submissions add up to about 600 - 700 words.

**Note:**

Your main discussion should be structured in terms of the Rubric for "Assessing Discussion Forums" found under Additional Resources - Unit 1 with an introduction relating to the view "Whenever we use language, we reflect who we are" in general, a body as your discussion where your own 'linguistic identity' is explained and interpreted as requested.

When you do the comparison between the linguistic identities of two of your classmates (you can go to your own post and do it as a reply on your own post) you need to conclude with reference to your thoughts about language diversity and how it is manifested in different linguistic environments.

Remember, in academic situations -- even online -- we strive to be polite and helpful at all times. Go back to the "Rules of Engagement" for more about Netiquette and online behaviour.

**Assessment Criteria**

These are the assessment criteria for this Assignment. You can also find a copy of the Rubric for "Assessing Discussion Forums" under Additional Resources - Unit 1. You can print it out to see how your discussion will be marked for this Assignment.

- **Quality of thoughts and posting:** We are interested in your interpretation of the things you read and do -- do not give us our words back. This is copying and no marks will be received.
- **Relevance of discussion and quality of reply:** Remember, this is a formal assignment and you need to take it seriously.
- **Personal contribution to the discussion:** You need to give your own opinion and support it with facts and examples.
- **Understanding of contents and context:** We want to make sure that you read and understood the contents and can make sense of it, i.e. interpret it in terms of the assignment.
- **Response to others:** You will need to go online a few times in order to respond to some of the Discussion posts from your classmates.

*Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.*

1.2 **So how do we see each other?**

- What do we think about the culture and traditions of our fellow South Africans?
- What about when people adopt children from another group, who speak other languages?
- What does this mean when it comes to language?

**How we see each other -- Language Diversity**

Think about the picture and read the article below. Note, the picture is not of the family mentioned in the article, but a similar family of white people who adopted two children from a different language group in their country.
Read this article from *The Times* (Feb 16, 2008) and think about that question.

The skin colour of Julie and Roger Greaves’ adopted African pigeon pair is not a subject taken lightly in their house. To the white, middle-class Greaveses, their chocolate-brown children show they had no qualms about crossing the cultural divide when they adopted them.

While seven-year-old Kayleigh and five-year-old Zane are being raised in keeping with the Greaveses’ English-speaking South African culture, the couple have opened themselves to understanding cultural differences, particularly within the African community to which their children are linked.

“It makes you realise how little you know and are more eager to understand,” said Julie Greaves. But, said husband Roger, “when you speak of adopting and embracing Africans into your life and your home, you can only teach them what you know and live”.

The Greaveses’ views are reflected in a recent study conducted by TNS Research Surveys, which polled 2000 South Africans to establish if they felt threatened by other cultures and whether they perceived their own culture and traditions as important.

The study found that while a third of the 2000 participants said they found other cultures threatening — this being most pronounced among black people — 63% embraced cultural diversity.

TNS Research Surveys’ Neil Higgs said an analysis of the data revealed that “working people” were less likely to feel threatened. "Those in upper-income brackets and those with jobs feel more secure and probably find that their experience of other cultures is now familiar and not novel," he said.

The study showed that a higher level of insecurity about other cultures was prevalent among the poor, and could be fuelled partly by their relative lack of contact with other cultures. Broken down further, the results looked at fear of other cultures by language group, with 37% of Zulu-speakers feeling threatened, compared with 25% of English, Afrikaans and Tswana speakers.

When it came to retaining one’s culture and tradition, 86% of the people polled said it was an important part of cultural identity. Women, in particular, felt strongly about the issue.

Alberton book-keeper Rosie Roberts is one such person. She has preserved her Portuguese roots, but has also adopted Indian culture in some aspects of her life. It was the popular Bollywood epic *Devdas* that hooked Roberts on Indian culture. Her son, who has also taken an interest in Indian culture, even bought her a punjabi — a traditional Indian outfit — as a Christmas present.

“Ever since I started watching Bollywood a few years ago, I became interested in other cultures. I became fascinated with the music, the beautiful costumes, the way Indians relate to each other, and the food.” Her interest in Indian culture has allowed her to enjoy a good relationship with her Indian neighbour. “I feel like an Indian princess when I wear traditional outfits. I am really into the Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan — I think he is one of the sexiest men alive.”

She’s even learnt how to greet and express her love in Hindi. “That’s important, so one day I can tell Shah Rukh Khan how I feel about him,” she said, laughing. Roberts said she believed that having an understanding of another culture allowed people to relate better to each other.

But University of Cape Town sociologist Professor Jeremy Seekings said that while a better understanding of cultures may foster better inter-racial relationships, it could also entrench a sense of difference. “Understanding does not necessarily mean that everyone becomes friends. It would not be surprising if South Africans are more open-minded now than they were under apartheid. There are many reasons why it would not be surprising: South Africans are exposed to many integrative messages in the public media, and come into contact with each other in the workplace far more than in the past.”

Seekings said South Africans were adopting aspects of other cultures in their lives. “Middle-class South Africans happily embrace all sorts of cross-cultural things as evidence of their cultural cosmopolitanism. Black CEOs drive imported cars from Europe and wear Italian suits, and black women wear white wedding dresses, while white CEOs wear traditional dress (at least Madiba shirts) at social occasions. There are even white sangomas,” Seekings said.
He said there were differences between understanding, accepting and embracing other cultures. “I guess it will be a very long time before South Africans move to this phase — embracing — at least in a substantive way,” he said. He ascribed the feeling of being threatened by other cultures to two factors: language and history. “We should not underestimate the importance of linguistic divisions in South Africa. Many South Africans do not understand each other well, if at all, when they speak in their home language. The big divide is between people whose home languages are not of African origin — English and Afrikaans — and those whose languages are Xhosa, Sotho or Zulu.”

He said history was harder to deal with. “South Africans are, for the most part, either the descendants of settlers or the descendants of people native to Southern Africa. These are two very different cultural traditions. Political and economic power were used for a long time to lift up one set of cultures and suppress the other.” Seekings said that cultural differences between South Africans had been highly politicised and could not be easily undone.

University of KwaZulu-Natal sociologist Rob Pattman said that respect for cultural differences was a post-apartheid ideal enshrined in the idea of the rainbow nation. “But how do people in contemporary South Africa view other cultures? That so many people of different races find other cultures quite threatening suggests we are a far cry from living in a rainbow nation.” Pattman said this was supported by articles published in a recent collection, Undressing Durban, in which university students and lecturers examined people’s identities and their relations. “Many of these articles suggest that culture is closely associated in people’s minds with race. They also show that people do not engage very much with other cultures or races, let alone celebrate these. Rather, they tend to stick to their own.”

But, asked social anthropologist Sally Frankental, “why conflate race and culture? What’s the relationship — since race is biogenetic and culture is learnt?” She said a better understanding “of others’ ways of being and doing might improve relationships between the followers of particular ways if the practitioners of those ways had equal access to resources, and mutual respect prevailed”.

For little Kayleigh Greaves, race, skin colour and cultural differences are insignificant in her life. All she knows is that “we have a really good family”.


Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

1.3 Importance of context

What do we mean by Context?

Within this whole process of interaction the importance of context must also be taken into account. Interaction and communication always occur in a particular physical, interpersonal or ideational context. It can be considered to be any background knowledge assumed to be shared by the s and the h and which contributes to h’s interpretation of what s means by a given utterance. Behavior also has meaning in context, and can only appear to be random or inappropriate if an observer negates the context or frame within which that behavior would make sense. In order to co-ordinate actions, humans have to draw distinctions. Our lives depend on our ability to appreciate distinctions and to create difference. It is possible to know and survive in the world only if one can distinguish one object, process or pattern from another.
In the case of human beings, language becomes the tool for drawing essential distinctions and for choreographing contexts of survival. The goal(s) of an utterance depends on the type of distinctions a speaker draws. A language of survival needs to be used in each and every speech situation. Consider the following processes underlying the language of survival and co-ordination:

(a) A human being learns to draw distinctions based on her operations of distinction dictated by her epistemology[knowledge and justified belief] or worldview (which is shared by others). The term "epistemology" may be defined as "... a set of immanent rules used in thought by large groups of people to define reality" (Auerswald, 1980:1). In the following units we formulate the different ways in which ethnic groups specify and maintain immanent and explicit meanings, attitudes, and worldviews.

(b) These distinctions are described in words. Words may be defined as tokens for the linguistic co-ordination of actions. For example, most people do not kill and cook a bull anymore - it is the convention to sit down at a restaurant and use printed words on the menu to order a steak. These words bring forth a series of actions resulting in the delivery of a slab of meat cooked to one's specifications.

(c) Words carry meanings, which may be defined as intersubjective linguistic realities and consensually agreed upon experiences.

(d) Meanings form a language, which may be described as comprising sets of ascribed meaning about phenomena and processes. In terms of this view, language may be described as a means to an end, and also as a context in which we live. Boxer and Kenny (1990:209) suggested that language can be viewed "... as a parasite which steadily invades the newly born human being until he or she reaches the point of 'having learned how to speak' and of having been completely colonized by this invading parasite. Just like a parasite, after the initial struggle to 'learn how to speak', the human host is no longer aware of it, and lives in this condition like a fish in the medium of water as if it were totally 'natural' ".

(e) Language drives the choreography of behavior and social organization essential to survival, creativity and expanding differentiation. As scholars and human observers, we have to account for the world of real people, objects and processes, but in addition to that, we have to account for the different human groupings (observers) who generate these worlds of realities. Human beings cannot exist apart from their 'languaging' medium, since "... language supports the structure of the community" (Efran, Lukens & Lukens, 1990:115).

All of this happens within the metacontext, that is, the context of contexts in which we live. One may specify the knowledge society, the global information world, the fourth world of poverty and exclusion - this metacontext will inform and constrain the processes already discussed. Clearly, one of the most important contextual challenges at national and international level is the management of differences, and the amplification of differences in the interactions between cultures, nationalities, the first and fourth worlds, and so on. [The "fourth world" is an emerging set of communities of social exclusion occurring within all countries, constituted by the "homeless, incarcerated, prostituted, criminalized, brutalized, stigmatized, sick, and illiterate people" (Day, Personal communication, 21 September 2000)].

Human beings are linked to each other and the world they share through language, the symbols used to represent and describe things and events. Distinctions and descriptions in language generate the phenomena that we observe, and this should alert us to the incredible power inherent in the human ability to use language. Language may be used to create contexts of creativity, reconciliation, destruction, mutual confirmation, war, and so on. Maturana and Varela (1987:248), the Chilean biologists, maintain that "... every human act takes place in language".

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

Activity 1.2: Discussion on Misunderstanding

Instructions: Watch the video clip from your lecturer, Jurie le Roux, as he tells a story about language and misunderstanding from when his children were small.

Instructions for Activity 1.2

Click here to download the video

http://podcasts.unisa.ac.za/library/attachments/9353A31B-2900-42B4-A352-B947B96BEB3C/2867A1AC-F43A-4D4F-9F50-BFD78DE31737.m4v

Now go to the Discussions and reflect on the story that your lecturer told you.

- Have you experienced any similar story of a misunderstanding which may have been due to a language problem?
• Share your own story in the Discussion forum.
• Make sure that you focus on the language aspects that lead to misunderstanding.
• How do you think the misunderstanding could have been avoided?

In the video, we shared a story that was complicated by the miscommunications between groups without a common language. Reflect on your own past.

- Do you have a similar story of language and miscommunication?
- What happened? when? where?
- How did you overcome the miscommunication in your own story? What did you do?

Briefly share your story on the Discussions of the course.

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

1.4 Self-reflection, recursion and misunderstanding

Reflection and misunderstandings

We know how humans engage in recurrent interactions (co-ordinations of action) with other human beings in order to survive. Reciprocal interactions over time lead to continual co-ordination of actions. Human beings are of sufficient complexity to co-ordinate their actions about their coordinated actions, thus giving rise to language. We use words and meanings to co-ordinate our behavior; we live in a domain of constant semantic interactions. In this consensual linguistic domain we can also talk about and formulate meaning about ourselves.

This recursive ability enables us to question our own distinctions and creations, and as Efran (1994:221) cites Anaïs Nin: “We don't see things as they are; we see them as we are”. We do not understand the dynamics of other cultures in an absolute sense, but only our images of these cultures as they are exposed to our own cognitive filters and methods of questioning. Each culture may be viewed as a club, and the distinctions and rules of various clubs differ. Misunderstanding stems from operating in different clubs whose rules differ (Efran, Lukens & Lukens, 1990:144).

How Ubuntu relates to our ideas of language and identity

Watch the video on YouTube of former Archbishop Desmond Tutu, as he explains the important concept of Ubuntu in the South African context:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZkyz_QDvfE
(Compare study unit three for examples of words and expressions which are taboo in certain cultures or contexts, but may be acceptable in others.)

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

1.5 Difference as Resource

The variety of opinions and ideas covered in the following units may create the impression that differences among cultures and groups are severely problematic and constraining, and can only lead to mutually exclusive domains of meaning, as well as to escalating tension. You will do well to remember that perception is based on difference, that information is "a difference which makes a difference" (Bateson, 1979:4), that difference partly explains one's choice of a life partner, and that evolution and growth are based on difference.

Differences help us understand others

Narration is "... the representation of the flow of events in a meaningful sequence. Thus without narrative, there is no meaningful depiction of change over time ..." (Vogel, 1994:243). The major challenge to South Africans is the management of difference and news of relations among various groupings in our society. Far from being frightening and inhibiting, difference should be celebrated in a multi-cultural context, since difference and news of difference is the very stuff which fuels novelty, creativity and change.

[Graphic source: http://www.yfu.org.za/]

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

Activity 1.3 Reflect on your learning in this unit
Remember, you should reflect on what you have learned in each unit, as you move from one to the next. In this Unit, we discussed many ideas which deal with Language as a Process. In the next unit, we will look at how language affects our attitudes and world view.

Before you go: Reflect on your learning in Unit 1

Before we finish Unit 1, we want you to take some time and reflect on what you think are the main ideas. Use the Blogs tool and add to your Blog that you started in Unit 0, as Ice Breaker 2, and in the First Portfolio Activity.

2. You are adding to your previous blogs, so click on Add new blog entry.
4. Put a new title and the date to start the new blog.
6. Reflect on what you have learned:
   - What was the main purpose of Unit 1, in your opinion?
   - What were the ideas behind the Assignment and the First Portfolio Activity?
   - Do you have anything else that you learned from the activities and discussions in this unit?
   - How long did it take you to complete the activities for this unit?
   - Add anything else you want to reflect about.

References for Unit 1

REFERENCES


1.6 Winding up Unit 1

Let's quickly wrap up what you need to take along from this unit.

First you need to focus on the following aspects: ‘survive’, ‘linguistic identity’, ‘meaning of words’ and ‘user of the language’. Because it is about language as a process the most important aspect is: *whenever we use language we reflect who we are*. Also take note of the cooperative principles we need to adhere to when we use language to interact. The context must also be taken into account. It can be explained it in terms of a diagram that we can draw - you can of course draw your own in terms of your own interpretation of the content of this unit by using circles or a table. Take a look at the following:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Adaptation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Reproduction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INTERACTION**

"Mutual cooperation"

**DISTINCTIONS**

1. Language
2. Rules (redundancies)

The rectangles work from 1- 4. You work with the definition of 'conservation' as any person who is always in a process of maintaining who he/she is, how he/she is organised and how he/she is adapted to his/her relationships and patterns of behaviour when he/she uses language - always!

Take yourself as a scenario or for that matter any other person or a character from a book or play or film, etc. In the next unit we deal with Magda and Titchere as examples.

Now, let’s take you. Place yourself in rectangle 1. First you have a specific linguistic identity - you use language in a very specific way (your pronunciation of speech sounds, specific words, etc.) from which other people can make specific deductions - you as a to be psychologist/sociologist/health worker/manager/criminologist must learn to do this - and you adapt depending on the (linguistic) context - you use language differently every time you speak depending to whom you speak, where, when, etc. and you reproduce, i.e. from experience you know what type of language, e.g. certain words, phrases, code switching, etc. works when and where and with whom. You as a person survive linguistically as an individual in rectangle 1. In rectangle 2. you co-ordinate your linguistic behaviour through communication in terms of the interaction that is taking place, i.e. you don’t offend, you stay in your orbit (mutual cooperation), etc. See the reference to cooperative principles. This all happens within a specific context, viz. first linguistic (medium) but also physical (domain) in rectangle 3. Within each specific context you follow the processes underlying the language of survival and co-ordination, i.e. you first draw distinctions, e.g. is it a child that you speak to, is it someone you know, is it a stranger, etc. and you now describe your feelings or attitudes towards what you are talking about to this person in words. These words take on a specific meaning within this specific context, e.g. “I love pumpkin" vs. “I love my wife” vs. “I love my child”, etc. All of this happens in terms of the metacontext, viz. rectangle 4. It is the contexts of contexts in which we live.

From all of this you need to know that whenever we use language we reflect who we are – always. This occurs in terms of self-reflection and recursion. Refer to Anais Nin’s words: "We don't see things as they are; we see them as we are". If we don’t adhere to all the above we create misunderstanding. Remember it is not about difference when we create misunderstanding. Difference need to be used as a resource.

*Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.*
Unit 2: How does language signify attitude & world view?

Unit 2: In this unit we introduce you to the how it comes about that we reflect who we are when we use language - the attitude and world-view we reflect. We come to the conclusion that one can only cope with reality once it is ‘storified’.

2.1 Overview of this Unit

The Purpose of Unit 2

We have already dealt with language as a process and we found that whenever we use language we reflect who we are, how we are organised and how we are adapted to our relationships and patterns of behaviour. We now take a look at how this comes about:

How does language signify attitude and world-view?


To be able to answer this question we first need to investigate what we need to see as discourse. We lean heavily on the view of Foucault, a French philosopher (as portrayed by McHoul and Grace, 1993) in this regard. (There will be more about Foucault in the next section.)

We end up adhering to the view that we can only deal with reality once it has been 'storified'. In this regard we refer to Gadamer and Brink. Once we adapt 'storification' as the notion of how language signifies attitude and world-view, we deal with two examples, i.e. the portrayal of two characters in literary works.

We are now ready to proceed to the next step to deal with language and identity in the next unit.

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

2.2 How language signifies attitude and world view

Language, attitude and world-view

Read the following extract and then spend some time thinking about it. The questions that follow the extract will help to give direction to your thoughts.

"[B]y the power of the written word ... before all, to make you see" --- Joseph Conrad (2000: i)
In which context do you think the author made this comment?
What does the words “to make you see” imply?
How do you think can one “see”?
Is it only through the written word that one can “see”?

I am sure that you came across the term ‘discourse’ or your own term, e.g. dialogue, conversation, discussion, communication, speech, talk or chat for it when you tried to answer some of these questions. What is discourse? Does it only refer to written text?

Let’s take the communicative function of language as our primary area of investigation when we try to define discourse. As we are focused on the attitudes and world-view that we can detect when someone uses language we consider words, phrases and sentences which appear in the textual record of a discourse to be evidence of an attempt by a speaker/writer to communicate his message to a hearer/reader (see unit 1). We are particularly interested in how a recipient of the message might come to comprehend the producer’s intended message on a particular occasion. For instance, the phrase “I love you” can mean a lot of different things within different types of discourse and then specifically within different contexts, e.g. feel affection, adore, worship, care for, be keen on, etc. It is all about the different ‘environments’, ‘circumstances’ or context in which we use this phrase. It will also relate immediately to a specific attitude when it is spoken or written.

Take a look at the following comic strip and think about the questions that follow it: It was copied from the website for the famous Madam & Eve, by S Francis, H Dubmore & Rico (6 Oct 2000):

![Comic Strip Image]

Graphic source: http://www.madamandeve.co.za/archive.php?sel_keyword=12&do_search=1&search=vanilla&start=0

What is the context of this discourse?
Will a person not living in South Africa be able to understand it?
If not, why not?
Describe what we get to know about each character as signified by the words they use.
Do you know a joke about the general situation dealt with in the comic strip?
What attitude is expressed by the artist?

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

2.2.1 More from Foucault & Brink

What does Foucault say about the role of language
A number of contemporary scholars refer to the dynamic role of language as the gateway to the concepts and attitudes we live by. It was Foucault (McHoul & Grace 1993:35–36) who redefined discourse in a very particular way.

Foucault argues that formal and empirical approaches have tended to work on the side of the enunciation of discourse. By "enunciation" he means the techniques, the structures, the forms of know-how by which people are able to produce and recognize utterances. Such a narrow focus can include only the surface of language use, the ways and means by which concepts and meanings are spoken or written. In place of this emphasis, Foucault (1972) proposes to look at discourses --- specific bodies of knowledge - at the level of the enounced or, as his translators put it, the "statement". **This change of emphasis moves discourse away from being simply a technical accomplishment** (linguistic or communicative) on the part of pre-existing sovereign subjects, and redirects it towards the questions: What can be said? And what can be thought?

With regard to the sites (bodies of knowledge) of (mis)understanding that we deal with in this module, we will be asking:

- What was said in bygone years?
- What is being said today?
- What was thought in the past?
- What is being thought today?
- What is likely to be thought and said about these sites in future?

### Areas of Social Knowlege

Thus it is Foucault's **"areas of social knowledge"** that we are interested in. Our source (McHoul & Grace 1993:31) explain their view of discourse as "whatever constrains --- but also enables --- writing, speaking and thinking within ... historical limits". They advise as follows (1993:49):

- Treat past discourse not as a theme for a commentary which would survive it, but as a monument to be described in its character-disposition.
- Seek in the discourse ... its conditions of existence.
- Refer the discourse ... to the practical field in which it is deployed.

**For Foucault language has ceased to be the province of formal linguistics alone.** He re-conceives of it "as a social and political entity, the means by which what we know of the world can be created (rather than simply represented)" [emphasis added]. Manchester (1985:146) states that the linguistic system of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for ideas, "but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the programme and guide for the individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade".

We need to constantly be looking for this "creative" ability of language to guide us to a better understanding of self and other. Whorf (1956:147) points out that an "individual's conception of the world (including perception, abstraction, rationalization, and categorization) is intimately related to the nature of his native language". In others words, a people's world-view are affected, perhaps even constituted by the nature and structure of their language.

**Gadamer** is one of many scholars who have emphasised the importance of language to the ideals of understanding. Understanding, Gadamer argues, "must be historically and linguistically mediated" (Kearney 1995:262). "We are always partners in dialogue, whether it be with 'eminent texts' or with one another in conversation. Thus, the path to understanding can only be traversed through language" (ibid 263). Gadamer premises his views on the principles of what is known as "hermeneutics" --- the art and "science" of understanding. In an interview with Kearney, he explains the significance of this approach as follows (Kearney 1995:266):

> The genesis of the word "hermeneutics" itself shows an original connection with the god Hermes, the divine mediator between the will of the gods and the acts of mortals. It is clear that such a concept of hermeneutics comes very near to the concept of "translation".

Gadamer, in the same interview referred to above, stresses the role of our own spoken language when it comes to the way that we think in concepts. The co-authors of this module will introduce us to their interpretation of the diverse South African life-world, with the aim of facilitating "understanding, trying to comprehend others, seeking communication with others --- all processes of the life-world" (Gadamer in interview with Kearney, 1995:271).
Gadamer stresses the importance of literary genres to our understanding of the real meaning of the intended communication. Of similar opinion is the South African writer André P Brink, who formulates his ideas in this respect in a particularly interesting way. Asked by Cathey Maree, the interviewer, "Do you see the novel as a conservator of memory as well as a mode for converting history into story?" Brink replied (Maree 1999:42, emphasis added):

"I think memory is the starting point of literature; literature is the repository of memory. Which is why I think that however necessary Truth Commissions have been in the countries where they have been established, it is only when that kind of experience enters into literature that it becomes understandable and accessible to the public as a whole. In order to grapple with the world we transform it into stories ... we can only manage the world once it has been storified. Since the novel is the archetypal story of our time and having manifested its extraordinary versatility over many centuries and its ability to renew and change itself, I see the novel continuing to be the literary form of the 21st century. The Internet is terrific for conveying information but literature has amplitude which information lacks."

[Graphic source: http://www.humanrousseau.com/authors/2880 ]

Now, after reading the above, stop and think about what you think discourse is. Do you still think it is any piece of spoken or written language? If that is the case, you need to read the above arguments again.

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

2.2.2 How stories tell us about ourselves

Storification: telling stories to tell who we are

A South African writer eminently aware of the crucial role of language as a means of creating and "coming to grips", as it were, with one's own life-world and its "storification", is J M Coetzee. In his novel, In the heart of the country, Magda is a lonely spinster whose attempted "power" over her condescending father and hostile environment vests in her being "a dealer in signs".

The novel is set in the early colonial past of South Africa where Magda's father, a lonely sheep farmer, seeks comfort in the arms of a young concubine. The father's lack of communication with his daughter, his rude masculinity and non-existent life-skills alienate her from him completely, and he becomes her enemy. Her life on the farm is mere existence. Her thoughts, expressed in language, become her life-line. Early in the novel Magda characterises herself in a long paragraph that simultaneously characterises the way in which language enables us to create ourselves.

[Graphic source: http://www.voiceless.org.au/content/writing-change ]

Let's see the situation from Magda's perspective. Let us read the greater part of that paragraph (emphasis has been added):

I live neither alone nor in society but as it were among children. I am spoken to not in words, which come to me quaint and veiled, but in signs, in confrontations of face and hands, in postures of shoulders and feet, in nuances of tune and tone, in gaps and absences whose grammar has never been recorded. Reading the brown folk I grope, as they grope reading me: for they too hear my words only dully, listening for those overtones of the voice, those subtleties of the eyebrows that tell them my true meaning. "Beware, do not cross me", "What I say does not come from me." Across valleys of space and time we strain ourselves to catch the pale smoke of each other's signals. That is why my words are not words such as men use to men. Alone in my room with my duties behind me and the lamp steadily burning I creak into rhythms that are my own, stumble over the rocks of words that I have never heard on another tongue. I create myself in the words that create me, I who living among the downcast have never beheld myself in the equal regard of another's eye, have never held another in the equal regard of mine. While I am free to be I, nothing is
impossible. In the cloister of my room I am the mad hag I am destined to be. My clothes cake with dribble, I hunch and twist, my feet blossom with horny callouses, this prim voice, spinning out sentences without occasion, gaping with boredom because nothing ever happens on the farm, cracks and oozes the peevish loony sentiments that belong to the dead of night when the censor snores, to the crazy hornpipe I dance with myself (Coetzee 1999[1976]:8).

Twenty pages later the struggle in Magda's mind continues; it is a struggle also to capture the struggle in words. When the farm-hand Hendrik brings his child-bride home, she thinks (emphasis again added):

Words are coin. Words alienate. Language is no medium for desire. Desire is rapture, not exchange. It is only by alienating the desired that language masters it. Hendrik's bride, her sly doe-eyes, her narrow hips, are beyond the grope of words until desire consents to mutate into the curiosity of the watcher. The frenzy of desire in the medium of words yields the mania of the catalogue. I struggle with the proverbs of hell (Coetzee 1999:28--29).

Neither Hendrik nor his bride expresses their desire in as many words. Magda, as observer, transfigures this desire linguistically. In so doing she generates an inventory of passion which invokes her own desire. Lower down on the same page, Magda asks: "How do I, a lonely spinster, come to know such things?" And she replies, significantly claiming that she can represent sexuality (Attwell 1993:64): "It is not for nothing that I spend evenings humped over the dictionary" (Coetzee 1999:29). Once again reiterating how she moulds herself out of words, some fifteen pages later, she asks: "... but if one cannot think of oneself in words, in pictures, then what is there to think of oneself in" (pp 44--45)?

Magda's first-person narrative of self is a revelation of the role language plays in the lives of all humans. Her life might be quite different from anybody else's life, but the centrality of language in human existence remains the same. David Attwell, who partly devotes chapter 2 of his book J M Coetzee: South Africa and the politics of writing to the novel under discussion, states (Attwell 1993:56):

Although aggressiveness is one of the consequences of Coetzee's fictive struggle with colonialism, another is the emergence of a displaced subject, a narrator who is not one of the primary agents of colonialism but who lives in the conditions created by such agents, and who endures the subjectivity the position entails. Magda in In the Heart of the Country is such a displaced subject ...

Magda's means of enduring the predicament of her displacement is through language --- endlessly reflecting on the self, defending herself against her father and the environment he tries to conquer through possessing it for personal gain, and occasionally remembering bygone days when there were a mother and relatives. Most revealing about her obsession with language is an incident which occurs towards the end of the novel, when she writes and moulds words on stones in Spanish to show to the (probably imagined) "conquerors of the sky occasionally flying over their settlement".

Magda's behaviors, by her own admission, is a performance through language, in Foucault's proposal, a monument revealing her character-disposition, enabled --- perhaps even enforced --- through the condition of colonial isolation. The linguistic monument she creates of herself is moulded through exposure to the possibility of uncensored, uncontrolled morality of such time, which fostered exploitation by the colonial “have” of the “have-not”, the latter including herself. The practical field in which this discourse is deployed is the reality of colonial isolation together with the many observable ailments of that condition. She is a fictional character, created in and through the creative imagination of an author-agent who tells her story as if it were told by herself.

Her performance through language is a conscious performance, a performance neatly controlled, perhaps edited and revised by her maker several times.

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

2.2.3 Our world view

How does Magda's case relate to us?

This activity helps us to bring the situation of Magda closer to the practical field --- our life-world --- several questions spring to mind:

2. Historically speaking, is there an explainable relationship between the fictional world of the novel, and the colonial world of that period --- yes or no?
   o If yes, what is that relationship?
   o If no, why not?
3. Speaking in a contemporary sense, is there an explainable relationship between her behaviour through language and the behaviour of non-fictional ordinary mortals such as you and me --- yes or no?
   o If yes, under which conditions?
   o If no, why not?
4. Concerning your reply, what would you call significant about your formulation of the reply?
8. Concerning your reply, to what extent have you found it difficult to express yourself? Why?
10. Have you been formulating your answers in English, or another language, perhaps your first language?

Comments on the questions

Most of you would have answered yes to question 1. You might have made use of some of the arguments we have suggested above. You might have added additional and even more original arguments. If so, that is fine — one of this module's intended outcomes certainly is to stimulate and enable original thinking through which you, the learner, could intervene in situations where ignorance, aggression and hostility might be the cause of conflict, and even catastrophe.

With question 2, if you have chosen yes as an answer, you might have chosen to describe circumstances or conditions that you have experienced before or are experiencing at the moment. Or you might have chosen an example of a situation that a relative or friend might have been exposed to. For question 3, various replies will be forthcoming. What would be reassuring in view of our method is that you have been (re)creating the condition through language — your formulation of it became the condition itself, as it were.

The aim of question 4 was to increase your awareness of the creative process involved in self-expression. The degree to which you grappled to make your point, should not be judged in terms of mere linguistic ability or inability in the first place; rather in terms of how demanding/exacting the creative process is likely to be. Read the next paragraph below as part of the comment on this item.

If you have chosen to formulate your answer in English since that is the language medium of this module, first-language English speakers are likely to have found formulating an answer less difficult than the rest, even you might have liked to do it better still. Second-language speakers of English might have experienced more difficulties — as I am doing as the writer of this chapter; however, limited proficiency sometimes simplifies the syntactic choices at one's disposal, and one is likely to make do with what comes to mind at the moment of formulation.

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

2.3 What is your "mother tongue?"

The language that we use for education and learning has a big effect on how we study and how we learn. Look at the questions below in Activity 2.1 and share your ideas in Discussions about your own mother tongue.

Activity 2.1: Mother Tongue and second or third language

Think about your answer in Assignment 01 and answer the questions in the following activity in the online discussion forum in Discussions [under Unit 2 Discussions]:

2. Concerning your reply, what would you call significant about your answer?
4. Did you find it difficult to express yourself? Why?
6. Have you been formulating your answers in English, or another language, perhaps your first language?

Various replies will be forthcoming. What would be reassuring in view of our method is that you have been (re)creating the rendering through language — your formulation of it became the condition itself, as it were.

The aim of question 2 was to increase your awareness of the creative process involved in self-expression. The degree to which you grappled to make your point, should not be judged in terms of mere linguistic ability or inability in the first place; rather in terms of how demanding/exacting the creative process is likely to be. Read more below as part of the comment on this item.

If you have chosen to formulate your answer in English since that is the language medium of this module, first-language English speakers are likely to have found formulating an answer less difficult than the rest, even you might have liked to do it better still. Second-language speakers of English might have experienced more difficulties — as I am doing as the writer of this chapter; however, limited proficiency sometimes simplifies the syntactic choices at one's disposal, and one is likely to make do with what comes to mind at the moment of formulation.

If some of you had the opportunity to use your first language — isiZulu, Afrikaans, or Sesotho for example — you might have felt freer and might have found it easier to describe what you regarded as the essence of the condition. You might have experienced it as a more personal and internalised rendering. About this Gadamer (in Kearney 1995:288–289) says:

... [W]e remember and know the kind of incomparable intimacy possessed for its part by the mother tongue, nativeness, the care of ancestral memory, and all the other unconscious characteristics that form us from an early age ... Can we really believe that "correct speech" or analytical linguistic precision could replace the mother tongue and her world-disclosing power? We must think with language, not about it or against it.

Mnisi (2000:40) in similar vein reiterates that:

... the individual's cognitive capacity (emphasis added) is to a large extent influenced by language. If then the individual's language contests for a space with another language to influence the individual's cognitive capacity, it becomes difficult for it to
2.3.1 Mirror and reflection

Kweetsa ya pelo ya motho [The depth of the heart]

Let’s now move on to another example to elucidate how language signifies attitudes and world-view. The example comes from N P Maake’s 1995 novel Kweetsa ya pelo ya motho (The depth of the heart), a work written in Sesotho.

Deeply rooted in the political struggle of the mid 1980’s to the early 1990’s, the novel explores human behaviour from four different points of view as represented by four main characters. Interpersonal relations strained by circumstances such as suspicion (of conspiracy, collaboration and betrayal), blackmail, a sensitive social issue such as backyard abortion, as well as the human need to love and be loved --- these elements contribute to an admirable narrative that looks back on those years.

One aspect of the work which one could regard as particularly impressive is its psychological depth with regard to both the character and the structure of events. “Desire”, read as “the impossibility of fulfilment” (MacCannell [1986] as interpreted by Du Plessis [1987:99]), features prominently in the pursuits of all characters, who seem to be faced with the impossibility of its fulfilment.

Tshepiso Thobejane, known by local folk as Tichere, is an attractive and intelligent activist. Initially training as a lawyer, he is expelled from university owing to his political activities. He becomes a teacher, but then leaves the teaching profession to become a truck driver at Pan-Am Pharmaceuticals Pty Ltd, a firm based in Pietersburg, in order to proceed --- as protagonist of organised labour strikes --- with his subversion of the state.

Tichere is a central character and the main brain behind organised labour strikes at his firm and at firms whose members belong to the Mokga wa Bakganni ba Teransefala (MBT; Transvaal Truck Driver’s Union). His political actions fatally affect the lives of the people in his immediate environment, even if they are not, or not in the same active way, involved with or even supportive of his actions. Most of them seem to be interested in having only quite ordinary and personal relationships with him. Frequently disappearing from the scene and missing appointments his life is veiled in considerable secrecy, especially as regards his relationship with two women --- Ntsepo, his first love and mother of their out-of-wedlock child, and Ntombi, his rich landlady’s attractive daughter.

Tichere’s encounters with his self are rarely described in the work --- we hear mostly about him from the narrator, his elderly neighbour Mma Zet, his lovers and so on. For our purposes the two instances where he “meets himself” that do occur, are worth exploring. The first is at the start of the novel where the narrator describes Tichere alone in his room, observing himself in the mirror. Let us read a few paragraphs (for the convenience of learners who understand the Sesotho, both the Sesotho and its English translation are provided):

Motho a qhoma moalong eka ho na le ntho e mo lomang, mme a tlola matjato ho ya itjhebe seiponeng se rakanyaneng e leboteng. A itjheba, a atametsa sefahleho seiponeng, a hile a shebile lebadinyana le ka hodima leihlo le letshehadi. Mohlankana ya ka hara seipone le yena a mo hotolela mahlo, ya ka ba phehile kgobe. Ba tadamana, ba ntse ba famolelana dinko. E mong ha a hwaqela, le yane ya ka seiponeng a hwagqele, ha a hula seribana sena, le yane ya ka seiponeng a mo etise, eka ha a bathe ho hlowa phehsianong ena ya ntjhebe ke o schebe re khobe ke man ya tla panya pele. A mo tadamaino, ba tadamina motsotswana, enwa a tiisa pou tsena eka o a mo tshosa, o tla tloha a mo re ntil! ka setebele kapa a mo jabela ka seatla. Yane le yena a hla a dula hona moo, a bontsha hore ha a mo tshabe le hanyenyane feela.

A tswela pele mohlankana wa heso ho itjheba seiponeng, a ntse a fetola sefahleho, se tshehisa, se bontshe tlonamo, mme se qetelle e le sa motho ya nang le setile ya hlomphang. Jwale re bona a se a tšhetjhella morao hore a tle a itjiebe hantle le mmleng, empaa a thulana le bethe eo a sa tswa tlola ho yona, e neng e hile e mo hlokisa sebaka sa ho tsamaya ka bolokolohi ka phaphoseng ena ya hae, eo thepa ya yona e neng e le bethe ena, rakanyana ena ya diaparo e nang le seipone, setulo, le dipotlolomentehadi tsa hlaneng hodimo mane motsheo. Leboteng le lebaneng le monyako ho le wateroplo. Sebaka se ka mona se ne se lekane motinyane, se mo hlokisa bolokolohi ba ho ikala bopharana. Mane ho ne ho le poraemasetofo ya parafini eo a phehelang ho yona, le pitsanyana tse pedi, bekere ya tee, le nthonyana tse seng kae, ho bonahala hore mona e se e mpa feela e le tsoho la monna ... .
Tshepiso a nna a itjheba leha ho ntse ho patisane jwalo. Leha a ne a ke a bolela, ke a bona hore o ne a hile a ipona e le mohlankana e motle, a ntse a fetoja a itjhele le potongwane tsena tsa hae. O ne a itjhebile ka mokgwa oo banna ba yeng ba re basadi ke bona ba ratang ho itjheba seiponeng ka wona, empa Tshepiso a di akgela matjoing kwana taba tseo, hoba o ne a le mong, mme ha ho motho ya ka mo nyatsang ka ketso ena. Mohlomong banna ba bangata ba ye ba etse jwalo ha ba sa bonwe, motho a itjhebe seiponeng a itjhebele ruri, athe hana batho o tla utlwa ho ntse ho thwe ke basadi le barwetsana feela ba itjhebang botle seiponeng (Maake 1995:1--2).

A translation of the story excerpt is provided on the next page:

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

2.3.2 Translation of the story

A translation of the story excerpt is provided below:

Translation of the story into English

[The man jumps out of bed as if there is something biting him, and dashes to look at himself in the mirror on the little shelf against the wall. He watches himself bringing his face near to the mirror, and indeed observes the scar above the left eye. The young man in the mirror pulls faces at him too, as if they were arguing. They stare at each other, the one showing anger towards the other. When this one frowns the one in the mirror frowns as well, when one inclines the forehead, the one in the mirror follows as if he doesn't want to loose this encounter of watch-me-while-I-watch-you so that we see who is going to give up first. He watches him, watches him for a moment, this one pressing his lips as if he threatens the other and as if he would punch him with the fist, or slap him with the hand. The other also remains just there showing that he doesn't fear him at all.

Our young man continues to look at himself in the mirror, changing his face, smiling, then showing anger, and then finishes with the face of a person with character and respectability. Now we see him stepping backwards so that he can watch himself properly in full body, but he bumps against the bed from which he has jumped just now, which indeed deprives him of the space to move freely in the room of which the furniture included this bed, the little shelf for clothing with the mirror, a chair, and huge suitcases stuck onto each other in the corner. Against the wall opposite the door there is a wardrope. The space in here actually fitted a warbler, disallowing him the space to sit down at ease. Over there is a paraffin stove on which he cooks, two small pots, a tea mug, a few other things, clearly showing that this was a man's place...

Tshepiso continues to look at himself despite the lack of space. Although he would not say so, I notice that he indeed sees himself as a handsome young man, turning as he looks at his muscles. He is looking at himself in the way men usually say women like to look at themselves in the mirror, but Tshepiso brushes those thoughts aside, because he is alone, and there is no one around who could mock him for that. Perhaps many men often do so when they are not seen, a person looking at himself in the mirror, watching himself closely, although among the people you would hear it said that it is women and girls only who look at their beauty in the mirror.

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.
Literature portrays world-view through language

This extract shows a young man in a rare encounter with his self. The mirror in which he sees himself contributes to his meeting himself, and the reader is given almost a double vision of the character. At first the encounter is secretive and there is a hostile attitude towards the self, here reflected in the man-in-mirror scene. The encounter ends when he regains composure, but at the very moment he steps back to view himself in full, he is reminded of the crammed space in the little room, reflecting his humble existence --- with second-hand furniture and utensils. The scene then changes again as the young man starts looking at himself in almost narcissistic appreciation. His preoccupation with himself causes a slight feeling of guilt, but he brushes the feeling aside, accepting that men are no different from women when they are alone in a situation such as this.

In another paragraph we are told about the backyard room he is renting from Mofumahadi Konyana, a rich landlady with Italian cars. In subsequent paragraphs we are told how he looks at his watch and reminds himself of the important appointment he has later that morning with officials of Pan-Am Pharmaceuticals --- the firm which would soon employ him as truck driver, and from where he would start organising labour strikes across the province. The author's description of his encounter with the self is a brief foreplay to prepare the reader for the fundamental disruption Tshepiso is destined to cause in his effort to speed up the struggle.

From here on there is no further description of Tshepiso-in-confrontation-with-self, except for one scene much later (p 132) when he sees himself in the mirror of a hospital bathroom. From this hospital he later escapes from the hands of the police who had arrested him on the charge of running over a child with his car, near Soweto. The police believed that he did it on purpose in order to use the child's intestines for ritual purposes.

The scene is worth reading:

(It is night already when Tshepiso recovers. The nurses whisper to him that there are two detectives guarding him. Getting up he asks them whether he can go to the bathroom. They allow him. Taking a towel he starts walking with painful limbs to go there. When he enters, he startles terribly when he sees himself in the mirror. His face is swollen, puffed up, and there are blood drenched scars. He looks at himself as the day he saw himself in the mirror when he went to the interview for the work at Pan-Am Pharmaceuticals Pty Ltd: only, today, the fine young man he saw that day is gone, he sees a different person. He asks himself what a human being really is; is it the person one sees when looking in the mirror, or what people see when they look him in the eye, or is there something inside, unnoticed, something which actually makes a human being what s/he in fact is.)

Here the image of the mirror, and the outward observation of self, becomes a symbol of inward mirroring --- self-reference, self-awareness and eventually a self-investigation: the human being exposed to the environment as well as relentless judgement from within. It is a continuous assessment of (interpersonal) role relationships and power, as circumstances --- often self-imposed --- change position towards self. In the process we need to remind ourselves that there are more mirrors at work here. There is Tshepiso Thobejane's mirror and the image he observes of himself in it, then the image that this scene inspires in us, the readers, when we do the same in our own position, and, finally, the fact that we are doing so through yet another mirroring mechanism: language.

What the extracts from both Coetzee's and Maake's works bring to the fore, is the unique status of language. Note, however, that in contrast to Coetzee, whose Magda creates herself through her words (a two-dimensional creation, i.e. author creates through character), Maake creates Tichere one-dimensionally (i.e. author is the only creator). The mirror, however, becomes a powerful instrument to bring Tichere to the reader almost "in person". Efran, Lukens and Lukens (1990:23) describe this unique status of language as follows:

It [language] is both a major component of human functioning and, simultaneously, the tool with which we attempt to explain that functioning. This dual status leads to a series of logical paradoxes, of which the master paradox is that language generates the very conundrums it is supposed to help resolve.

"Because of our capacity for language", Efran, Lukens and Lukens (1990:24) later continue, "we are self-aware and lead self-referential lives. Self-awareness is a mixed blessing, being both a powerful conceptual tool and also the key that opens a Pandora's box of self-referential paradox". Still later the authors illuminate the paradox as follows (1990:30):
Thinking, planning, imagining, wishing, analyzing, evaluating and so on --- all the symbolic functions --- coordinate social performances and serve to greatly extend the range of human possibilities. Moreover, once a person begins to operate with language, words and symbols become such ubiquitous and integral parts of a person's experience that it becomes virtually impossible for him or her to determine how the world would look without the glasses that those functions provide. However, as useful as our language lenses are, they also blind us --- more or less permanently --- to some basic truths. It becomes hard to tell which aspects of perception are due to characteristics of the lenses rather than the shape of reality itself.

Dante, that great pre-Renaissance poet of the twelfth century who did so much for the development of the Italian language through his poetry, and through his scholarly writings (his poetry was in Italian, but his scholarly works were written in Latin), expressed the belief that "speaking" involves the ability to "externalise our particular thoughts" (Eco 2000:42). In this respect humans are entirely different from angels even, and definitely from animals. "It is in languaging that meanings are created. Without language, life would have to be lived moment-by-moment, minus narrative, evaluation, comparison, or contemplation. We would not know who we are, where we are going, or whether or not we have gotten there ...", according to Efran, Lukens and Lukens (1990:32).

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

2.4.1 Who is reflected in the mirror?

If one reflects on the two extracts once again, several questions present themselves to the reader's mind:

- Is the human being the image reflected in the mirror? or
- Is the human being the image people see when they look a person in the eye? or
- Is there something else inside a person, invisible, which causes that person to be what he or she in fact is?

How do we really see ourselves?

The mirror becoming an instrument of investigating the self, the ultimate question is: Who am I?

How does this connect to our language?
What is the position when it comes to black/white/white/black, to Sesotho/Tshivenda/Setswana/isiZulu/English/Afrikaans/ speakers? Look at speech environments such as the farm/factory; the school/college/university; church/bus/taxi; street/sports field. What is the position in more formal and institutionalised environments: parliament, provincial legislators, local authorities; or civil, provincial and municipal services? As Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin (1989:103) put it:

The Other can, of course, only be constructed out of the archive of "the self", yet the self must also articulate the Other as inescapably different. Otherness can thus only be produced by a continual process of what Bhadha calls "repetition of displacement" and thus instigates an ambivalence as the very site of (imperial) authority and control. Thus there is a kind of built-in resistance in the construction of any dominant discourse --- and opposition is an almost inevitable effect of its construction of cultural difference.

What is more, and is also more pertinent to the purpose of the module, is the role of language in expressing a thought, in the ability to reflect, i.e. language and identity. We shall focus on interpersonal relations embedded in "greetings", "manner of speaking", "deference", "appreciation", "interaction", "decency", etc. (Davey 1999:224--233). Thus language will become the source of the views we put forward. How does language express the popular view, and how does it bring us nearer to an acceptable ethical vision?

This road inevitably has to lead us to self and other and then in terms of Ubuntu/Botho. Dante, in his famous work Paradise, makes Adam say: "It is natural that man speaks, but, whether this way or that, nature lets you do yourselves, as it pleases you ... [T]he customs of mortals are like leaves on a branch, one goes and another comes" (Eco 2000:55). Efren, Lukens and Lukens (1990:33) refer to the Chilean biologist Maturana who pointed out that language hurts:

Hitting people over the head with a bit of language can be as potent as hitting them over the head with a two-by-four. Furthermore, the strictures imposed by particular "linguaging" modes can be as formidable as walls of steel. Words, just as surely as bullets fired from guns, change the structure of people and their lives. However, words would not have such power if they were not woven so completely into the fabric of our existence.

Part of the objective of the module is also to look at the impact of South Africa's new political dispensation on present and future relations between the people(s) of the country. Concepts of tradition and identity --- have they changed considerably since 1994? And then, have the more complex contexts which might have arisen, given new meaning to tradition(s) and identity? Narratives about a common past, cultural heritage, language, are often used as political means to create a common identity, such as a national identity among some, while others may be excluded. National identity consolidates and legitimates the authority of the state (Anttonen, in Ytrehus 1999:7--8). There seems to be the basic assumption that a nation state should show a correspondence between folk, an ethnic group, and a territory. South Africa does not qualify here, as Ytrehus also observes about Finland and Sweden, because of its heterogenous composition. Thus, he concludes, nations are not created by people who administer a particular common territory. "Rather the state appeared first, and then only later created a collective identity --- a nation ... If we accept these lines of argument, the next questions are: Is the image of national homogeneity a narrative the state tells about itself, or has a real process of homogenization been going on? How did this process of adaptation happen?" (Ytrehus 1999:10). And then finally, in this respect: "Who is considered as 'us', and who as the 'other', and who is depicted as belonging to marginal groups?"

Mnisi (2000:30) provides an example of how people often deal with language and identity:

Language is one amongst the basic tools through which we are enabled to identify people. Who they are, where they come from and what their cultural orientation is --- when we receive this data, it is mostly language that sparks our awareness that people are from different backgrounds. For example, all "white" people look white and all "black" people look black. On the first encounter with a "white" person it is normally difficult to establish if the person is a German, an Italian, a British or Afrikaner white person until he or she begins to speak. Accuracy is difficult to establish in this regard by looking at the variations of whiteness. The same procedure is normally evidenced amongst blacks. It is also difficult to tell if a person is of Zulu, Sotho, Ndebele, Xhosa or Tsonga origin. But once words are exchanged and the two parties do have knowledge of each other's language then their identity becomes clear. Although they share the platform as human beings, they begin to be aware of aspects that declare them different. Therefore, to tamper with people's language is equivalent to tampering with their history and their identity.

Ready to proceed? Please follow me as I introduce you from author to author, chapter to chapter and side to side, to our diverse yet fascinating landscape. May wisdom grow from your newly acquired knowledge and from the questions your knowledge is bound to raise. Here's to a great nation!

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

Assignment 02 (Assignments)

Instructions: Use the Assignments tool to submit this assignment
Assignment 02

Year Mark: 20%
Tool: Assignments

How do you upload this Assignment? Finalise your assignment as a PDF format document (with the marking tools available to us we can only comment with ease in the assignment when it is a PDF format file). Go to the Assignments tool, by clicking on the tool in the left hand panel of this webpage. Fill in your student number. Go to No. 2 under AFL1501 and click on Submit > Follow the steps. A Resubmit message will now appear - this only means that you can resubmit the assignment if you wish to do so, but it is not necessary to do so if you are satisfied with what you have submitted. Note that the message will change to Closed when the assignment is moved from Inbox by the marker to be assessed or usually also after the due date.

Do not send a hard copy assignment to the university.

Note: It is your responsibility to ensure that the file you upload as your assignment is the correct file, that it is complete and that it is accessible for the marker.

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Check your Assessment Plan document under the Additional Resources for Unit 0. You will find a document for semester 1 and a document for semester 2 which will have suggested start dates, and due dates for each assignment. Make sure you look at the document for the correct semester.

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Do not copy any text or even one sentence from other students or from the internet or from any other source. It is plagiarism and will be punished with a 0% mark for the assignment. All statements that are not your own should be properly referenced.

Assignment

Read and study section 2.4.1 Who is reflected in the mirror? from Unit 2. Then, look in a mirror, like the man in the story, and reflect on yourself in terms of who you really see in the mirror, i.e. take note of your thoughts in terms of yourself with reference to the image you see in the mirror - ignore the physical reflection you see on the surface - this is not who you really are.

- Report to yourself, about of what you see in the mirror in terms of section 2.4.1 Who is reflected in the mirror? from Unit 2.
- What does this say about who you are?
- Do you like what you see? Why? Or why not?

Remember - do not merely reproduce information for the sake of completing the assignment, interpret the information in terms of the tutorial matter, i.e. the relevant information from Unit 2.

The part of Learning Unit 2 which is most relevant to Assignment 02 is section 2.4.1. In this section it is stated what this module intends to achieve is to give you the opportunity to assess your relationship with yourself, your relationship with others and your relationship with your environment. The unit also wants you to look at how South Africa's new political dispensation has impacted on your identity.

Maybe this graphic will give you some ideas...
Directions for submitting written assignments on myUnisa

To submit an assignment via myUnisa:

- Go to myUnisa.
- Log in with your student number and password.
- Select the module: AFL1501.
- Click on Assignments in the menu on the left-hand side of the screen.
- Click on the assignment number you wish to submit.
- Follow the instructions to upload your assignment into the system.

The marker (your TA) will mark your assignment electronically. You are thus required to submit your written assignments (like this one) online in a Pdf format via myUnisa so that it can be marked by your TA.

After you upload your assignment, you will immediately receive an onscreen message with a reference number, like a receipt. Keep track of this number, in case you have a question about a specific assignment. Also your original document is protected and no one can change your answers. You may receive your TAs' feedback on the file. They may even attach the rubric with your marks. They have the choice of how they want to give you feedback. This is so that you can read and learn from their comments and improve for the next assignment.

Many of you are already submitting your assignments electronically on myUnisa, and these assignments are marked electronically and sent back to you quickly.

**NOTE: You will not be allowed to submit hand-written assignments for this online course.** This means, you must type your assignment and save the file before you submit it online. There are no hard copies and no hand-written submissions allowed. **So, where we talk about a ‘written assignment’ in this module, we refer to an assignment that is typed on the computer, and submitted online via myUnisa.**

The advantages of submitting your assignments online include the following:

- If your assignments contain colour maps and graphics, we will see it in colour.
- A second advantage is that your assignment will reach us much sooner and we can also return the marked assignment much quicker. In a semester system – this has huge advantages in terms of the time it takes for you to receive feedback.
- A third advantage is that this mode is more environmentally friendly, which is important.
- You don't have to wait for the post to see how well you have done in the assignment.

If you experience problems with myUnisa, contact Bugmaster@unisa.ac.za with a detailed description of the problem and/or the error message you received. Make sure you include your student number (plus the group site number) with every email you send to us at Unisa.
Assessment criteria for assignment 02

You will find a copy of the rubric that we will use to assess this assignment under Additional Resources - Unit 1. The rubric is called Assessing Written Assignment Rubric (in a file called "Written AssignRubricAFL-Ass02.pdf"). You can open and read this and it will help you to write an excellent assignment. Here are the main things we look for:

- **Content and Quality:** Make sure you do both tasks and follow all the directions for the Assignment. We are also looking for facts and examples to support your ideas.
- **Organisation:** We want to see that you can organise your ideas around both parts of this Assignment.
- **Communication:** We need to understand your writing, so make sure your language is clear and that you explain your ideas very well.
- **Final Product:** Did you take the assignment seriously? Read through it carefully and make sure you completed it to the best of your ability.

If you follow the rubric and take note of these assessment criteria, we are sure you will do well in this assignment.

*Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.*

2.5 Winding up this unit

Telling the story -- until the end

What is it that we need to understand on how language signifies attitude and world view? Obviously all language is used to communicate. We take the communicative function of language as our primary area of investigation. We focus on the attitude and world view reflected when we use language. For us discourse is not only the structure and how the structure is put together, it is much more; it is what can be said and what can be thought. Very important!!! To strengthen our view we relate to what Brink says: ".......we can only manage the world once it has been storified".

Think about anything that happens in terms of the news, etc. the next day you hear/read a joke about it – we storify ......

Study the examples given of this process of ‘storification’ in terms of the two characters Magda and Tichere. You can take any story or poem or drama and you can study it in terms of an identified ‘site of knowledge’. What you need from this unit is summarised in terms of what Mnisi (200:30) says. Read it again and understand it.

*Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.*

Activity 2.2 How stories relate to us

Connecting through literature to our lives

The video at this link is the story of a young Xhosa woman who lives far from the traditional life of her family, grandparents and ancestors. By going to the see the play, *Umtshato*, she learns about the culture of her parents and grandparents, .... and of herself.
Activity 2.2: How do your stories tell us about who you are?

- After watching the video above, did you have any thoughts about the type of reflection that this young lady went through as she learns about her own culture from the literature and stories she saw around her.

- Go to the Discussions tool and share your insight with the others in your group. Although this activity is not for marks, it may help you to prepare your answers for the Assignments in this unit, as well as help you to prepare for your Final Portfolio at the end of the module.

Click on Next to go on to the following section.

Activity 2.3 Reflect on what you have learned in this unit

Instructions: Use the blog to add your reflections on Unit 2.

Before you go: Reflect on your learning in Unit 2

Before we finish Unit 2, we want you to take some time and reflect on what you think are the main ideas. Use the Blogs tool and add to your Blog that you started in Unit 0, as Ice Breaker 2, and in the First Portfolio Activity, and at the end of Unit 1.

2. You are adding to your previous blogs, so click on Add new blog entry.
4. Put a new title and the date to start the new blog.
6. Reflect on what you have learned:
   o What was the main purpose of Unit 1, in your opinion?
   o What were the ideas behind the 2 Assignments and the First Portfolio Activity?
   o Do you have anything else that you learned from the activities and discussions in this unit?
   o How long did it take you to complete the activities for this unit?
   o Add anything else you want to reflect about.

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

References for Unit 2


Click on the link to listen to her story: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D11-ME9JGVc&feature=related
References

These were the references that we used in this Unit.

- Maree, C. 1999. 'We can only manage the world once it has been storified' --- an interview with André Brink. *Unisa Latin American Report*, Vol 15, No 1.

*Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.*
Unit 3: Language & Identity

We now move forward and look at how the language we speak relate to our own identity. We do it here in terms of an African perspective but you can apply it to yourself, whoever you see yourself to be. We start with the family, naming, the social structure and ceremonies. All which determine who one is in terms of the language one uses.

3.1 Overview of this Unit

Instructions: Unit 3 is all about language and identity, but we start with a view back to...

The Games People Play

Do you remember an old song from the 1960s called, The Games People Play? Click on the link below for a YouTube video showing a performance of this song by Joe South. This song was made famous in the early 1960s, but here is a more recent photo of the singer from 2003:

[Image of Joe South playing guitar]

Activity 3.1: Remember an old song

Did you catch the words of the song? Click on the link and watch the video, or you can read the lyrics for the first stanza:

Oh the games people play now
Every night and every day now
Never meaning what they say now
Never saying what they mean

The whole point of Unit 3 is to explore issues around language and identity, in terms of the self and other. Note in this song, how the pronouns [I, You, They, etc] are used to refer to the interaction between the self and the other.

If you would like to read all the words of the song, you will find them online here: [Link to lyrics]

Also, if you had trouble opening up the video file from the link above, the same link appears on this page with the lyrics, so you can open it from the same webpage.

In terms of Units 1 and 2, we now leave on the journey of discovery where it all starts: our identity begins with the family (or whom we call 'our family'), the immediate group of people who surround us and sustain us in our lives. In this respect, we will deal with the family structure and kinship, naming, social structure and cultural ceremonies.

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.
3.2 Language and Identity

What does language tell us about who we are?

Referring back to Mnisi’s (2000:30) example in the previous unit of how people often deal with language and identity, we have noticed that language is one of the basic tools through which we are enabled to identify people. In this unit we will explore how language is used to reveal who people are, where they come from and what their cultural orientation is. With such knowledge we will be able to alleviate misunderstandings and misconceptions about other people.

- Has it ever occurred to you that when you talk, you reveal your identity?
- Listen to a colleague or a friend from a different cultural background and identify traits that reveal the identity of this person.

Read the following narrative and identify aspects of culture that differ from yours:

My friend Dipuo, (which means ‘Talks’) always talks about her ‘small’ and ‘big mothers’ as well as her ‘small’ and ‘big fathers’ when she refers to her maternal aunts and paternal uncles respectively. She calls her male parallel cousins her ‘brothers’ and her female parallel cousins her ‘sisters’. This confuses me so much, how can cousins be brothers and sisters? How can aunts be mothers and uncles, fathers? She further says that she was given this name because when she was born, her family was engrossed on talks about her paternal uncle’s waywardness.

The narrative above shows how family members qualify as significant people in the lives of all human beings. As human beings, we are dependent on family members not only for our growth but also for the acquisition of language. Within the family, a child learns to communicate with the outside world. It is within the family that he/she learns to say his/her first words. He/she know the names of the members of his/her family long before he/she knows the names of other things. As we grow older, the manner in which we use language usually reveals our cultural background. This starts very early in one’s life. It starts in the very family into which one is born. Through the use of language as a system of communication many cultural aspects are revealed. Language reveals who we are, what kinship terms we use, what naming patterns are most prevalent in our cultures and how our social structures are patterned.

In this unit we will look at some cultural characteristics of the South African people and their languages with regard to family and kinship terms, naming patterns, the social structure as well as some cultural ceremonies and occasions.
The graphic is a photo of a painting bought from a street vendor in Soweto. What does this painting tell us about the identity of the artist? (or at least, what the artist is portraying in the painting.)

In the following sections in Unit 3, we explore some issues around how language shapes our identity -- starting with our identity of our families.

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

3.3 What do we mean by "Family"?

Instructions: Do this activity to get started on the section about your family, and the language we use to describe them.

Look at the photo of a large group of people from Limpopo Province. Do you think that they are all part of the same family? Why or why not?
Activity 3.2: Who is in your "family"?

Tell us about how your family works.

- Who are the people in your family?
- Do they all live near you?
- Are they all related by blood, or by marriage?
- Are there other people in your life, that you consider as part of your "family"?

Perhaps there is a neighbour who looks after your children while you are at work. Or maybe there is a friend of the family who has always been there to support you, like an uncle -- even though he is not physically related to you or your family.

Use the Discussions tool to talk about how your family is structured.

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

3.4 Family structures and kinship

Instructions: Think about these questions as you work through this section.

1. Have you ever considered how life would have been if we humans were without families?
2. Are families structured in the same manner the whole world over?
3. Which family structures are you familiar with?

Structure of the family

You may have given different answers to the questions above but the basic family unit is the same the world over. It comprises the father, the mother and their children and that is known as the nuclear family. It can be a bit more than that in cases where one spouse is widowed, marries again and the second marriage also produces children. The children in the second type of family would not all have the same set of biological parents. Another scenario which results in a compound nuclear family involves polygamous marriage.

Take a look at family trees 1 and 2 illustrating two different types of the nuclear family (the terminology used for illustration is in Northern Sotho (Sesotho sa Leboa)):[1]:

Diagram 1: basic nuclear family
In a number of African communities it was traditionally not unheard of for a man to have sisters for wives, simultaneously or one after the other, and that would constitute other types of compound nuclear family. For example if the wife dies, whether or not she already had children, the next wife would traditionally be one of her younger sisters. The groom’s family would ask for and the bride’s family would offer another wife called seyantlo in Northern Sotho (lit. se-: class 7 nominal prefix, -ya (go) + ntlo (house)). In cases where the elder sister already had children their mmane (mother’s younger sister) would ideally be the most suitable woman to be sympathetic to their course and to give them the best upbringing and care under the circumstances. Similarly, if the first wife doesn’t bear children the younger sister would be taken as the second wife. Obviously, not every woman would have a sister within the basic or compound nuclear family or further away, according to what the family may deem suitable. It was also not ‘wrong’ for a man to get a woman of his choice in both instances. Whether or not the children’s upbringing would be good would largely be dependent on a mix of the nature and heart of the second wife as well as the kind of influence that the family of the deceased wife may have on the children. Even traditionally, it was the ideal and generally practised but not always possible.

- Can you describe what used to happen in your traditional society as regards the above
- If the practice differed would you explain what existed in your society?
- What is the practice in your society now regarding this matter?

Many African communities (of South Africa in particular) have a patrilineal family system; that is, the family line is determined through the male/father. Because of the patrilineal nature, families that do not have a male child were/are said to be ‘dying’; that is, that particular lineage will be extinct because there would be no one to carry on the family name. Daughters cannot ‘carry on’ their own family name, but that of their in-laws. One of the solutions to the situation was/is for the parents to marry someone called ngwetsĩ ya lapa (the family bride/daughter-in-law) in Northern Sotho. Such a ‘wife’ does not have a husband; he might have died in infancy or youth or never have been born. She is recognised as a daughter-in-law and her children are entitled to the same benefits that other children of sons are entitled to.

Interesting Information to think about

This is not entirely very old -- recently there has been a case involving the deceased estate wherein the daughters and this kind of sister-in-law had a dispute over the parents’ inheritance. The lawyer had to make a call to find out what Ngwetsĩ ya lapa is and what her status is in the family since she or her children may not necessarily claim any biological descendants.

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

1 Northern Sotho or Sesotho sa Leboa (also erroneously known as Sepedi) is a standard language used by people speaking a number of Sesotho varieties of the north of the Republic of South Africa such as Sehanawa, Khelovedu, Sepedi, Seţokwa, etc. For further information on the language and its dialects cf. Mokgokong 1966, p.8-29; Mphahlele 1978, p. 23 and Government Gazette no.22223 of 20 April 2001[Find full details of the sources under References at the end of this unit].

3.4.1 Extended family structures

Instructions: Read this section about extended families and it will help prepare you for Assignment 07.

Extended family structures in African families

Family structures and kinships do not have a universal form in the world. Various factors determine how they are formed and how they function. Traditionally African families are more than just a nuclear family. If a woman marries into a family she and her husband’s new nuclear family and those of her husband’s siblings become an extended family, with a common paternal grandparent. As such a ‘pure’ nuclear family was traditionally a rarity in African communities; a set-up which has been disturbed by urbanisation and Westernisation. Family trees 3 and 4 illustrate father’s nuclear family, and mother’s nuclear family, respectively. The only reason for using five siblings in each case is to illustrate siblings of both genders, older and younger. In order of age, in the family tree diagrams below, the older sibling appears to the left and the younger one to the right.

Diagram 3: Father’s family

koko/ makgolo♀ + rakgolo♂ (paternal)

________________________

| ramogolo♂ | rkgadi♀ | papa♂ | rkgadi♀ | rangwane♂ |

(father)

Diagram 4: Mother’s family

koko/ makgolo♀ + rakgolo♂ (maternal)

________________________

| mmamogolo♀ | malome♂ | mma♀ | mmane/mmangwane♀ | malome♂ |

(mother)
Now you see that in the African context ‘uncle’ and ‘aunt’ are not just generic terms. They are specific and different.

**Interesting information to think about**
The ending-golo is a Northern Sotho adjectival stem meaning ‘big’; it also means old(er). Here are some examples:

- **mmamogolo** can also be “father’s wife junior to one’s mother” or “rangwane’s wife”.
- **mmane** can also be "father's wife junior to one's mother" or "rangwane’s wife”.
- **ramogolo** can also be "mmamogolo’s husband"
- **rangwane** can also be "mmamogolo / mmangwane’s husband"

[Graphic source: http://flickrhivemind.net/Tags/schwarzermann/Interesting]

- Is your extended family patterned in the same manner as those in the family trees in Diagrams 3 and 4? If different, does your culture contribute to the differences?
- Take a look at the family tree in Diagram 5 and imagine who, in your particular case, would occupy those positions. Do you call them by name, by a kinship term or by both? Do some of them share a kinship term?

The Family tree in Diagram 5 below illustrates the situation of a patrilineal extended family and the lineage:

```
Diagram 5: Extended family (e.g. patrilineal)

koko/ makgolo♀ + rakgolo♂ (paternal) [generation 1]

ramogolo♂ rakgadi♀ papa♂ rangwane♂ [generation 2]

mogolo motswala♀/♂ mogolo mogolo [generation 3]

moratho [self] moratho

(kgaetšedi) moratho (kgaetšedi)

(kgaetšedi)
```

[mogolo or mogolle and moratho are also known as wa rra (from wa rara --- my father’s); kgaetšedi is specifically of the opposite gender].

The relationship that one has with a paternal uncle’s child (parallel cousin) is similar to that between siblings – they are one’s brothers and sisters. The terminology on the tree diagram is illustrative of that. A paternal uncle is like a father; that is, he plays the role destined for the paternal side in one’s life. A maternal uncle, on the other hand cannot substitute a paternal uncle; he plays the role destined for the mother’s side of the family. The same applies to the different roles played by the ‘aunts’ from either the father or the mother’s side of the family.
- Make an extension of your family tree (vertically and/or horizontally) based on the example of the family tree, in Diagram 5 and see how far you can get.
- Have you had the chance to meet everyone you placed on your family tree?

Although the physical structure of extended families has largely been destabilised, in the majority of African people the ‘extended family’ it still recognised. Knowing that one belongs to a certain ‘extended family’ and as such being aware of one’s lineage/descent offers one a sense of identity, dignity and security. People of the same lineage usually know whom they are descendants of. As can be imagined this relationship can expand very far, from the past and into the future. Here is a graphic of a large extended family from the Limpopo Province in South Africa.


The clan is broader than the lineage. Although common ancestry is acknowledged, it is not always easy for every member of a particular clan to trace the common ancestor and the lineage intricacies involved. More on the clan will be discussed later in this unit.

*Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.*

### 3.4.2 Second Portfolio Activity: Your Family Tree

As the next part of your Portfolio for this module, we want you to think about family. Where do you come from? What is the size and shape of your family? One way of describing your family if to draw a picture – a family tree.
Your Family Tree

Follow the examples given in the text to compile a drawing of your own family tree.

- Label it carefully, from yourself
  - Go up to your parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents
  - Go down [if you need to] to your children, grandchildren
- Use dotted lines to link people who are not related by blood or marriage
- If you know the kinship terms in another language, add them to your family tree, too.

Here are some examples to get you started.

![Family Tree Diagram](http://lonniesmart2k10.wordpress.com/2010/11/23/tracing-your-ancestors-through-family-tree-genealogy/)

Here is another example which looks more like a mind map. Put yourself in the middle, and then your parents, grandparents, etc.

![Mind Map Family Tree](http://pedigree-chart.com/free-printable-family-tree-template/)

And here is one that looks like a business chart that you can fill in:
If you want to use a chart similar to one of these, we have put some resources for you in Additional Resources under Resources for Unit 3:

- There is a copy of the MS word doc file which you can download and open it in your word processor on the computer.
- There is also a powerpoint template that you can use, also in Additional Resources.

However, you can also create your own chart, using your own style and creativity.

**Part of your Final Portfolio**

This Second Portfolio Activity will be part of a section in your Final Portfolio for this module. At the end of Unit 2 and in Unit 3, we asked you to identify your family groups, including the names that you are called by. This Family Tree is also part of your Portfolio, worth 10%. We explain more about the Final portfolio in detail in Unit 5, section 5.2.

*Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.*

### 3.5 Naming conventions

*Instructions:* Read this section and think about your own name and how you got that name.

**What's in a name?**

In English, we have a common saying about "What's in a name?" The names that we have for ourselves and the names we give our children are very important indicators of who we are -- our name is part of our identity.

If you click on the link below, you will watch a video about kids' names in Ethiopia. The video was made by a young man who asks this question to kids in each country where he visits:

- [http://youtu.be/Mtchi2K2kk0](http://youtu.be/Mtchi2K2kk0)

As the video shows, naming is important. Our name is an important part of who we are -- our identity. Here is another example of a very important name. Do you recognise the signature?

![Signature](signature.png)
Yes, this is the signature of one of the most important people in South Africa, former President Nelson Mandela. In the previous section of this unit you saw how family members relate to each other in the African context. Now answer the following questions regarding the terms used by your family members to refer to you:

Being a member of your family unit what terms are used to refer to you? Which members of your family call you by those terms? Are you referred to differently by different family members? Do some of these members call you by name? Who call you by name? What does your name mean? Without a name who would you be?

Read the following paragraph whilst considering what it would be like without a name:

Some may be aware of the story of Tarzan the ape-man. In the story the author, Edgar Rice Burroughs, depicts a human infant who was found and was thus adopted by a huge she-ape, and was then brought up among a band of apes. Burroughs gave his jungle hero the name of Tarzan.

Do you think that this little boy would have had a name if this happened in reality? Would the apes have given the little boy a name or not?

It is very unthinkable that a person could be without a name. Names and naming occupy a prominent position in all cultures. Your name establishes your presence on earth. It is the evidence of your existence. Names give a person his/her social persona and link him/her to other people. It is nearly universal for a human being to have a name, rare exceptions occur in the cases of mentally disturbed parents, or where children are not growing in their natural environment. In African societies naming is a very important event. For this reason, this responsibility is largely assigned to people who are considered important by the family into which a child is born. A personal name is usually given at birth, although in some cultures this is done a few days or weeks after the baby has been born. According to the Bill of Rights, entitled "Children", every child has the right to a name. Although there are numerous practices pertaining to naming in African culture, only a few will be discussed in this section.

Different cultures have different naming procedures. In some cultures naming cannot be separated from the society from which the naming process takes place, with for instance social surroundings influencing the choice of a particular name given to a child. However, in other cultures, naming has little to do with the events happening in that particular society at a given time. That children get names at birth or shortly thereafter, speak volumes in African society. In many clans of the Northern Sotho communities, even though a child is formally named after birth, his/her name would have been known even before conception. For instance, the bride would normally be given a name according to who her first male child is going to be, and there would normally be a particular name-giving pattern that the clan follows.

African names are simply not labels that randomly identify person, and even those given to animals, don't merely recall circumstances, they also serve as lifelong praise, encouragement, or even rebuke. The Pedi people consider the name of the person to be much more than a mere appendage by which a person is addressed. It is an integrated part of the person, a reflection of his personality and his whole being, and is coloured with his spirit. If you are interested in knowing more about naming amongst the Pedi people, you may read The Pedi by H.O. Mönnig.

There are many factors that influence name giving in African cultures. These include social, economic and cultural circumstances. The name which parents give to their child at birth would usually be devised in such a manner that it explicitly or implicitly communicates and articulates their deep inner feelings about their environmental, social or family life experiences before or just at the time of the child's birth. Since almost all African names have a clear meaning, naming a child has huge significance. The name chosen may be influenced by circumstances of the birth. This kind of naming pattern would normally be triggered by some unusual memory to the birth or conception of the child. For instance, a baby would not be named Mapula simply because it was drizzling when she was born – it usually has to be a memorable event. Traditionally among most clans of the Northern Sotho such names would be associated with unusual or extreme circumstances such as premature birth, long awaited baby, high expectation of a particular gender after the birth of a number of children of
the opposite gender. A name like *Masilo* would be given to the first boy after a series of girl siblings whilst the first girl following a number of boys would be named *Morongwa*, for instance. A baby born directly after a deceased sibling would be named *Matschediso*, shortened *Tshidi*. In the olden days when infant mortality was rife a baby would be given an ugly name such as *Matlakaña* (lit. leaves) or *Ntatauwane* (monster) with the belief of motivating its survival. Because names may be inherited names such as the ones mentioned above may no longer relate to illustrated circumstances in a particular bearer. It should be noted that names with undesirable or negative semantic content do not necessarily prophesise the child’s character, behaviour or fate, which are largely genealogically and environmentally influenced. The Northern Sotho saying *leinalebe ke seromo* ('give a dog a bad name and hang him') applies also to people whose names have desirable or positive meanings, but who may have dislikeable behaviour or bad luck similar to the person they are named after. The Zulu, however, believe that a child lives up to the likeness or meaning of the name that she or he bears.

Now, read the following narrative as to some of the circumstances under which parents name their children:

*Sibhamu is a primary school boy living with both his parents in Zamani, a township on the borders of Maputo. On the day of his birth his father was lying in hospital because he was shot with a gun one evening when he was closing his small shop. As Sibhamu’s birth and his father’s shooting occurred almost at the same time, the child was given that name. Isibhamu in Zulu means gun. The boy is now not happy at school because whenever other kids see him, they sing ‘Awuleth’umshini wami, umshini wami’ (Just bring my machine gun, my machine gun), a song which has been popularised by one of the politicians in our country.*

This story illustrates one of the circumstances under which the practice of name giving takes place in Zulu culture. The names given are sometimes complimentary to their bearers and at others not. We will discuss some of the circumstances under which names are given in some African societies.

*Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.*

### 3.5.1 Are you named after me?

*Instructions:* Think about some of the ways we come up for names of our children.

#### Naming a child after a relative

Within most Northern Sotho communities specific name-giving patterns occur. In many instances a traditional name would be carried over from one generation to the next, following the name of a specific relative whom a child should be named after. The ‘meaning’ of such a name may not be a big issue. The suitable person to be named after may be either living or deceased. For example, a pattern in a particular clan may require that the first male baby of the first son be named after its paternal grandfather; the first male baby of the second son be named after the first son (i.e. its father’s immediate preceding elder brother), and so on. However, following tradition does not necessarily prevent parents from giving names of their choice, resulting in a child having up to four or more names.

In other African cultures, though, this kind of naming puts emphasis on the deceased relatives. For instance, the first-born son would generally be named after the paternal grandfather and the first daughter after the maternal grandmother. The child's features may prompt the name to come from an ancestor or recently deceased member of the family.
3.5.2 Names are about relationships

Are you named after someone in your family? How do these relationships connect?

Naming according to relationships with the family

The relationship within the family and with relatives does from time to time become a deciding factor for name giving. Although there are numerous attitudes that are prevalent during child birth and according to which naming sometimes takes place, this sub-section will focus only on love, joy, hatred and conflict. The following attitudes are usually expressed by parents when giving their children names:

(a) Naming that pertains to love and being loved

In instances where love is felt by both parents and the mother feels the affection of her in-laws, parents will in most probability give their child a name that would reflect and express their feelings. Female names such as Sithandwa, and Thandiwe both derived from -thandwa, meaning loved, and Thandeka, meaning loveable, are illustrative of this tendency.

(b) Naming that pertains to joy and gifts

Children in African societies are desired after marriage, and the birth of a child always brings joy and happiness to the parents and families. Thus, both male and female names are coined the joy parents feel with the birth of their child. Names such as Jabulile (Joy), Sijabulile (We are joyful), Thokozile (Joy) in Zulu and Vuyokazi (Great joy) and Sivuyile (We are joyous) in Xhosa, are given to girl children. These names express the happiness and excitement of family members on hearing about the
birth of the child. Boy children on the other hand are given names such as Jabulani (be joyful), Njabulo (Joy) in Zulu and Vuyo (Joy) in Xhosa. Some such names are used for both genders, for example Mpho, Tebogo and Kagiso/Kagisho in the Sotho languages.

Gifts are a blessing to all who receive them. Children are also considered to be gifts given to parents by God. Names such as Siphiwe (We have been given -a gift), Simphiwe (We have been given a child) are normally given to girls, while the name Sipho (Gift) is usually given to boys.

(c) Naming that pertains to hatred, conflict and gossip

Although more often parents do not give their children names that have negative connotations, this, however happens when family strife, conflict and disagreement prevails during the birth of a child, these attitudes may be expressed when a child is born. If there has been conflict, and hatred felt by the bride towards her in-laws, she often than not, might call her new born child Danisile (The one who has disappointed them) especially if she has been barren for a significant period.

- Consider the meaning of your name and ask around what the name means in a South African African language?
- Could you associate your name with some specific attitude pertinent during the time of your birth?

Now read the following narrative and then answer the questions below:

After giving their little boy a name they liked, a young couple had restless nights because at night the child would cry and scream. They consulted an African medicine man who advised them the child by man’s grandfather’s name, ‘Zagila’ (Fighting sticks). Since giving the child this name, there has never been cries and screams at night. The child, following Zulu traditional custom, had received the ‘ancestor spirit’ of the deceased ancestor ‘Zagila’.


Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

3.5.3 Names of praise and clan

Instructions: Do you know about Direto?

Direto

Another category of individual personal names among many clans of the Northern Sotho is greeting/praise names. They are called direto (singular: sereto) and they are used when greeting, praising or affectionately referring to or addressing an individual. Examples of direto are: Serogole, Hlabirwa and Mologadi. A number of them have masculine-feminine variation such as Nape, Mphela, Ngwato and Mosebo with feminine Napjadi/Napšadi or Napogadi, Pheladi, Ngwatomosadi and Mosebjadi, respectively. It should be noted that not every Northern Sotho clan would have this category of names – people of the Northwestern[1] dialectal cluster, for instance, do not have direto. A bride that comes from a clan that does not practise this or
from a different language group altogether is usually given *sereto* on incorporation into her in-laws’ family. She would usually be named after someone in the family and she too would have a personal greeting name.

In South Africa, there are many examples of praise songs, praise poems, etc., used in times of celebration and great joy! Another common place to hear praise songs at Unisa is at the Graduation ceremonies where people celebrate that achievement.

Click on the link to watch a version of a praise song which occurred at a musical celebration in Cape Town by the group Goemarati:

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1OqfoYba_A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1OqfoYba_A)

[Graphic source: http://www.inkokhelo.blogspot.com/]

This is a photo of a well known Praise Singer named Bulelani Zantsi from near Cape Town.


Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

### 3.5.4 Do you have "a school" name?

*Instructions:* Many children get another name when they go to school. Did this happen to you?

**The influence of Christianity on African names**

Conversion into the Christian faith resulted in the emergence of new names amongst the African people. This development allowed Christian parents to name their children after biblical characters they liked. As a result names such as David, Peter, Simon, Andrew, etc. were given to African children whether or not the meanings of these names were known. Converts were expected to adopt Christian names, and this practice spilled onto other members of the communities as long as they also wanted to go to school and have ‘accepted’ names. It was, and still is, common to have a ‘home name’ and a ‘school name’. Often other members of the community, school teachers, nurses and clerical staff at hospitals would assist in giving such names.

During their earliest encounters with white people, a whole range of names and random words had become available and been put into use to refer to non-Christian Africans who did not have Christian names. Often non-Christian Africans had to take a European name because their African names by which they were called were very confusing and difficult to pronounce, to the Europeans. In some cases the names would be forced on people. Often the employer or the Native Affairs (Home Affairs, as it was then called) official would just think of a name, and this would then be given to a non-Christian African. It was also a common occurrence for people to be sent back from a Home Affairs office to go and look for ‘suitable names’ in order to have a pass book. Thus, non-meaningful names such as January, September, Kleinbooi, Jan, etc. were given to the people. People resented this custom because it seemed to imply that their names were being looked down upon.

Christian names were, therefore, adopted by being a convert, by force, by inheritance from the earlier bearer, by being assisted or by aspiring to fit in. Emotions related to this custom range from feeling accepted, to indifference and to feeling stripped of one’s identity.

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJubV9ge0eU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJubV9ge0eU)
Here is a link to a video on YouTube where an African American man shares similar feelings about names that were 'forced on' people -- in this case, forced on African slaves who were brought to other countries to work. They were give names by their owners -- names from the Christian Bible, even names from the families of the owners!

Interesting information to think about
Are you familiar with Mario Puzo’s novel *The Godfather* or Francis Copolla’s trilogy of films based on the book? *The Godfather II* shows how Vito Andolini became Vito Corleone at the hands of an American immigration official (Corleone is the name of a town in Sicily, Italy).

- Do you think fiction depicts elements of truth about human life?

[Graphic source: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0068646/]

- Do you know of similar incidents in other cultures where people were/are given wrong or foreign names?
- What were/are the reasons behind the incidents?

If you and another person closest to you have never talked about the meaning of family names, now is the time to begin to explore this topic together. If you were named after someone, share what you know about that person (or use this as an opportunity to learn more about her/him!).

Part of your Final Portfolio

Remember that a part of your Final Portfolio is related to how much you know about your own name. The activities in this section will help you to prepare that section of your Final Portfolio.

*Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.*

Assignment 03 (Discussions)

*Instructions:* Use the online Discussion forum to submit this assignment.

**Assignment 03**

*Year Mark:* 20%

*Tool:* Discussions

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Check your Assessment Plan document under the Additional Resources for Unit 0. You will find a document for semester 1 and a document for semester 2 which will have suggested start dates, and due dates for each assignment. **Make sure you look at the document for the correct semester.**

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**Assignment**

Go to Discussions and do the assignment under the topic Assignment 03.

Read Unit 3 and summarise the following investigations in different paragraphs as your discussion:

**PARAGRAPH 1 of your discussion**

Investigate your name and its origins.

- What does your name(s) mean?
- Where does it come from?
- Do you like your name? Why? or why not?
- Has this changed over time?
- If you could change your name, what will it be and why will you change it?
- Do you think your name(s) had an impact on who you are?
PARAGRAPH 2 of your discussion

Interview people (2-4) to find out as much as you can about the background or history of their names, i.e. proper name, surname, nicknames, etc.

PARAGRAPH 3 of your discussion

If you have children, how did you choose their names?

- What does this tell us about you, as the parent?
- What does this reflect about your attitude to life?

If you don't have children yet, do you have ideas for names you will use, in the future?

- names for a boy?
- names for a girl?
- what will change this idea?

Use the table provided to help you gather information about your own name (and other names in your community). Go to Additional Resources and look at the files under "Unit 3 Resources" for the file called "Assignment 03 Table". You can use this to help you get started and add it as an attachment to the Discussion.

Remember to reflect on other student's posts, especially in terms of language identity with reference to naming - do not merely reproduce information for the sake of completing the assignment, interpret the information in terms of the tutorial matter, i.e. the relevant information from Unit 3.

Your discussion should be between 500 - 700 words.

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

3.6 Social structure in African world

Instructions: Think about the structure of the communities around you.

African Social Structure

As indicated at an earlier section of this unit, people of the same lineage usually know whom they are descendents of. The lineage extends into a clan.

One of the greatest paradoxes of life is that humans are both individual and social entities concurrently. Each of us is a physical separate being with an independent consciousness, experiencing in his/her own particular way a physical world populated by other humans, all different from him/her, but largely behaving in ways that are intelligible. Each of us feels unique: our emotions about new encounters and how we react to them are the outcome of a set of previous experiences that each person has accumulated.

Yet, at the same time, our day-to-day life is a social one. We cannot exist in isolation from one another

- What aspects of life disclose a commonality between you and others in your community?

The clan

We lead our lives in social groups defined by what we have in common that makes us different from other groups. Our personal sense of identity draws on how we routinely interact with members of our groups: this is termed social identity, defined by sharing common sets of values and attitudes, which is termed culture. In a social group, our daily patterns are patterned in such a manner that they interconnect in countless ways with the activities of others, so that we are able not only to survive but to enjoy far more services than we could possibly provide for ourselves as individuals. Societies consist of structured relationships between people and patterns of activity which have emerged through processes of historical development. A society is a form of organisation of large numbers of people.

The elementary or nuclear family, which comprises a small group, forms the basic structure in most societies. The first section of this unit is devoted to the family and the terms used by members to refer to each other. Almost every African society has some form of descent group, in which close-knit ties of kinship provide powerful links through the notion of ‘common blood’.

By claiming common ancestry, such a group can claim rights to a clan. Clans are commonly defined as a group of people united by kinship and descent. Even if actual lineage patterns may be unknown, clan members may nonetheless recognise a founding member or ancestor, usually by the common surname shared by members. People from the same clan may have different surnames, but people of the same surname belong to the same clan.
Did you know?

Madiba is not Mr Nelson Mandela’s ‘nickname’, as one South African quiz show had once suggested. There are other Madibas whose surname is not Mandela, but all Mandelas are Madibas.


Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

3.6.1 Clans in South Africa

Different types of Clans in South Africa

Clans are closely associated with totems. A totem is an object (mostly a wild animal) that symbolises a clan. Totemism would, therefore, loosely be explained as a belief system that recognises that people sharing a totem have some ancestral link.

- Have you ever heard a person greeting or calling another by an animal name such as Tlou (elephant), Kolobe (pig, in this case a wild one) or Tau (lion)? Have you tried asking why these people call each other by such animals?
- If you have not heard anything about such tendencies, listen particularly to the greetings of African Languages speaking communities and ask about the significance of such greetings.

If you want to see some more information about clans, read this example of clan names in Botswana, on Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tswana_people.

Zulu Clan names

In Zulu, each clan has its own isithakazelo (clan name). For example someone from the Ndlovu clan would be addressed Gatsheni! and someone from the Sithole clan would be addressed Jobe!

Sometimes these address names are used as surnames. Thus the clan name Ntuli has the address name Sompisi, which is now the surname of some members of the Ntuli clan. Everyone will know the isithakazelo of the clans in the neighbourhood. Two people known to each other will greet each other using the isithakazelo, eg. Sanibonani Gatsheni! (when addressing someone of the Ndlovu clan) and Sanibonani Mageba! (when addressing someone from the Zulu clan). When a stranger calls at someone’s homestead, he or she will always shout out the isithakazelo of that homestead, for example Eh! Gatsheni! (when approaching the Ndlovu homestead). Each clan may have more than one address name, for example the Zulu clan has the address names: Mageba, and Ndabezitha.

Using address or clan names shows politeness and respect. An African will always appreciate your use of their clan name. Zulu married women, for instance, never address their husbands by name or clan name, but always use the address name.

Neighbours and communities

- Close neighbours in one’s community can become your immediate family. Is this statement true in your situation? Explain what your relationship is with the people who live around you?

That neighbours in one’s neighbourhood can become one’s immediate family is true to communal settings. In these types of settings social ties are linked through closeness, loyalty and affection. Individuals know and care about one another and depend on each other not only for basic necessities but for relationships. Owing to the strong ties that have developed amongst neighbours, it is important that neighbours exchange greetings whenever they meet. Strong neighbourhood ties promote stronger bonds where all the children belong to all the parents and reprimand of errant children is not interpreted negatively. In such communities people become and take it upon themselves to go and see an ailing or distressed neighbour.
When one neighbour is in trouble, it is of necessity that the other neighbours be of assistance. A field is never ploughed by the owners only, but helpers rally around the ploughing so that the ploughing is done in a much shorter time, the same applies to building a hut. The word *ilima* (Zulu)/letšema (Northern Sotho), means communal cultivation. It is specifically used in instances where help is solicited from neighbours and other community members. During times of bereavement, neighbours are the first people to come to the home of the deceased to pay their last respects. Even during joyous times such as marriages, and other celebrations such as when one’s daughter comes of age, it is the neighbours in one’s community who help with all the preparations. African languages abounds in proverbs that demonstrate community interdependence.

[1] Among others, there are several instances in African communities where families have recategorised their father’s first name to a surname, and are still within the same clan.

*Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.*

### 3.7 Cultural Ceremonies and occasions

*Instructions:* Remind yourself of relations from a nuclear family to a broader community and how the communal way of life results in people often rallying around one another in times of need.

#### The ceremonies which tell us who we are

Several occasions in cultures the world over are being celebrated or commemorated. Some of such occasions are related to rites of passage and/or are religious in nature, and they span the proverbial cradle to grave. The birth of a child, onset of puberty, initiation, marriage and death are traditionally recognised, and each has certain sub-occasions attached to it. As cultures evolve and new things are introduced, occasions relating to schooling and new religious ways of life became common. Because they are so many and varied, this unit will focus on the common occasions, namely marriage and funerals.
3.7.1 Marriage ceremonies

Marriage

Marriage in the African sense is not a union only between a husband and his wife; it is a union between the two families as well. In the traditional African way a young man would not personally approach his prospective father-in-law and ask for his daughter’s hand in marriage – it would be interpreted as disrespect. A young man would make his intentions known to his family and the family would approach the prospective in-laws on his behalf. Negotiations go in phases and there are specific people who must be included in specific delegations. In most clans of the Northern Sotho, for instance, *malome/ umalume* has to be part of the delegation that takes *magadi/ ilobola* to the lady’s family.

**Activity 3.3: Watch a wedding video**

The video [at this link](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D11-ME9JGvC&feature=related) is the story of a young Xhosa woman who lives far from the traditional life of her family, grandparents and ancestors. By going to the see the play, *Umtshato*, she learns about the culture of her parents and grandparents, .... and of herself.

Click on the link to listen to her story: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D11-ME9JGvC&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D11-ME9JGvC&feature=related)

You may have already watched this video in Unit 2, but it can also apply in this Unit.

In Northern Sotho the verb used with *magadi* has neither a connection with payment nor does it suggest payment or buying. *Magadi* is not ‘payed’. *Ba ntšha magadi* (they take out magadi) or *ba iša magadi* ... (they take magadi to ...). It is taken out of one family to be received by another family. *Magadi/ ilobola* is traditionally livestock, taken from the groom’s family to the bride’s family. Scarcity, unavailability and in some cases impracticality of owning livestock has ushered in substitution by money, which is in the case of marriage talked of in terms of livestock. For instance, a family would talk of receiving ten heads of cattle and further specify that ‘their head of cattle’ is such and such an amount in monetary terms.
After *magadi/libola*, the next step is *go bekwa* (to be taken to the groom’s parental home), from where the bride will arrive some time move to her own house. Specific people, according to kinship-based suitability are included in the delegation from the groom’s family to come and take the bride whilst some from the bride’s side are more suitable to lead the delegation accompanying her to her in-laws. The wedding ceremonies are normally a farewell celebration at the bride’s home followed by a welcome celebration at the groom’s home the following day. The bride would be given a new name at her in-laws’ home to mark that she is no longer a girl, but she is a woman. The new name relates to her being a mother, because normally according to certain clans’ naming patterns the name of her first male child would already be known. Naming has already been dealt with.

African Languages have rich idiom around marriage procedures, reflection of the role-players in the procedures, the status of the daughter-in-law in a family and problem-solving procedures and guide lines. Although some of these traditions are no longer practised in full many rural and some urban communities are practising some remnants thereof, for various reasons.

Marriage is cause for celebration. Traditionally all villagers would be informed and invited from the beginning of proceedings. Because of the communal cultural lifestyle all villagers take ownership in preparing to make the day a success. It would start from women collecting wood and water to brewing beer and cooking on the day while men would be involved in beast slaughtering. No one would be paid or expect to be paid for their service. Even the singing or other entertainment would not necessarily involve monetary reward. Everyone would eat and feast to their satisfaction. In modern days, one would obviously not expect everything to be exactly the same. As times changed individual wedding invitations started to be sent out in the form of cards or letters. However, because of the African way of life characterised by communal ownership and *ubuntu*[1], unless seats are specifically allocated and plates counted (which is out of character) anyone is free to join in the celebrations. The concept of ‘gate catching’ a celebration is foreign to the African way of life. But, since no culture is static other cultures may offer attractive ways of doing things.

In Northern Sotho linguistic representation of the union is not reciprocal – a man and a woman do not marry each other. *Monna o a nyala* (...he marries); *mosadi o a nyalwa* (...she is being married). A man marries/takes a woman. She is taken from her family to the husband’s family. However, in the traditional set-up a woman never drops her family name. In Northern Sotho there is often a reminder that even if she is a member of her married family her ‘head’ (implying the core of her being) is her family’s. If a woman comes from the Dikgale or Legodi family she is referred to as *NgwanaDikgale* or *NgwanaLegodi*, respectively. *Ngwana* is Northern Sotho for child; therefore NgwanaDikgale means child of the Dikgaless. Similarly, in Zulu culture, a woman from the Ntuli family married into the Ndlovu family will be called MaNtuli meaning child of the Ntulis. In that way there is always a connection between a woman’s descendants and her family name.

Several songs, idiomatic expressions and proverbs encourage and anticipate that marriage lasts forever. For example, *Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi* (Lit. A woman’s grave is at her in-laws; meaning once one is married it is for good); which is the universal ideal. More on proverbs and culture will be dealt with in the next unit.

[1] *Ubuntu* is dealt with in unit 5.

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

### 3.7.2 Funerals and death

#### Ceremonies around death

- Have you ever wondered why some funerals are attended by a small number of people whilst some usually have a crowd that may fill a stadium? Do you think family structures/relations, social relations and communal way of life have something to do with that? Give your view on the matter.

In African cultures death is not something personal and private which is spoken of in undertones or whispers. It is a loss that is shared by the whole community, who will in turn offer emotional support. The characteristic communal lifestyle and the underlying *ubuntu* philosophy do no allow anyone to be isolated in grief. In death not only the family mourns but the whole community does. Once the word is out the community would offer support – emotional, material and ultimately psychological.

The announcements of the passing, the consolation of the bereaved family and the procedures involved have distinct sets of linguistic items that are used. The announcement of a death, the greetings and consolations for a king/chief, a baby, a young man/lady, a person who was known to be ill for a long time and a person who passed away unexpectedly are linguistically differently ‘coloured’. The tone of voice as well as the pace is different from everyday way of speaking.

Take time to listen to a programme in which deaths, including funeral information, are announced. Remember, it is not a closed family secret; it is everybody’s loss. SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) has the following radio stations in South African Languages: Phalaphala FM; Ligwalagwala FM; Thobel FM; Motswedeng FM; Lesedi FM; Ukhosi FM; Umhlobo Wenene FM; Ikwekwezi FM.
Visit [http://www.sabc.co.za](http://www.sabc.co.za), find a station of your choice and view program line up and frequency.

- What do these radio stations have in common in terms of language and cultural grouping (apart from being South African stations)?
- Do you think announcing the dead is uniquely South African or have you observed it in other countries or other cultures?
- If you are in South Africa you may listen to the station representative of the province you live in (or any, if you like). If you are outside South Africa you may share in the experiences of fellow students on myUnisa.

South Africa’s history of migrant labour that ripped families apart as well as forced removals resulted in people of the same lineage/ clan living in separate areas far from one another. Radio programmes such as these became suitable means of letting people know that one of them has passed on. Whoever heard the announcement would spread the word and by the day of the funeral almost everyone would know. The announcement on radio would normally be the deceased’s full name, where he/she resided, when he/she passed away, where and when he/she will be buried and the name of the person who sent the announcement.

The period of mourning starts right after the first word went out and for an average of a week people would be coming to makula (lit. be surprised, in Northern Sotho --- to confirm that indeed what they heard is true) and to lend support until after the funeral, with the day of the funeral being a big gathering. The African roots of ubuntu see to it that the bereaved family is cared for all the way (emotionally, psychologically and otherwise). There may lately be some changes as to the basic intentions of coming together and the way that the ceremony is handled, but all is borne out of the traditional intentions based on ubuntu.

In rural areas where the spirit of ubuntu still prevails, activities of burial are also approached in a communal way with no expectation of monetary reward. Some such activities are more structured than others. Men slaughter, cook some of the meat, dig and cover the grave. Women take care of the cooking. The older folks take care of the emotional well-being of the family; and they even sleep over to ensure that all is well.

Respect and empathy are observed around the deceased’s family. For instance, a widow would be visually identifiable by the form of dress. There would be sensitivity around her and her children. There are various ways in which the community would contribute in helping them deal with their grief, to the stage where they can cope. To this effect a period of mourning is observed. Traditionally it was generally a full year, but for various reasons the period may be shortened to six (in some cases three) months.

One of the things traditionally done immediately after the funeral is to formalise the onset of the mourning period. In some cultural groups, for instance, in the case of a widow before this process can start it may be necessary to establish whether or not she is fully married. This would normally include ascertaining that there are no outstanding responsibilities surrounding her marriage such as part of magadi/ ilobola. Once that has been settled her family would take the lead in the proceedings. So many procedures are followed, but traditionally the common one is that the family would have their heads shaved.

Traditionally there were no expensive hairdos and people didn’t have to be in the public eye a lot and/or too soon

The widow (mohlologadi, in Northern Sotho) would be fully clad (in a dress, head scarf and cape or shawl) in black. Due to several reasons the black colour may be substituted by navy blue or green. Sometimes such a dress would be made inside-out with a setotsi[1] fabric.

- What other colour are you aware of in any culture that is symbolic of mourning? Explain who wears it and what kind of clothing they wear.

Other members of the family may have a pinafore, a black cloth-covered button to be worn on the lapel or arm, a small folded square cloth or an armband. Normally the spouse, the first and the last born children would ‘mourn’ full term whilst other members of the family, including middle children, do not go full term.

- Have you ever found yourself in the same queue with a (visually identifiable) widow in a bank, post office or similar place?
- How did you identify her as a widow?
- What was the other people’s reaction towards her?
- Describe the exact occurrence and give your views about the issue.

Because of today’s lifestyle such as having to return to work the attire may be different to suit the work place and the term may be shortened. One of the difficulties that career people may be faced with is that before one takes off mourning clothes at the end of term you are not to still be outside the homestead by sunset. Because the way of life is not the same as in the past such rules may be impossible to follow and possibly creating conflict and/ or resentment, in the case of people who find it hard to break from tradition. It all has to do with the living conditions of the people involved and their level of flexibility.

Suppose a friend/colleague of yours is faced with having to choose between attending a long awaited concert of an international rock star and going to a cleansing ceremony in his/her rural home because the day falls on the first anniversary of his/her father’s death. How would you advise him/her? Why?
Setoitšhi is the blue version of seshweshwe, a print cotton fabric named after the German settlers [Deutsch].

Approximately a year (sometimes six or three months) after an adult had passed away a cleansing ritual is performed. Following through with the example of a widow, her hair would be shaved for the first time after it had been shaved on the day of the funeral and she would discard the mourning dress that she had been wearing for the past year. Although the whole idea is cleansing, family and relatives would bring presents. At this time it is hoped that she had gone through almost all the stages of grief and she has come to accept what has happened and she is fit to live a normal life again. The occasion would traditionally be witnessed by others who took part in helping her through, and that would be family, neighbours and other villagers. For various reasons relating to unavailability of individuals at certain times in today’s fast-paced life and the fact that the family would at that time be relatively stronger the cleansing ceremony does not attract the same size of crowd as the funeral – it has gradually narrowed down to family size. And because of changing religious beliefs not every family observes the rite.

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

Assignment 04 (Assignments)

Instructions: Use the Assignments tool to submit this assignment.

Assignment 04

Year Mark: 20%
Submit Written Assignment to Assignment System in Assignments tool - hard copies will not be assessed.

Note: The Assignment system where you submit written assignments, i.e. Assignments tool, is closed when examinations start. An attempt to submit a formative assignment after this date in this tool will result in a cancelled assignment.

Also note: It is your responsibility to ensure that the file you upload as your assignment is the correct file, that it is complete and that it is accessible for the marker.

Check your Assessment Plan document under the Additional Resources for Unit 0. You will find a document for semester 1 and a document for semester 2 which will have suggested start dates, and due dates for each assignment. Make sure you look at the document for the correct semester.

As we have been exploring ideas around names and kinship and clans in this unit, another aspect of language and identity is what our culture and social grouping tell about us in terms of who we are.

Assignment

2. For this assignment, we ask you to find a photo about a cultural ceremony or social gathering which impacts on your daily existence in terms of how you use language - please take into account sensitive viewers and do not use images which might be offensive to other people, e.g. killing of an animal, explicit nudity, etc. Examples could be weddings, funerals, dances, birthday party, special church service, sports events, initiation or coming of age.

ceremony. Note that you do not get any marks for the quality of the photo - marks are given in terms of
the discussion of the ceremony as a reflection of who you are. The required length of the assignment is about
four to five (4-5) pages. Such pages should mainly consist of text. You can use your cell phone or camera to
take a photo of some aspect of the ceremony or gathering. It is difficult to upload large files, so you won’t be able
to upload many photos.
4. Write a document and insert the graphics where you explain the cultural ceremony or social gathering in terms of
how it impacts on your language usage. Make sure that you explain specific terms used to identify the specific
aspects of the ceremony or gathering, e.g. the term ‘marriage’ means different things in different cultures for
different people.
6. Then you must discuss what is happening in the photo and how it reflects something important in your culture or
social group.
8. What did you learn from this in terms of yourself (who you are) and your culture or social group?
10. Keep in mind that the assignment should be of a high academic standard. Your personal views should be
presented against the background of your language, attitude and worldview.
12. State clearly which culture you are from by referring to it, e.g. Zulu, Indian, Sotho, etc.
14. Should you discuss a ceremony which you have not personally attended, it is essential to quote the sources from
which you have acquired the content.
16. It adds value to your assignment if you present your personal reflections on the ceremony even if you have not
attended it yourself.
18. A conclusion is essential. This conclusion should put the ceremony into perspective in terms of the bigger
South African cultural landscape. In your conclusion you need to answer the following questions:

| a) What activates cultural/traditional/social grouping? |
| b) Why do we have these gatherings? |
| c) What is the relationship between language, tradition/culture or social grouping? |
| d) What is the impact of digital media (mobile phones, computers, internet, etc) on
cultural/traditional or social practices? |
| e) Does culture/tradition or social grouping evolve over time? Give examples relating to each of the |
categories listed below: |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which languages did/do your family speak?</th>
<th>50 years ago</th>
<th>Today</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many of your family members were/are furthering their education after Grade 12?</td>
<td>50 years ago</td>
<td>Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did/does your family communicate with family members that live far from them?</td>
<td>50 years ago</td>
<td>Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of house did/do your family live in?</td>
<td>50 years ago</td>
<td>Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did/does a groom ask a bride’s parents permission to marry her?</td>
<td>50 years ago</td>
<td>Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What currency was/is used to secure a bride?</td>
<td>50 years ago</td>
<td>Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of clothes did/do the wedding couple wear?</td>
<td>50 years ago</td>
<td>Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did/does the bride prepare herself for marriage?</td>
<td>50 years ago</td>
<td>Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did/does the bridegroom prepare himself for marriage?</td>
<td>50 years ago</td>
<td>Today</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

https://my.unisa.ac.za/portal/tool/1ff51620-0373-426a-9aec-b000d70b770b/print_module.jsf?printModuleId=662536757
What was/is the most common drink used by your family during festivities?

NOTE: The myUnisa system only allows you to upload a file of up to 6 MB, so you will not be able to use a large photo files from a nice camera or smart phone. The best thing to do is to take a few photos and pick one, reduce the file size, and then copy the photo into a word document with your description and discussion of the ceremony.

To reduce graphic file size:
Resize general graphics to less than 500kB (preferable 250kB) before uploading. It will look the same onscreen.

How to do this:
- Save the picture/graphic you want to use on your PC
- On your Windows Start Menu, click on "Paint"
- Click File, Open and browse for the picture
- In the Paint Menu bar click on "Resize" (this could be in View or Image tab depending on your version of Windows)
- Choose Pixels, and type in the new value for Horizontal. ALWAYS check the box for Maintain Aspect Ratio. This will prevent your picture from going skew.
- First check for any erroneous white background behind your image. Then Save the Image under a new name.

You can also use the Discussions tool to share this assignment information with other students. This will NOT be part of the assignment that you submit, but an extra place for sharing with others.

- Here you can attach a graphic as an attachment to the discussion.
- After looking at examples from other students, what did you learn about them and their cultures?

Assessment criteria for Assignment 04

You will find a copy of the rubric that we will use to assess this assignment under Additional Resources, in Unit 3. The rubric is called Assessing Written Assignment Rubric (in a file called "Written AssignRubricAFL-Ass04.pdf"). You can open and read this and it will help you to write an excellent assignment. Here are the main things we look for:

- Content and Quality: Make sure you do all the tasks and follow all the directions for the Assignment. We are also looking for the photo or video and explanation to support your ideas.
- Organisation: We want to see that you can organise your ideas around all parts of this Assignment.
- Communication: We need to understand your writing, so make sure your language is clear and that you explain your ideas very well.
- Final Product: Did you take the assignment seriously? Read through it carefully and make sure you completed it to the best of your ability.

If you follow the rubric and take note of these assessment criteria, we are sure you will do well in this assignment.

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

3.8 Winding up this unit

Instructions: Answer the questions to help you review this unit.

As a winding up for this unit do the following self-assessment questions

- Can a personal name change the personality of a person? Discuss why you agree or disagree.
- What do you consider to be advantages and/or disadvantages of extended families?
- As a member of a community/society do you think it is your business to interfere/intervene when you see any teenager in your neighbourhood involved in mischief? Sketch a possible scenario and discuss whether or not you or any adult should interfere/intervene.
- The multi-coloured flag of South Africa symbolises multi-culturalism. Do you think that it promotes unity within society?

We believe that up to this point we agree that it is important in a multicultural society to have an idea of how other people do certain things and why they do them that way. As a result what is important to one person may not even be necessary for the other, hence the need to understand one another for harmonious co-existence. We have also seen how the use of language can clear some of the misconceptions about others. In the following unit we are going to learn more about how understanding and using language can enhance or spoil interpersonal relations.

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.
Activity 3.4: Reflect on what you learned

Instructions: Use the Blogs tool to reflect on what you have learned in this unit.

Activity 3.4 -- Before you go: Reflect on your learning in Unit 3

Before we finish Unit 3, we want you to take some time and reflect on what you think are the main ideas. Use the Blogs tool and add to your Blog that you started in Unit 0, as Ice Breaker 2, and in the First Portfolio Activity.

1. You are adding to your previous blogs, so click on Add new blog entry.
2. Put a new title and the date to start the new blog.
3. Reflect on what you have learned:
   a. What was the main purpose of Unit 1, in your opinion?
   b. What were the ideas behind the 2 Assignments and the First Portfolio Activity?
   c. Do you have anything else that you learned from the activities and discussions in this unit?
   d. How long did it take you to complete the activities for this unit?
   e. Add anything else you want to reflect about.

You can also use this space to talk about anything in this Unit that you want to share about.

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

References for this unit

REFERENCES


Unit 4: Interpersonal Relationships

We dealt with who we are in terms of our own ‘self’. Now we take a look at who the ‘self’ is with reference to interpersonal contact, i.e. in terms of the ‘other’. We do it in terms of language usage.

4.1 Overview of this unit

In our last unit, we talked about all the ways that our language use shows who we are, our identity and attitudes. In this unit, we focus on the interpersonal relationships that rule our lives and how our language use affects those relationships. To get started with Unit 4, begin here.

What our interpersonal relationships say about us

When dealing with the previous units we first dealt with language as a process where we focussed on the fact that whenever we use language we focus on who we are in terms of the processes underlying the language of survival and co-ordination. We went further in unit 2 and dealt with the issue of how language signifies attitude and world-view, which is based on the fact that we always reflect who we are when we use language. In unit 3 we returned to the roots where we acquired our language usage skills. We had a look at language usage in terms of those first social groupings we grew up in like the family with reference to language and identity.

Our interpersonal relationships can be positive or negative, but they say a lot about who we are. For example, the gestures we use, our body language and non-verbal communication also have a great impact on the ways that we interact with other people.


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4.1.1 Multicultural Interpersonal Relationships

Instructions: Interpersonal relationships are often more complicated in the cases of multicultural connections.

Multiculturalism and multilingualism: Many cultures & many languages

In the preceding learning unit you acquired the fundamental knowledge about the role of language in revealing family structure and kinship relations among the indigenous people of South Africa. The purpose of this learning unit is to raise cultural awareness through language usage, with a view to instilling a tolerance of differences that have the potential of dividing people and creating tension between them. Cultural awareness through language usage will help you to interact with people of other cultural groups, co-exist with others in different social groupings and address communication problems in an environment of a different cultural background.

Activity 4.1: Watch a video and think about your own language

There are many official languages in South Africa (we discussed this briefly in Unit 1), but this is one of the advantages of living here -- such a multicultural and multi-lingual society brings us many opportunities to learn about other people. This video gives us some insight into all those languages, just through the greetings we use:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MzJoEguy3j0

Then read the following extract and respond to the questions below:

Multilingualism promotes unity

BuaNews: 12 June 2003
The use and promotion of all 11 official languages will provide an opportunity for ordinary South Africans to make choices on ways in which they want to be educated, according to Arts, Culture, Science and Technology Minister Ben Ngubane.

Addressing a two-day conference on the government’s National Language Policy Framework in Benoni on the East Rand on Thursday, Ngubane said the framework, approved by Cabinet in February, aimed to foster respect for language rights and linguistics diversity, and to promote national unity.

“It is important that South Africans be afforded an opportunity of achieving in their own languages, of not dropping out of school because of difficulty with a second or third language as a medium of instruction,” Ngubane said.

Ngubane dismissed perceptions that multilingualism was a costly exercise, citing examples of progressive multilingual countries such as Belgium, Canada, Finland and Switzerland.

“The value of multilingualism for South Africa is not exclusively measurable in rands and cents. The truth is that monolingualism also has financial costs for South Africa.”

The minister challenged sceptics to think about the hidden costs implications for the country, such as loss of human resources resulting from school dropouts, poor performance and poor communication.

Ngubane launched a multilingual mathematics dictionary at the conference, which he said will go a long way to ensure the success of the language policy.

The Minister also announced that the Northern Cape government and his department would be starting a project to record the San and Khoi languages which were on the verge of extinction.

(Source: BuaNews)

Go to the Discussions and click on the Discussion forum called "Activity 4.1: Multilingualism" and share your answers to the following questions:

1. What is a multilingual society?
2. Are you aware that South Africa is a multilingual society?
3. Do you agree with what the minister said in the first paragraph?
4. Look at the third paragraph: Do you think we can achieve this?
5. Imagine if you were to make a decision on whether South Africa or your own country should be multilingual or not: What line of argument were you going to choose?
6. Do you think multilingualism can promote unity in the society? Why do you say so?

In responding to the above questions, you could have stated some of the following issues:

South Africa is a multifaceted and multilingual society, and this is reflected in the existence of various speech communities. Each speech community is characterised by people who share the same norms with regard to language, and have the same set of social attitudes towards language. In addition, one should note that the speakers of the same language form many different communities. Each community is characterised by its norms and rules of speaking, and speech behaviour is dictated by the circumstances in which interaction occurs. Through the speech behaviour of speech communities one is able to recognise the role-relationship between people of different racial groups or between father and son, husband and wife, teacher and pupil, clergy and congregation, and among friends.

Have you noticed that people’s attitudes toward different languages and varieties of these languages reflect their perceptions of people in different social categories? Can you think of an example in this regard? Such perceptions influence their interaction within and across the boundaries of the speech community. Attitudes are in fact acquired as a factor of group membership and this forms part of the process of enculturation in a particular speech community. This is so because attitudes are strongly influenced by the social structure of the community in question. Think about your attitude towards your language and towards other languages.

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

4.1.2 Multilingualism

More about interpersonal relationships

In your response to the previous questions, you also could have mentioned some of the following issues:

Research suggests that there are many ways to portray positive or negative feelings among people and this plays an important role in human relationships. Language has the power to affect interpersonal relationships positively or negatively. Intercultural relationships involve relations between persons. Attitudes can be reflected through different forms of language usage, for example, address, greetings and gestures; proverbial expressions and religion. In this unit the reflection of attitudes will be focused on forms of address, greeting and gesture; language and religion; and oral tradition. These are the basic elements of communication a person must know if he or she intends to interact with persons of a different cultural background in a multilingual society.

Although in this unit we deal with interpersonal relationships, we will not provide a detailed discussion of it here. You can read more about it in the sources provided at the end of the unit. Answer these questions to explore your prior knowledge about multiculturalism and multilingualism.

**Activity 4.1 -- revisited**

1. Go back to the Discussions tool and look at your ideas that you have shared in the topic called "Multilingualism"
2. Add these ideas to your initial discussions.
3. Can you define the concept 'multilingualism'? 
4. Talk about your own multilingual abilities.
   - How many different languages do you know? Can you read in all of them? Can you write in all of them?
   - Which languages do you prefer to use for your education?
   - Which language do you prefer for worship in your religion?
   - Explain your preferences.
5. What will you do to achieve good interaction if you could find yourself in a multilingual society?

*Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.*

**Activity 4.2: Visit a friend**

*Activity 4.2:*

If you have a friend of a different racial group, spend a weekend with him or her in his or her home to observe the following:

- the response of the children when they are called by their parents
- the response of children when they are called by their age groups
- the behaviour of the wife when passing over an article to the husband or any elderly person
- the response of a wife when called by the husband
- the address of a wife to her husband or any elderly person
- the address of a younger person to an elderly person

*Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.*

**4.2 Forms of Address, Greetings and Gestures**

*Say "Hello" "Howzit" "Sawbona"*

The photo here show a Ghanaian World Cup soccer player when they met with former President Nelson Mandela in 2010 [*photo taken from http://www.nationnews.com/articles/view/Ghanaians-meet-SA-icons/]
Can you recall the time you experienced some difficulty when you try to communicate with a person of a different cultural group? What happened during your communication with that person? Different racial groups have been living side by side for centuries since the arrival of white people in 1652 in South Africa; yet communication between these racial groups is not improving. What do you think might be hampering smooth communication between these racial groups? Probably the root cause might be a lack of understanding another person's language and culture. What differentiate white communities from black communities are their different cultural activities and the different way each community perceives the world around it. The source of these cultural activities and particular perceptions of the world is the family.

There are a lot of languages to learn in South Africa because we have so many different cultures living together in one country. But each of these cultures has its own way of greeting and saying hello.

Watch the video below, as it explains yet another language — that of non-verbal communication. In this case, the video explains the sign language used to ride by taxi:

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nORTIquDBvw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nORTIquDBvw)

What happens in your culture when a wife calls her husband by his first name? Among the African people, it is unacceptable for a wife to call her husband by his first name, especially in the presence of the elders. She must use the clan's name if she wants the attention of her husband, and if she dares to call her husband by the first name, she will be showing disrespect. The family and the community will scold her. Among white people it is common behaviour for a wife to call her husband by his first name, and this is regarded as an indication of the couple's closeness.

Have you ever heard about a speech variety among the Nguni people and Basotho which is used by women only in order to show respect to their husbands. You may not have heard it before; this speech variety is known as Hloniphaphi or isizohoniphaphazi or sehlonephaphi sa basadi. Hloniphaphi is a isiZulu or isiXhosa or SiSwati noun formed from the verb stem -hloniphaphi meaning "to respect". On the other hand, sehlonephaphi is a Sesotho noun formed from the prefix se- of class 7 and the verb stem –hlonephaphi meaning "to respect". This speech variety is characterised by the fact that women in their everyday speech appear to use names of their husband's families, for example: a woman may avoid using the syllables –komo in Inkomo (head of cattle), saying inombe instead, or she may avoid the sound f in ukufukama (to hatch) by saying uku'ukama. This custom applies with reference to the names of the father-in-law, the mother-in-law, the father-in-law's brothers and their wives, and the mother-in-law's sisters and their husbands.

How do younger people address older persons in your culture? It is unacceptable for a younger person to address an older person by the first name, because this is considered disrespectful in the African culture. In this instance one should in isiZulu use Baba or mama before the proper name, whereas in Tshivena one should use Vho- before the proper name, for example Vho-Masindi.

Have you made an observation about how people greet? Watch TV stories, etc. Among the Zulu people, Vatsonga and Vhawenja etc., the wife cannot greet the husband while she is standing, and she cannot look the husband in the eyes. The tone of her voice must be friendly and also show respect. When she passes the husband an article or gives him something to eat, she must always kneel or else she will seem disrespectful towards the husband. When a Western system of schooling was introduced to Africans, the African children were in these schools also taught to observe the African norms and culture. At school, for example, a girl would be taught not to hand over a book or any other article to a teacher while standing; she must kneel or bend over a bit. If she does not do that she will be regarded as disrespectful of her teacher. A boy may not wear a hat while talking to his teacher or any older person because this is a sign of disrespect. In the white community on the other hand, it is not wrong for a wife to greet her husband while standing, looking him in the eye or kissing him or hugging him. If an African woman did this, she would be called all sorts of names.

Among traditional Vhawenja a son cannot greet his father or talk to him while standing, he must sit down. If he is wearing a hat, he must take it off. He is supposed to say ndaal (the interjection which is used when one is responding to a call or when one greets older people) when his father calls him. If he should say heel (the interjection which is used when one is responding to a call) his father may get angry and punish him. He does not relate his problems to his father directly, but to his mother who will communicate all his problems to his father. The son does all these things to show his respect to his father. A daughter, like a son, should kneel down when she greets her father or talks to her father or any other elderly person. When she gives her father an article or something to eat or drink, she must kneel down in order to show respect. When her father calls her she must respond by saying saaf (the interjection which is used when one is responding to a call or when one greets older people) and not heel. What is the situation in your culture? Can a daughter or son speak to her or his father, or any elderly person while standing?

In a black community there are certain things which children cannot say about their father or mother. For example, children cannot say that their father is drunk because they will then be insulting him; they would rather say that their father is happy (Vho takala, which means he is happy). The children also cannot say their mother or father is lying, even if that is the case, because they will be insulting their mother or father; they would rather say she or he is joking (Vha a swaswa). On the other hand, there is nothing wrong if a white boy or girl tells his or her parents that they are drunk or lying. Saying these things do not strain the relationship between parents and children like it would in the black communities.

In black communities parents cannot discuss sexual matters in the presence of their children, because sex is considered to be an activity performed by adults only. In addition to this, children cannot utter words such as faece, vagina, testicles, penis etc. in the presence of their parents or strangers, because to do so would be regarded as an insult. Any persons of equal age and who are related, or friends, can however talk about sexual organs, etc.

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.
4.2.1 Feedback on Forms of Address

Sharing what we have learned about Forms of Address

Go to the Discussions tool and post your findings under a new topic for "Forms of Address". You can attach your note files or your recordings from your cell phone.

Activity 4.3: Share your ideas on Forms of Address

Remember, you can only attach one file for each discussion post. If you want to attach a recording and some notes, you will need to add a new post.

2. Discuss the way a wife and a husband, son and father, daughter and father, the youth and the adults communicate in an African culture, and compare this with the situation in your own culture.

4. Knowledge of the way people address, and greet members of the society is considered a key to a successful interaction. As a person of a different cultural group, do you think this knowledge will help you to have a successful interaction with other communities in a multilingual society like that of South Africa? Discuss and illustrate with suitable examples.

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

4.3 Language and Religion

How does oral tradition relate to our religious beliefs?

According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, persons belonging to a cultural, religious or linguistic community may not be denied the right, with other members of the community, to practise their religion. Find out from the people around you if they agree with the position taken by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa regarding the practice of religion. They must also provide reasons for the agreement or disagreement.

Read the following passage and respond to the questions that follow:

One day at a funeral in a village, a priest was asked to lead the funeral proceedings. After the coffin has been lowered into the grave, and the priest done his Christian rites of burial, he ordered the people to fill in the grave with soil. He was surprised to see one old man stopping the people to do as ordered. The old man called a woman who was holding a calabash, some roots and reeds in her hands. Without speaking to the old man she approached a young man who was standing next to the grave and handed all the articles to him. The young man did not speak to the woman; he just took the articles and handed them to a young man who was already in the grave. The young man in the grave put some of the articles on the opposite sides of the coffin (the head and the legs). When the young man came out of the grave, water was poured into the grave. My friend told me that the priest confided in him after the funeral that he will never preside in a funeral if people keep on practising their heathen tendencies.

1. What makes the priest consider the practices mentioned above heathen?
2. Can you justify this thinking?
3. What do you think could have happened if the priest had approached the old man regarding stopping the people to do as ordered?

In responding to the above you could have indicated some of the following:

The priest is not aware of the different religious practices in the world, or undermines other society’s religious practices. According to the African religious belief, the dead joins the ancestors (gods) who act as intermediaries between God and the living. All the articles put in the grave are symbolic and meant to please the spirit of the dead so that there could be effective communication between the dead and the living. In the absence of such rites, communication between the dead and the living will not be effective. This is another medium through which the living connects with their ancestors.

What will be your personal views on the following?

- Do you think the priest would have a problem if he knew the purpose of placing such articles in the grave?
- Do you have a problem about placing such articles in the grave?

There is no nation in this world which is devoid of religion. Religions share the ideas of icons, symbols, sacrifice, behaviour, attitudes and quest as part of meaningful life. Think of the religion practised in your society? Does it influence your life? How is religion communicated to the people in your culture? Religion plays an enormous role in influencing a wide range of spheres, including community life. What value do you attach to the dead in your culture?
Africans believe in ancestral worship. Ancestor worship among the Africans is centred on the belief that the living and the dead can mutually influence one another. Ancestor worship is any of a variety of religious beliefs and practices concerned with the spirits of dead persons regarded as relatives, some of whom may be mythological. The influence which the ancestor spirits have on the living forms the basis for all rites connected with the ancestor worship. In an African community, death does not make a person cease to belong to his or her social unit, i.e. family, clan, tribe, village, and nation. The ancestral spirits have to be respected, honoured and obeyed. Proper respect and reverence are given. They should be thanked for their blessings and they should also be fed through sacrifices. A person who does not adhere to these practices, angers the ancestral spirits who can display their anger or displeasure by punishing this person. Other racial groups do not believe in ancestor worship. Do you believe in ancestor worship?

The role of language in demonstrating communication between the ancestors and the living is important. The ancestral spirits are known as vhadzimu (gods) among Vhavenda, swikwembu (gods) in Xitsonga, badimo (gods) in all Sotho languages, izinyanya (gods) in isiXhosa and amandlozi (gods) in isiZulu. In all these language groups, it is believed that the ancestral spirits are intermediaries between God and his people. Language has the power to affect interpersonal relationships positively or negatively. There are different forms of communication between ancestral spirits and their descendants. Communication between the ancestral spirits and the living descendants can be through dreams known as miloro, in Tshivenda or ditoro in Sotho languages. The ancestors cannot speak directly to the living, and can only express their desires by visiting them in their dreams. Usually they do this through the characteristics of their attributes of spirit known as muya in Tshivenda or moya in Sotho languages, and spirit (the visual image of the deceased), also known as seriti in Sotho languages or tshirunzi in Tshivenda. Descendants can sometimes communicate with their ancestral spirits through diviners who are called dzin’anga in Tshivenda or dinaka in Sotho languages. Diviners use a set of divination bones (called ditaola in Sotho languages or fhangu in Tshivenda) to communicate with ancestral spirits. The ancestors can send messages to their descendants during divination process. The divination set can deduce whether the cause for a mishap should be ascribed to witchcraft or to dissatisfaction of the ancestral spirits (Mönig 1967).

The ancestral spirits can express their discontent or desires through certain signs, namely whirlwinds which appear during ploughing time, or hail which is also considered to be a bad omen from the ancestors, or other signs. The ancestors are worshiped through sacrifice known as u phasa (spit out water) in Tshivenda or go phasa in Sotho languages.

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

Activity 4.4: What is the name for God?

Think about your language and your religion. What are some of the different names for God in that religion?

- What is the name of the Creator? Is there any explanation for the name?
- Is there an evil / bad counterpart for the Creator, such as Satan?
- What are other names that are used for spiritual beings -- both good and bad?
Go to the **Discussions** forum tool for Unit 4 and you will find a topic about your name for God. Share your ideas with the others in the course.

In your discussions, you need to do more than just list the names you know of.

- For example, who uses these names?
- For what purposes? How are they used in your religion?
- When and where are they used?

As you see, we want you to give a full picture of the names of spiritual beings, in terms of how the language is used.

*Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.*

### 4.4 Oral Tradition

This section deals with oral tradition which is very important in African indigenous knowledge systems.

**Storytelling is a long-standing tradition in Africa**

- What do you consider as oral tradition in your language?
- Do you consider oral tradition as part of indigenous knowledge systems?

In responding to the two questions you could have indicated the following:

- Indigenous knowledge is a knowledge that is unique to a given society. It encompasses the skills, experiences and insight of people applied to improve their livelihood. African indigenous knowledge systems will improve your knowledge of other cultural groups build on better human relations by understanding that, although every society has its ethical system or moral code, African moral codes are not totally different from those of better known cultures (Finnegan 1970). African indigenous knowledge systems will improve the use of language in a way that repairs and rebuilds South African society, and the understanding of African moral codes as found in proverbs, idioms and riddles. It is passed down from one generation to the other and it is closely interwoven with people's cultural values. It must be recognised, valued and appreciated by people in their interaction with local communities. Resolving theoretical and conceptual issues about the identity of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIK) is in fact one of the many challenges confronting African philosophers, historians, anthropologists and educators (Emeagwali 2003). Indigenous knowledge is relevant to areas such as agriculture, primary health care, traditional medicine, food processing, building technology and oral tradition. This section of the module will focus on oral tradition as a form of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

Do you think indigenous knowledge is relevant to language? Why do you think so? Language is a process of education. There is a strong relationship between oral tradition, as an aspect of a people’s life, and language as an instrument for initiating learners into the life of society. Oral tradition covers spoken and sung expressions, and other genres such as proverbs, idioms, riddles and beliefs. Language plays a big role in a child’s development. It is interesting how language is used in social interaction between people.

Do you have proverbs and idioms in your language? What is the role of proverbs and idioms in your language? The use of proverbs and idioms in social interaction socializes people into “ways of culture”. Proverbs and idioms emphasise the appropriate role behaviour values, ethics, social relations, and rules of etiquette and the pragmatics of language (Penifield 1981).

The sociolinguistic role of the proverb and idiom in the development and socialization of people is discussed in this section. Examples of proverbs on morality that emphasise the respect due to adults and women and the vital importance of healthy social relations will be given.

Every society has its own ethical system or moral code, which is not totally different from the moral code of other societies. The basic moral axioms which are presupposed in all social systems are implied in the categories of values. These values are usually summed up in concepts such as discipline, diligence, taboos, etc. which forms part of every human society. Every society has, therefore, some authoritative rules for criticizing or praising human conduct. And by this is meant that its average member has beliefs about what is justifiable or preferable and the need to conform to these moral rules. There is, therefore, ground for thinking that “in at least most societies there is an approximation at least, to the principal distinct concepts that are definitive of ethical discourse”.

In this photo, a bushman storyteller shares his craft with a group of tourists.

![Graphic taken from http://africalls.homestead.com/culture.html](http://africalls.homestead.com/culture.html)

As the photo shows, interpersonal relationships are related to many aspects of our lives -- including how we relate to people, the gestures and expressions we use, and the way we tell stories.

The stance taken in this section is that South African society needs to establish a code of conduct for people, especially the youth. A focus on traditional moral concepts is essential in this regard. The few philosophical investigations which have concerned themselves with African people and
South African people in particular, have mainly concentrated on religious, political and legal concepts. The African ethical systems are hardly noticeable in contemporary life, and where moral notions are mentioned, they are mentioned only in passing. This is in spite of the fact that every society has moral codes which are encoded in its language.

4.4.1 Language of Proverbs and Idioms

**What do we know about proverbs and idioms?**

Before you can continue with this section of the unit, identify any two proverbs and two idioms in your language. What are the functions of the proverbs and idioms you have identified? In your response you could have stated some of the following:

Like myths and folktales, proverbial expressions restate themes that appear in ethical and moral teaching. Proverbs and idioms serve to instruct and remind members of society of wise codes of conduct. They drive home for social behaviour by holding up to scorn those who depart from socially accepted norms. Proverbial expressions can be described as short, popular, oft-used sentences that use plain language to express some practical truth that results from experience or observation. The weight and effectiveness of proverbial language among African is attested by their continuing daily use of proverbs and idioms and by their current interest in collecting and documenting proverbs and idioms.

Proverbs are a suitable form of verbalizing socially prescribed actions and attitudes. Proverbs are sometimes used quite formally and consciously as a vehicle for achieving a certain end. Proverbs have a general educative role; they often imply some general comment on the way people should, or should not, behave. It is clear that proverbs are particularly effective at expressing a people’s experience and expectations.

Since the moral codes and ethical principles of Africans are not written down, proverbs and other forms of oral tradition serve to encode and enact the principles of African life in the society. Penfield (1975) observes that proverbs are used rhetorically in one of two ways: to illuminate or to correct. These are basically two different speech acts. Illuminative usage is what speech-act theory calls locution – which is a simple referential statement that simply reinforces a point. In most African societies proverbs used in public speech-making often have an illuminative usage. They remind the community of the traditional customs and moral standards that are to be followed and they remind the community of its moral code.

Proverbs used as corrective usage are illocutionary; in other words, they are not simply making a referential statement but are calling on some authority to manage or direct the actions of people. Such proverbs are used to correct the community’s profane behaviour, so that order is maintained and society can enjoy peace, happiness and prosperity.

Proverbs can take many forms, the most common being stories and fables with moral lessons.

**Activity 4.5: Here is an example**

Here is an example of a moral story told about origin the Baobab tree:

![Baobab tree](https://my.unisa.ac.za/portal/tool/1ff51620-0373-426a-9aec-b000d70b770b/print_module.jsf?printModuleId=662536758)
For more examples, or to read some of these tales, you can click on http://www.boop.org/jan/justso/ for the story text online.

Think about the story of the baobab and the ideas we have discussed about oral tradition and story-telling. Can you define the following concepts?

- oral tradition
- indigenous knowledge system

1. Have you ever been in a situation where a message was communicated to you through a proverb or an idiom?
2. What was the message?
3. How did you respond after analysing the message of the proverb?
4. You can also share your own proverbs, idioms or stories in the Discussions, under "Unit 4 Discussions".

Click on Next at the bottom of this page to go on.

4.4.2 Proverbs and African worldview

How do proverbs relate to the African world view?

Have you ever heard about the following English proverb: *When there is a will there is a way.* What is the message in this proverb? Its message is that of encouragement (When a person really wants to do something, he or she will find a way of doing it). Do you have proverbs with a similar message in your language? Such proverbs are abundant in African cultures. In accordance with Finnegan's (1970) claim that the African worldview is not totally different from that of better known cultures, an understanding of how African proverbs express a common wisdom that is unique to any culture has been given below. Thematic links that are mainly directed at disciplining people and supporting values will be discussed. It should be understood that proverbs in all languages are basically similar and in a sense compatible. African languages are rich in adages and locutions that remind us of the Book of Proverbs in many ways (Burden 1982:84). In fact, there are many similarities between the proverbs from different cultures. Some isiXhosa proverbs in particular show noticeable similarities with the biblical wisdom literature by addressing themes such as *child discipline and nurturing, you reap what you sow, respect due to women, patience and self-help and doing things for yourself.*


**Child discipline and nurturing**

This theme has been singled out from the sayings of both cultures, that is, the Christian and the African; this is because the family is a basic social unit in all societies. Healthy family practices are therefore essential for an orderly society.

Proverbs 30:17

*Iliso eligculela uyise, lidle ukumulamela unina, uyakulikrukra amahlungulu asemlanjeni alidle amathole exhalanga*

(The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley)

IsiXhosa equivalent:

*Uya kudliwa ngamaxhalanga*

(You will be eaten by vultures/ Undesirable behaviour towards parents will be visited by punishment)

Proverbs 3:12

*Musukuthandabuza ukuqequesha umntwana. Akuyi kumbulala ukumohlwaya. Ndaweni yoko kuya kumsindisa*

(Don't hesitate to discipline a child. A good spanking won't kill him or her. As a matter of fact it may save his life)

IsiXhosa equivalent
Umthi u gotywa usemanzi

(The runner of a plant is bent before it dries/ A child should be warned against the evil ways while it is still young, because when it is old it will be difficult to teach)

Most examples which fall into the above category are often characterized by admonitions such as: If you behave this way, you will be … (rewarded or punished); If such happens the result is …; Do not … and so on. These are admonitions regarding behaviour, especially respect for adults. This clearly shows that, in both cultures, Christian and African, the tradition of respect for parents presupposes respect for God and/or gods. Children are supposed to obey the instructions of their parents while parents, in turn, have a responsibility to teach their children the commandments/rules of life. Can you cite two proverbs in your language which are characterized by admonitions?

You reap what you sow

The occurrence of axioms couchsed in the negative is a popular form in African proverbs. The examples below illustrate that a person gets what he or she deserves.

Ingcimbi yamanzi ifa ngamanzi, eyekrele ngekrele

(An expert swimming in dangerous waters will die of water, and an expert in the use of a sword will die by the sword/A sinner will die of his sins)

Akukho nkwali iphandel’enye

(There is no partridge that scratches for another/Everyone for himself. One has to work for one’s own good and not expect others to work for his or her benefit)

This pattern produces a rhythmical balance proposition which places the emphasis on a key idea. For example, the idea underlying the above proverbs and some other examples not given here is that success is a result of working hard, while wickedness and laziness will lead to trouble (Ntshinga 1998). Cite a few proverbs in your language which reveals that success is a result of working hard.

Respect due to women

Contrary to the popular idea that major collections of African proverbs negate the place of women in society, Masetywa’s (1954) collection of isiXhosa proverbs, at least, gives us an example of a society that, on the whole, honours women. The few proverbs about women in this collection portray women as being extremely valuable to society. Mbili (1969:63) emphasises the value of African women in society and says about them:

Not only do they bear life, but they nurse, they cherish, they give warmth, they care for life since all human life passes through their bodies.

The above statement gives a picture of women as being highly valuable in African society. A number of African proverbs relate to mothers as being central to the family. The family is a basic social unit in African societies, therefore, relationships within this unit are very important. The relationship
between mother and child is a common theme of many proverbs. Outside South Africa we can cite the case of some Akan proverbs which reveal that Akan society sees a woman as valuable. For example:

- The tortoise has no breasts and yet she feeds her young ones.
- A hen might step on her chick, but not with the intention of killing it.
- When you catch the mother hen, the chicks become easy prey.

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Assignment 05 (Discussions)

Instructions: Follow the instructions for Assignment 05.

Assignment 05

Year Mark: 20%
Tool: Discussions

Check your Assessment Plan document under the Additional Resources for Unit 0. You will find a document for semester 1 and a document for semester 2 which will have suggested start dates, and due dates for each assignment. Make sure you look at the document for the correct semester.

The art of story-telling

Do you know someone who is a good storyteller? It could be your grandfather, your teacher, or just someone you know. Especially, we are talking about stories that teach a moral lesson, and the language used in telling stories.

We want you to find one of these special people in your community and record one of their stories or proverbs or moral lessons.

[Graphic source: http://flowhoorc.blogspot.com/2011/05/botswana-storytelling-academy.html]

Your discussion should be between 500 - 700 words. You can also use comments on other student's postings as part of your discussion. Remember: "...we can only cope with reality by storyfying it and by doing so we reflect who we are..."

Step 1: Go to a storyteller whom you know. Ask them to tell a story for you that relates to a proverb, riddle or idiom in your language.

- You can record this on your cell phone.
- If you don't have a recording facility, then you can write out the story in notes.
- Just make sure that you capture all the important ideas in the story.

Step 2: Share the story in the Discussions and attach your story [either in writing or recording] to your posting.

- Make sure you include the following, because this is how we will mark this assignment:
  2. Set the background for the story: where, when does it take place?
  4. Set up the characters: Who is involved in the story?
  8. What is the moral lesson in your story?
  10. How does it relate to the riddle or proverb or idiom?
  12. How does the language used in the story relate to the cultural background of the storyteller?

Remember, since we don't all speak the same languages, you will need to submit your proverb in English, or provide us with a translation so that the TA can mark your contribution. In addition, the other students will be able to share in the wisdom of your storyteller, if you provide us with a translation in English.
Assessment Criteria:

These are the assessment criteria for this Assignment. You can also find a copy of the Rubric for "Assessing Discussion Forums" under Additional Resources for Unit 4. You can print it out to see how your discussion will be assessed for this Assignment.

- **Quality of thoughts and posting**: We are interested in your interpretation of the things you read and do -- do not give us our words back. This is copying and no marks will be received.
- **Relevance of discussion and quality of reply**: Remember, this is a formal assignment and you need to take it seriously. Then support it with facts and examples.
- **Personal contribution to the discussion**: You need to give your own opinion and bring your own story for this assignment. Then support it with facts and examples.
- **Understanding of contents and context**: We want to make sure that you read and understood the contents and can make sense of it.
- **Response to others**: You will need to go online a few times in order to respond to some of the Discussion posts from your classmates.

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4.4.3 Lessons learned from proverbs

What lessons do you learn from the above?

In most African societies the word “woman” and “hen” are almost synonymous; as in nature, the obvious characteristic of the female is giving birth and nurturing the species. Mothers not only feed, but protect the young. All proverbial observations about hens and chickens also hold true for the human communities. The welfare of children takes precedence over everything else in a woman's life; nothing else is as important. Respect to women, particularly mothers, is publicly commended and appreciated. A woman's value as a procreator is surrounded with religious taboos. Please note that, in African discourse, a mother need not be a biological mother. The following Sesotho proverb illustrates the respect that should be accorded to women: *Mosadi ke morena* (A woman is a chief; a woman is respectable even in the eyes of a chief who is respected by all). Proverbs such as this one might be helpful in educating all those who abuse women whether emotionally, physically or sexually, about the values of women in society.

In traditional African society, physically abusing woman/women is a grave offence that is severely punishable. This is illustrated in the following isiXhosa proverb *Induku ayinamzi* (Physical abuse of a woman does not build a home, it destroys families). This is further illustrated in the following isiZulu song:

*Ungabomshay’umfazi*

*Wobaleka nebodwe lenyama*

(Never beat up a woman
She will run with a pot of meat (joy))

Proverbs are not just reflections of life; they also play an active part in creating this life. The youth learn to appreciate and understand the connection between the social world and language. The metaphorical use of proverbs introduces the youth to abstract thought and moral viewpoints in a very natural, holistic way through spontaneous, informal instruction (Penfield and Duru 1989). Proverbs carry tremendous power and authority. Their philosophical meanings make statements about the rules that guarantee a peaceful social order. These rules suggest how members in the society are to treat each other and behave generally.

Patience and self-help

Most people start their careers from humble beginnings. The majority follow certain professions to maintain their families, and opt for careers not out of choice, but because they need money to live on. They often scramble their way to success without any support structures. They have to overcome problems they had not anticipated, and have to be patient in while they learn the “tricks” of their trades. Within the repertoire of the proverbs are those which are meant to encourage people who had been struggling without success. Such proverbs serve as a motivation to persevere, and in a sense are a “coping strategy”. The same proverbs might well be suitable for teaching youth who are not prepared to work hard and wait for the material rewards they expected to get quickly and easily when they migrated to the towns and cities and who are prepared to resort to crime to get what they want.

The following are isiXhosa proverbs which emphasise the importance of exercising patience:

*Inja ixhapha amanzi ngolwimi*

(A dog licks water with its tongue/
one should exercise patience to be successful)

This example indicates how observant African people are of the habits of animals and birds. A dog cannot drink – therefore it has to lick water with its tongue in order to quench its thirst. This needs a lot of patience. People, youth in particular, should thus learn a lesson from the dog. As far as the dog is concerned, it does not matter how long it takes to lick, because it eventually satisfies itself.

*Ubud’abuphangwa*

(You do not rush to get tall/\nPatience should be exercised in trying to achieve one’s goal)

This example indicates how observant African people are of the habits of animals and birds. A dog cannot drink – therefore it has to lick water with its tongue in order to quench its thirst. This needs a lot of patience. People, youth in particular, should thus learn a lesson from the dog. As far as the dog is concerned, it does not matter how long it takes to lick, because it eventually satisfies itself.

People must not rush to amass wealth or to reach high positions, lest they blunder. It is good to climb all the steps of the ladder to success, to learn and know all stages of life, and to find out about the bad and good things of life. Taking time to get things gives a person self-respect and also makes him or her able to understand and sympathise with those who are still struggling.
You need to be taught that sometimes things do not work well, and people do not benefit immediately from their projects. Basically, the youth need to understand that they are being unrealistic when they lose hope and seek short cuts which usually involve crime such as pick-pocketing, hijacking etc. It is precisely in such situations that they need encouragement and moral support. African languages have proverbs that benefit such situations.

*Inkonjane yakhela ngodaka*

(A swallow builds its nest with mud/
exercise patience and perseverance like a swallow does)

A swallow builds its nest with mud, having to bring a little bit of mud at a time until the nest is finished. Cite two proverbs in your language which reveal an exercise of patience.

**Doing things for yourself**

Proverbs in this category focus on making people realize that they can contribute to their own development. People must take the initiative if they want to be successful, whatever it is they are trying to do. These proverbs teach people to learn to do things for themselves for their own benefit, and not to expect others to do things for them. Emphasis is on attaining independence and on teaching that each person should act for him/herself. These proverbs also point out that nothing is to be gained by sheer laziness. The following are proverbs that articulate this idea well.

*Akukho nkwal’iphandel’enye*

(There is no partridge which scratches for another/
one must look after him/herself and not expect others to do what he or she should do for him/herself).

*Isikhova sidla ngeso laso*

(An owl eats by means of its eyes/
people must learn to help themselves and not expect others to do things for them).

Understanding the proverbs of one’s language encourages mutual understanding among the community, and a greater appreciation of traditional wisdom. Even today, these proverbs help create reciprocal understanding between the old and the young in a community.

The idiom is a form of expression that reflects the genius of a language and the philosophy of the people. It is like the proverb in many instances. Like the proverb, it is used figuratively. The following is example of an idiom used figuratively:

*U vhulawa musanda. U vhidzwa nga vhamusanda.*

(To be killed at the royal house. To be summoned by the killed)

In Tshivenda a person is not summoned by the king, but killed. The king is feared and respected by all his people. To show that the king is a respectful and fearful person when he does not call a person but kills him or her. Another example is the following:

*U sia vhathu. U fa.*

(To leave people behind. To die)

When a person dies in Tshivenda it is said that he or she leaves the people behind. Vhavenda do not use the word die when there is death in a family. According to the Vhavenda culture it is only animals that can die, not people. It is either the person leaves the people or disappears.

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**Activity 4.6: Proverbs and Idioms**

The functions of the idiom are almost the same as those of the proverb. These have been better summed up by Smith quoted by Ntsanwisi (1965:110) who says that idioms are connected with aspects of life with which human beings are confronted in their everyday life existence. These are said to be aspects of “… success and failure and above all human relations – the vivid attitudes and feelings of people intensely interested in each other and their mutual dealings – approval, but for more largely disapproval, friendly but more often hostile feelings, falling out, making up, rivalries and over-reaching, chastisement and abuse.”

**Activity 4.6: Share your proverbs and idioms**

1. Identify proverbs and idioms in any of the African languages that reflect the following:
   - you reap what you sow
   - respect due to women
   - patience and self-help
   - doing things for yourself
2. Discuss how language can be used to remind the community about the moral standards that are to be followed. Illustrate with suitable examples.
3. If you want to share your ideas with others in your group, you can share in the Discussions topic, under "More about Proverbs and idioms"

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**4.4.4 Language and Riddles**

https://my.unisa.ac.za/portal/tool/1ff51620-0373-426a-9aec-b000d70b770b/print_module.jsf?printModuleId=662536758
Here is some additional information about proverbs, idioms and riddles. Riddles are a special type of proverb.

**What do you know about riddles in your language?**

Do you have riddles in your language? What are they called in your language? You might have already noticed that riddles are part of your culture and hence of folklore. Together with proverbs and idioms, they are stylised didactic prose. Do you agree that riddles are stylised didactic prose? Why do you say so? *Stylised* because they are couched in metaphorical language, and *didactic* because they purport to teach. In African cultures riddles are so plentiful that we get one term or more for a riddle from each of the eight African languages offered in the department. In Xitsonga a riddle is known as *Ntayili* or *Xilekatekisani*. In isiZulu, it is *ispicaphiwano; infumbe* or *impicabadala*. To this list others include *iqisandelo* and *ingqayingqayi*. In Sesotho sa Leboa a riddle is a *thai* or *nyepe*. *Thai* is also used by the Vhavenda, whereas Baswana use *thamalakwane*. In Sesotho riddles are *dilofo*; whereas in isiXhosa a riddle is an *iqhina*. In Chishona it is referred to as *chirahwe* (Zenjeru) or *chirabwe* (Karranga), or *chipari* (Manyika).

Almost in all African societies the game of riddling takes place in the evening, indoors, around fire. Participants are usually children as it is specifically a game for children. The children divide themselves into groups that should compete. Everyone gets a turn to propound a riddle; usually it is the one who has just solved a riddle propounded by the preceding performer. Riddles play an important though indirect role in the life of a child. On the face of it their main value is to entertain, but it goes deeper than that. The value of riddles cannot be underestimated. In terms of the Zulu language they serve a very important function in maintaining the high standard of the spoken language (Hadebe cited by Wentzel (1980:73)). Riddles mould the language of the child. They involve figurative speech which teems with artistic and colourful words. It is so memorable for them to use them and pleasurable for them to hear them. Vilakazi (1945:264) support the above statement when he states:

> In the same way as an elder is judged to be a clever man by his command of proverbs in oratory, so are the young people considered clever by their command and invention of riddles with which they test their company. Some of these riddles are stereotypes, but as they allow of initiative in metaphorical usages, the children, by giving play to their imagination and comparison of objects, can frame their own riddles in the first part of the problem, the solution always remaining the same. This may be the first step in story invention.

As indicated above, the game of riddling is an entertainment for children. This can be seen as they laugh heartily together, especially when one failed to give the correct referent. Riddles stimulate the mind of the child. As he or she is asked a question, he or she learns to think, observe, imagine, compare and assimilate things. The things he has to identify are disguised or obscure and he should be able to analyze them in order to get the correct referent.

Through the game of riddling, children learn to be together in one family, i.e. the African family. The game of riddling takes place when all the members of the circle of relatives are present. They serve to bring the people together as a social unit. Whilst engaging in the game of riddling the members learn the norms of the family and how to behave towards one another. The following Tshivena riddle can be used to illustrate this point:

**Thai! Tsha nkunda ndi lipo. Ndi damu la khala.**

*(Guess! That which proves to be difficult to get is near. It is a sister’s breast)*

This riddle discourages people against getting married to close family members. Children of the opposite sex, especially those of close family members, are discouraged against having body contact as this can lead to intimate relationships. According to the African culture it is not permitted for close family members to get married. In order to communicate this moral code to the children, Vhavenda use the cited riddle above. According to the riddle, a boy is not allowed to touch his sister’s breast. A sister is not one’s sibling only, but any member of the family who according to the African culture, is considered a sister, i.e. one’s father’s daughter, one’s father’s brother’s daughter, and one’s mother’s sister’s daughter. This is meant to avoid marriage by close family members. One can conclude that boys are not allowed to have body contact with their sisters when they play, hence they are not permitted to get married to their sisters. What is the situation in your language? Do you have riddles with similar education?

Children learn to argue, agree and disagree, accept defeat and beam with joy as victors. In the process, they learn to accept each other. This is their social and cultural significance. Apart from amusing children in the evening, riddles serve to keep them intact morally. Riddles play a great role in the life of people, very few cases of immorality occurs where the game of riddling is practised in the society. This means that riddles inculcate a moral lesson, i.e. they have an educative or didactic value. Let us consider the following Tshivena riddle to illustrate the above:

**Thai! Nhuna u bebwa vhalloci a hulela vhalloci. Ndi lulimi.**

*(Guess! A child is born in a family of witches and grew up in a family of witches. It is the tongue.)*

This riddle teaches a person to endure a situation even if it is bad or difficult to handle. In this riddle a person is likened to a tongue which is found between the teeth. A tongue can be bitten by the teeth at any time, but will never cease to exist between the teeth. A person is therefore encouraged not to run away from a bad or difficult situation. Instead he or she must try to solve the problem. Do you have riddles which denote the same message?

The conclusion we arrive at is that riddles serve a threefold function. Firstly they are a form of entertainment; secondly they fulfil a very important social and moral function; thirdly they play a very significant educational role.

As you think of more riddles to share with your classmates, consider these points:

- Identify ten riddles in your language and demonstrate their functions.
- Show how the knowledge of riddles of other cultural groups can help to promote a better interaction in a multilingual society.
- Discuss how riddles, as a form of communication, fulfil a very important social and moral function. Illustrate your discussion with suitable examples.
- There is a topic under the Discussions where you can share your riddles with others in your group. Start sharing under "Riddles"

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4.5 Winding up Unit 4
Is this the end of the story?

From the discussion above, you deduced that each culture has certain knowledge, valuable traditions, skills, values and attitudes which give it a character, a unique identity in the global society, and a certain moral philosophy. You also learnt that language plays an important role in promoting cultural elements in the society. It is important at this stage to mention that knowledge about aspects of traditional life of a society is vital in promoting better relations.

At this stage you know that forms of address, greeting and gesture differ from one language to another. The knowledge of forms of address, greeting and gesture of different languages in a multilingual society promotes relationships among the people. Through the knowledge of these aspects of language one can be in a position to interact with people of other cultural backgrounds.

All nations live in a world in which religion plays an important role in their life. In this unit you learnt that each religion is embedded in a culture of the community in which it is found. Language plays an important role in communicating religious practices in a society. The knowledge of other religions in a multilingual society is therefore important for one to co-exist with people of other social groupings.

Another aspect of this interpersonal communication would also include gestures and the nonverbal communication that takes place between people in our multicultural society. Here is a link to a video that explains how different hand gestures can be interpreted in different countries around the world, not just in South Africa.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2h0V1YkccEE

As this video showed, even if we think we are communicating in gestures, we can make awful mistakes if we are trying to communicate across cultures.

Nations are characterized by moral codes which are in many instances communicated through language usage. You learnt that African languages proverbs, idioms and riddles play an important role in promoting moral codes in a society. Language is an instrument for initiating people into the life of a society. Proverbs and idioms have a general educative role. They serve to encode and enact the principles of life in society. On the other hand, the game of riddling is important in inculcating a moral code through the use of figurative language. While children learn much about thinking, arguing and moulding their language, they also learn to co-exist with others and tolerate each other. A lack of these aspects of indigenous knowledge systems can be a hindrance towards good communication in a multilingual society. If one has good knowledge of the proverbial language and figurative language of other cultural groups, one will find it easy to address communication problems in an environment of a different cultural background.

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

4.5.1 Reflect on this Unit

Instructions: Use the Blogs tool to reflection on what you have learned in this unit.

Before we move on...

Before we finish this Unit 4, we want you to take some time and reflect on what you think are the main ideas. Use the Blogs tool and add to your Blog that you started in Unit 0, as Ice Breaker 2, and in the First Portfolio Activity.

Your reflections

2. You are adding to your previous blogs, so click on Add new blog entry.
4. Put a new title and the date to start the new blog.
6. Reflect on what you have learned:
   o What was the main purpose of Unit 1, in your opinion?
   o What were the ideas behind the Assignments and the First Portfolio Activity?
   o Do you have anything else that you learned from the activities and discussions in this unit?
   o How long did it take you to complete the activities for this unit?
   o Add anything else you want to reflect about.
8. You can also talk about any proverbs, idioms, stories or riddles in your language, in your blog.
   o Identify some riddles in your language and demonstrate their functions.
   o Discuss how riddles, or proverbs, as a form of communication, fulfil a very important social and moral function. Illustrate your discussion with suitable examples.

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

References for this Unit

Instructions: These are the references used in the teaching texts for Unit 4.

References


Unit 5: Ubuntu -- Self & Other

We now deal with Ubuntu/Botho as it is reflected in our society and specifically in terms of the place of the 'self' in the broader context of the community. The use of language and the role language use plays in this regard is emphasised.

5.1 Overview of this unit

Since this is our last unit we want us to start by recapping what you learnt in other units. What are the key issues that you learnt in the previous units? Why do we ask you this? It is important because you will discover that all that you learnt from previous units has formed the basis of the concept Ubuntu.

Introduction

Now among all the aspects you thought of, we hope that you wrote down how language signifies attitude and world view. Remember, any action by a human being is a reflection of an aspect of that human being and, no matter how simple, constitutes some form of communication. Through communication through language, we reflect aspects of our culture and philosophy. Among these aspects of our culture are family structures and kinship systems; naming processes and how people relate to each other, interpersonal relationships and forms of address and moral codes that bind members of a group.

Language is the medium through which a culture expresses its world view. Language transmits our cardinal principles and fundamental values, norms, the philosophy and the pathways that keep a group of humans together. Upholding these principles and fundamental values of a group of people is the foundation of Ubuntu (which is also known as Botho, Vhuthu, Unhu) an African philosophy which embraces the notion of humanity to others.

In this last unit, we ask you to review what you have learned in this module, and to think about how these things relate to you as a person. At the same time, we bring together all the loose threads that make up your final assessment task.

Activity 5.1: Watch the video

Now, listen to the video of President Nelson Mandela explaining what he means by Ubuntu and how it relates to the vision he has for South Africa.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UT-3Eh65kkA

We draw your attention to the fact that in this unit we focus on the concept of Ubuntu and its ramifications. It is in our view that upon
reading, answering, carrying out activities and research that we propose here, you will learn ways of demonstrating your humanity to others. In this unit, Ubuntu, we discuss three broad issues: communal life, generosity, compassion and healthcare systems, that is, aspects through which Ubuntu is manifested. These aspects form the basis of Ubuntu in African communities.

*Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.*

5.2 Your portfolio - assignment 06

*Instructions:* Use the Assignments tool to submit this assignment as ONE file

---

**Final assessment = Your Portfolio Assignment (Assignment 06)**

Suggested starting date: *At the start of the semester*

Submit a written document as a single file with the Assignments tool - note that the place where you should submit is at the bottom of the table under *UNISA summative assessments*. Make sure that the file is uploaded correctly and accepted.

It is your responsibility to ensure that the file you upload as your portfolio is the correct file, that it is complete and that it is accessible for the marker.

Check your Assessment Plan document under the *Additional Resources for Unit 0*. You will find a document for Semester 1 and a document for Semester 2 which will have suggested start dates, and due dates for each assignment. Make sure you look at the document for the correct semester.

Instead of an examination for this module, in this module we submit a final Portfolio. This is your final assignment and is listed on the Assignment system as Assignment 06. The assignment will not be send back to you as it functions as the summative assessment for this module. It is separate from your year mark, and also requires a subminimum of 40% or you will NOT pass this module.

**NB: You MUST turn in your Final Portfolio assessment, or you will NOT pass this module.**

Your Portfolio is made up of several elements that you have been working on throughout this module. The following information summarizes all of the assignments in one place:

**How your Portfolio is put together**

1. **Introduction (10 %): Introduction to your Portfolio:**

a) State the purpose of the portfolio.

b) Give us the structure of your Portfolio.

2. **First Portfolio Activity (20%): Personal Language Story.** Build on to your initial reflection in the Ice Breaker activity. Think about what you have read so far about language as a process, different South African languages and the purpose of language. Cut and paste your Ice Breaker activity from the Blogs Tool into your portfolio. Extend your initial Blog activity by adding to it answers to the following questions:
a) What language is your "mother tongue", the language of your heart?

b) What other languages do you know?

c) How did you learn these other languages?

d) How do you use these languages?

e) Do you agree that all the language(s) you know, and how you use it, reflects who you are as a person? Comment.

3. **Second Portfolio Activity** (30%: 10% Family Tree; 20% group identification and language): Draw a family tree of your ancestors as far back as you can identify them (in effect you are identifying your family groups, i.e. the family on your father’s side and the family on your mother’s side). The family tree needs to go down to the youngest member of the family. You also need to include yourself and the names that you are called by. Now interpret the family in terms of the impact they had on your linguistic identity, i.e. they gave you your name, you learned your first words from then, you speak the dialect they speak, etc. Also refer to the kinship term, e.g. uncle, malome, etc. used for each member of the family and the role that person plays in you being you.

4. **Portfolio Assignment** (20%): Cultural Ceremony. Improve Assignment 04 according to the comments that were made. Add to your initial assignment your own opinion, tell us how you feel about the events, does everything make sense in today’s world? Also comment on whether you have gone through a similar situation and how you felt about it. Make sure you focus on the written story on how the ceremony you chose is influenced by language, names, terminology, etc.

5. **Final Reflection** (20%): (800 words):

a) Tell us what you have learned from this course about language, about how language influences who you are and how you act, and about how you have changed your view of language use during the course of this module.

b) Tell us how the following statement about Ubuntu apply to language use in your modern communal life in terms of the self and other: *Ubuntu, the ability to show our humanity to others, manifests in communal life, community wholeness that goes beyond caring for one’s nuclear family.* In your deliberation you need to reflect on all aspects dealt with during this module with reference to language usage. Keep these ideas in mind:

- Process of language usage (show how people reflect who they are within the community through the language that they use).[Unit 1]
- Where we acquire language, i.e. in the family where we get our names, social groups, etc. and show how language is used to form our attitudes and world view in terms of Ubuntu within these groupings. [Unit 3]
- Use of language in interpersonal relationships to strengthen the feeling of belonging. This will ultimately lead to a discussion of the use of folklore to express who a group of people are in terms of language usage.[Unit 4]
- Your own point of view: applicability of Ubuntu in our modern society.

For more information on the structure of your portfolio you can go to Additional Resources > Unit 5 and see the file PORTFOLIO GUIDELINES for AFL1501.

**We started you early on the Portfolio**

Remember, there were two Portfolio Activities, early on in the semester,

- The first Portfolio Activity was in Unit 1, where we asked you to reflect in the Blog about your own language story. For this Final Portfolio submission, now you need to go back to the Blog that you wrote then and copy it into a computer document to submit.
  - [Note: We will NOT copy this for you... you need to make this copy, yourself]
You can make some changes and add to this first activity because progress and change is important whenever you write a Portfolio. Things do not always stay the same.

- The second Portfolio Activity was in Unit 3 where you talked about your family and make a graphic or mindmap to capture your Family Tree.
- Again, you can make changes and additions to the activity you did then, but you need to add it to the computer document for your Portfolio.

These two activities were designed to get you thinking about the final Portfolio early in the semester -- not to wait until the end.

**The Final Reflection in your Portfolio**

For the rest of your Portfolio, you can think about this question, which will make up your Final Reflection:

> Ubuntu, the ability to show our humanity to others, manifests in communal life, community wholeness that goes beyond caring for one’s nuclear family.

Your discussion should be more or less 800 words.

- How does this statement apply to language use in your modern communal life in terms of the self and other?

In your deliberation you need to reflect on all aspects dealt with during this module with reference to language usage. Keep these ideas in mind:

- Start by discussing the process of language usage in terms of Ubuntu and show how people reflect who they are within the community through the language that they use.[Unit 1]
- Then start at the point where we acquire language, i.e. in the family where we get our names, social groups, etc. and show how language is used to form our attitudes and world view in terms of Ubuntu within these groupings. [Unit 3]
- Also deal with the use of language in interpersonal relationships to strengthen the feeling of belonging. This will ultimately lead to a discussion of the use of folklore to express who a group of people are in terms of language usage. [Unit 4]
- Conclude by giving your own point of view in terms of the applicability of Ubuntu in our modern society.

*Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.*

**5.2.1 Your vision of Ubuntu**

**What Ubuntu means to you**

Answer this question and share your answer in the Discussion forum:

- What aspects of your community have helped to shape your attitude to others and other nations?

Now we draw your attention to the fact that in this unit we focus on the concept of Ubuntu and its ramifications. It is in our view that upon reading, answering, carrying out activities and research that we propose here, you will learn ways of demonstrating your humanity to others. In this unit, Ubuntu, we discuss three broad issues, communal life, generosity, compassion and healthcare systems, that is, aspects through which Ubuntu is manifested. These aspects form the basis of Ubuntu in African communities.

*This will help you to think about the various aspects of your Portfolio Assignment, as part of your Introduction or part of your Conclusion to the Portfolio.*

*Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.*

**5.2.2 Portfolio assessment rubric**

**General comments on assignment:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating scale</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Needs some more work</th>
<th>Needs much more work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Content</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Coverage of question</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use of sources</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Understanding/analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
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<td>• Length</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** 100

**FINAL MARK:** %

Specific aspects of your blog that needs more work.  
Specific aspects of your blog that I like.
The key to the rating scale is given in the table below. Please look at the marker’s rating of specific aspects of your assignment. The key below will help you to understand what this means for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Extremely competent. Your work exceeds the required level of competence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80% +</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Competent. You have shown that you understand the assignment question and the conventions of academic work (such as references, style).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Your work has met the requirements adequately. However, there is still room for further improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs some more work</td>
<td>There is some evidence of competence. Further revision of the content and conventions of academic work is required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs much more work</td>
<td>You have shown little or no evidence of competence. You have either not completed the required task or have done it incorrectly. You need to revise your work thoroughly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Communal life becomes Togetherness

Under this form of collective life Africans live together and work together for the benefit of everyone in that community. Based on your life experiences, would you say your community practises communal life?

It takes a village
Now read the following story:

Samuel grew up with his grandmother in a lonely village in the countryside. His grandmother rarely took him out anywhere to play with children of his age. Subsequently, he grew up with his grandmother as his closest friend. Unfortunately, this had repercussions when he reached school-going age. No one at school befriended him. At times he was their laughing stock. Hence he grew up an ostracised and dejected boy. This reminds me of the words of John Donne (1571-1631) “No man is an island, entire of itself; everyman is a piece of the continent…”

**Think about the story**

1. What do you make of this story? There are many interpretations you can make.
2. Do you support John Donne’s words? Why or why not? Have you heard them before?
3. Write your own short story that illustrates your view. We have opened up a Topic under Discussions, if you want to share your stories with your classmates. However, your discussion will NOT be for marks, this time... but it may help you to share your ideas and read the insight from others’ stories.


This is a portrait of John Donne, as a young man around the year 1595, which hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in London, UK. It was painted by an unknown artist ([Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Donne)).

*Click on Next to go on to the following section.*
5.3.1 No man is an island

Here you noticed that a human being cannot survive alone? Ostracism is the worst disease any human being should be subjected to or should experience and hence should be avoided at all times. Hence, we draw your attention to the fact that a person is a social being and as such is not meant to live or stay alone.

Communal living in Africa

Among African societies it is the practice of Ubuntu manifest in communal life that keeps people together as one. Ubuntu enforces communal life. Hence, people share a common destiny. Needless to say, from birth the creation of each unique individual begins. It is a creation that happens in some form of family or group. Hence the process of responding to family or group influences and orientation towards one’s fellowmen begins. This owes to the fact that human beings need each other for their survival. They need each other in order to lead a life that is socially, spiritually and politically fulfilling.


This depicts commonality that binds humans together as a nuclear family and a group. Small groups develop into a community or communities that are also bound by commonality. Commonality binds us and influences and subsequently makes us behave similarly and ‘reflect one another’. In other words you witness another person’s way of thinking in me. You see me in another person in terms of our way of life, our attitudes and beliefs.

Click on Next to go to the following section.

5.3.2 Archbishop Tutu on Ubuntu

How Ubuntu relates to our ideas of language and identity

Watch the video on YouTube of former Archbishop Desmond Tutu, as he explains the important concept of Ubuntu in the South African context:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZkyz_QDvfE
Activity 5.2: Watch the video

After watching the video and Archbishop Tutu's interview about Ubuntu, compare study unit three for examples of words and expressions which are taboo in certain cultures or contexts, but may be acceptable in others.

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

5.3.3 Rastafarians

In South Africa, one of the communities that we have been talking about is the Rastafarian community. It's a community based on religious, cultural and language practices. The community started in the Carribean Islands, part of the West Indies, and culturally the people are mostly descended from slave communities in the 1800s.

Rasta man!

Just to elaborate on this refer to the picture below, read the dialogue below or listen to a CD or watch a DVD of rasta music, paying close attention to the words.
This graphic shows a group of elders in the Rastafarian community (graphic source: lloydwolfphoto.blogspot.com/2011/03/nyabinghi-elders-from-vaults.html) showing typical features and Rastafarian hair-style. They also have a very strong musical tradition, probably best known by Bob Marley and such songs as "No Woman, no cry" and "Buffalo Soldier".


Click here to listen: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGqrn3q1v0o&feature=related. As he says, "Everyone has the answer...." Here are the lyrics, so that you can read them:

No Woman, no Cry: http://www.lyricsfreak.com/b/bob+marley/no+woman+no+cry_20021714.html

Because this is a very closely knit community, they have even developed their own dialect and language idioms. Look at the dialogue
below, as an example.

**Dialogue:**

Man A: Hi brother me.
Man B: How are you, brother me?
Man A: Yah man, fine brother me.
Man B: Yes, I and I gonna have it nice at the Magaretta tonight.
Man A: Yah man or at the Doctors' Cave, here in Montego Bay.
Man B: Yah man, I and I, brother me.

What do you think is the reason for Rastafarians to address each other as “I and I” and “brother me.” You may not know Rastafarians, but still what does the use of “brother me” and “I and I” mean to you?

The form of address of Rastafarians certainly implies that as individuals people are still one and the same, that is, solidarity. This is an adoption or perpetuation of the African philosophy, Ubuntu, which upholds the maxim: I am that I am because of who we are as a community. What it implies is that the community builds or nurtures you. In African societies if, for example, you encounter a neighbour’s child misbehaving you restrain or discipline him or her. In that way you help to build or nurture the child because that child belongs to the community at large not only to the nuclear family.

Click on **Next** to go on to the following section.

### 5.4 The soul of Ubuntu

Here we draw your attention to the maxim through which Ubuntu finds expression in some of the African languages.

#### Ubuntu by any other name

This maxim depicts an African philosophy of solidarity. It reads:

- **Isi Zulu:** Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu (A person is a person through others.)
- **IsiXhosa:** Umuntu ngumntu ngabantu (A person is a person through others)
- **Tshivenda:** Muthu ndi muthu nga vhathu. (A person is a person through others)
- **Shona:** Munhu munhu navamwe. (A person is a person through others)
- **Northern sotho:** Motho ke motho ka batho. (A person is a person through others)
- **Sesotho:** Motho ke motho ka batho. (A person is a person through others)
- **Setswana:** Motho ke motho ka batho. (A person is a person through others)
- **English:** A person is what he is through others.

These expressions imply that your life is dependent on other people. Like with the Rastafarians, your way of life is linked or intertwined with that of other human beings. Your existence gets meaning from your relationship with other people around you. What the expressions above also imply is that each one of us can effectively exist as fully functioning human being when one aligns to the valuable contribution of others in shaping one’s life, and one’s humanity, that is, shaping the self of the individual. There is emphasis on interdependence and inclination to reciprocity. Every individual belongs and depends on another. Hence, every member embraces a vision of inclusion - A person is a person through other persons. An individual’s humanity is bound in another person’s humanity. Now, give examples of what happens in your own or other cultures.

#### Not only an African concept

There are many rural-based communities or cultures around the world who follow similar patterns of working together in communities: the kibbutzim in Israel, cooperative living among young people, the Amish people in certain areas of Pennsylvania in the USA. You may have seen a movie called "Witness" where the farmers all come together to build a barn for a new family in the area.
The Amish people are a community, from German descent, who have a similar way of working together for the common good. For example, when one family needs a new barn, the whole community will come together to work and complete a barn in one day. Here is a short video about how this works:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCXCeV5RbHg

Another group of people that work together building homes for people who need help is called Habitat for Humanity. This charity began work in the 1980s and now works all around the world, working together with people to build affordable homes for them.

There are several Habitat for Humanity projects in South Africa. For more about the South African projects, you can read here: http://www.habitat.org.za/Page.php?pageID=71&entryID=192

Click on Next to go on to the following section.

5.4.1 Harmony in the community

Communities that practise Ubuntu experience serenity and harmony through maintaining and fostering good relationships and recognizing, the integrity and dignity of the individual. This is achieved through collectivism, kinship systems, totems and good interpersonal relationships.

Achieving Harmony, in practical terms

Activity 5.3: Community helping each other

Look at the following graphics.
(Graphic source: http://www.flickr.com/photos/stellastella/6931840260/ )
Both photos show Africans working, but what are the differences?
What do they say to you about working together?
What is your interpretation of the events in the pictures?
What approach do you consider as appropriate or proper in your culture, that is, working as a group or individually?

We have opened up a Discussion forum topic under Activity 5.3 for you to share your ideas.

In African communities the notion of communalism is manifested when people come to work together in groups. When people practise communal life they help each other plough, plant and cultivate their fields. This is referred to as:

- ilima in ISIXHOSA,
- davha in TSHIVENDA
- jangano or nhimbe in SHONA
- ilima in ISIZULU
- lešema in SESOTHO

This is mutual agreement to combine forces and this entails taking turns to work together for the benefit of the individual in that community. Thus members of the community help each other in terms of labour. They come together to form a formidable force that spends the whole day working for the benefit of the individual. In this way, members of the community who do not have children get valuable assistance from the community.

Now give us situations in which members of your community come together to assist each other as members of the community.
Who benefits from that cooperation and in what way?

We have opened up a Discussions forum where you can go and share your ideas, tell your stories, under Unit 5 Discussions. This could also help you to come up with more ideas for your Portfolio tasks. Remember, Ubuntu means helping one another and that's what you do every time you participate in these online shared discussion forums, etc.

Now, we draw your attention to the fact that the African philosophy of Ubuntu places much emphasis on inclusivity, collectivism, cooperation and communalism and not on individualistic tendencies. There is nothing as a solitary being as Ubuntu negates or counteracts oneness, individualism or self-centeredness. It is imperative for members of a community to work together. Whoever fails to cooperate is a social misfit or an outcast. Indeed inkomedlayodwa (IsiZulu) or , mugarandoga (Shona) (solitary life) is a taboo. Members of the community fight for a better quality of life for all as an entity. In this communal life members of the community nurture themselves with words of hope while at the same time work hard to improve the conditions of life for all. This finds expression in proverbs such as:

**SHONA**

Kuwanda huuya. ("It is advantageous to be many and united" which means, 'United we stand. Divided we fall'.)

**NORTHERN SOTHO**

Mphiri o tee ga o Ile ("One copper bangle does not produce sound" meaning: Many hands make work light. Unity is strength)

**SETSWANA**

Kopano ke maatla. (United we stand. Divided we fall.)

**ISIZULU**

Ukuhlangana kungamandla. (United we stand; divided we fall).

**SHONA**

Kugara kunzwana. (Harmony in society entails humanity to others and good understanding of fellowmen.)

They believed in bailing each other out in times of crisis. This is expressed as follows.
This practice stemmed from a positive sense of purpose and collective identity rooted in Ubuntu.

5.4.2 Treatment of strangers -- the Other

How do we treat strangers in our communities?

Read the following story and answer questions that follow:

One evening an old man entered our homestead. As he approached we stood up to receive him, shook hands and gave him a chair. My grandfather came and shook hands with the visitor.

He sat down, and realizing that the man was a stranger to him, Grandfather had the following conversation:

Grandfather: "Gara handichazivi ndiani zviya". (I seem to have forgotten. By the way who are you?).
Stranger: "Hamungandizivi. Ndini Zondo ndinobva kuZaka". (I am sure you do not know me. My name is Zondo. I come from Zaka district.)

Grandfather: "Kwakanaka hako?" (Is everything fine back home?)
Stranger: Kwange kwakanaka zvandabvako. (They were at peace the time I left.)

Grandfather: "Ko chifambirwa?" (What is the reason for travelling this far?)
Stranger: "Ndiri kuenda kwaNyika. Ndati nditi ndavirirwavo." (I am on my way to Nyika. I am here to seek...
shelter for the night.)

(‘It’s fine. Our elders used to say, ‘circumstances drive or force you to some unknown destination’. This is your home, too. We will accommodate you. By the way, what is your totem or clan?’)

Stranger: "Tinotenda. Ndiri Shumba." (Thank you. I belong to the Lion totem.)

Grandfather: "Dzafemerana. Saka makadini Shumba" (Ancestors sensed that we are of the same totem. That is why they directed you to our home. So how are you, Lion?).

[Graphic source: http://www.globalenvision.org/countries/south-africa]

(Turning to members of the family)

"Iyi ihama yedu chaiyo". (All of you, please know that this is our relative, true relative. My grandsons, this one is your grandfather, too.)

Activity 5.4: Now, how do we treat strangers?
We put together these last few sections in this activity. Go to Discussions and write about how communities help each other and even stories of how they did NOT help strangers. This discussion forum is in Discussions, under "Unit 5 Discussions."

- Write a paragraph or two explaining how a person in your community would have reacted.
- Visit the community and establish the way they react when they see strangers and why they react that way and establish how they treat strangers

Click on Next to go on to the following section.

5.4.3 Strangers in the community

The following story was taken from a newspaper clipping in the Pretoria News in 2008. Read the story and answer the questions that follow:

Locals attack foreigners...

Xenophobia has reared its ugly face in a squatter settlement west of the city, with shameful acts of thuggery and victimisation.

Goups of ... armed men attacked scores of foreigners including women and children, chasing them from their shacks in the Itirileng informal settlement behind Laudium and destroying their belongings.

Panic stricken Malawians, Mozambicans, Zimbabweans and Congolese, as well as several Zulus and Xhosas were forced to flee.

Beating drums, hundreds of squatters, armed with pangas, steel poles, guns, wooden planks and gardening implements attacked foreigners.

The armed gangs dragged people from their homes, set their belongings on fire and chased the people out of the area.

Dozens of crying women were seen running for their lives, dragging their children behind them as they were forced to leave their meagre belongings from their shacks before retreating.

Irate residents said they were tired of foreigners living in the country. “They steal our jobs and kill our people…”

Asked why Zulus and Xhosas (South Africans) had been targeted, several people said they were also foreigners. “They do not belong
here. They must go elsewhere. They must leave our place so that we can get jobs. The jobs are for us not them”.

Florence … of Newcastle in KwaZulu-Natal, said she did not know why she had been attacked. “I am South African. My husband is a policeman, why would I want to commit crime?”

(Article source: Pretoria News: Thursday February 21 2008.)

1. Applying what you have learnt so far, that is, your knowledge of Ubuntu, discuss the article critically.
2. If you were a local resident staying in the same squatter settlement what words would you have used to restrain your fellowmen or to quell the situation?

Now read this:

In the African communities where people are empowered by Ubuntu, strangers are never treated as foreign to a community. Upon arrival a stranger is linked and relationship is established through his totem or clan. No matter how distant the relationship appears to be, the stranger is easily accommodated and new ties are established. In African societies “a stranger or foreigner is every community’s responsibility,” Msimang (SA Home Affairs Director. SAFM radio 27/3/2008 8:45 am). In most cases after enjoying this hospitality the stranger promises to return. Thus the concept Ubuntu embraces hospitality, compassion and caring. One is expected to show humanity to others. The following are ubuntu perceptions about strangers:

ISIZULU:
Isisu somhambi asingakanani, singangenso yenyoni.
(A passerby or stranger does not deplete your resources.)

SHONA:
Shiri ipinda haipedzi mhunga
(A bird is a passerby, it won’t eat up all your millet
meaning: A stranger is a passerby, he/she does not deplete your resources).

Nyamupfuuri haapedzi dura
(A passerby or stranger does not deplete your resources).

Click on Next to go on to the following section.

5.4.4 Ubuntu Education & Empowerment

We have started a Discussion forum for you to share your ideas. Note that you will not be getting marks for this discussion but it will help you to share your insight. Now, in African communities in the evenings men gather together at a place called dare (traditional gathering place) where young people learn skills and receive education for living. Age old wisdom is passed on to young generations. Norms and values of the society are taught by the elders. Ubuntu concept influences the type of education children receive. How is this education structured? It is structured in such a way that social, cultural, religious and economic life is promoted. It is education that gives wisdom and expertise that is a prerequisite for the promotion of development in their own area. Thus in this communal life, one is assured of social security, food security, empowerment and there is a sense of belonging. Education plays a major role in instilling discipline and promoting respect among the young. The quintessent aspects of Ubuntu stem from a sense of purpose, mobilisation, self development initiatives and collective identity.

https://my.unisa.ac.za/portal/tool/1ff51620-0373-426a-9aec-b000d70b770b/print_module.jsf?printModuleId=662536759
5.5 Ubuntu -- for today's world

Ubuntu dictates that, if we were to be human, we need to recognise the genuine otherness of our fellow citizens. That is, we need to acknowledge the diversity of languages, histories, values and customs, all of which constitute South African societies.

How can we live together?

Indeed people of different backgrounds have to learn to live together and in broad and general, be able to practise Ubuntu, that is, show humanity towards others. Indeed, parents have the responsibility to teach children to respect the life, beliefs and views of people from other cultures, races and other countries*, (Soul City 2003:9).

Individuals should be respectful of other cultures and groups and their differences. A community should not stereotype others by assuming that people of a particular group behave the same. People behave and think differently from other cultures. Hence, one should understand that different groups will do things differently. In addition to this, one should understand that verbal and non-verbal communication is different in that people behave differently when they greet, give and receive and when they bide farewell (Soul City Magazine 2003). When people greet, in some communities people shake hands and in some they do not. Some communities kiss when they meet and in others kissing in public is a taboo. Needless to say, in some communities people avoid eye contact.

The two nefarious practices or behaviours, racism and xenophobia, are a reflection of failure to understand the complexity of reality, that people are different in many ways. Hence, one should embrace his own culture with an abundance mentality not scarcity mentality. Finally, in this scenario we need to foster brotherhood of man through the spirit of Ubuntu. This is expressed in the words below:

SHONA:
Kugarisana (living together in harmony)
Kubatana (unity)

ISIZULU:
Ukuhlalisana (living together in harmony)
Ubumbano (unity)

SESOTHO:
Poelano (living together in harmony – reconciliation)

NORTHEN SOTHO:
Poelano (living together in harmony – reconciliation)

SETSWANA:
Poelano (living together in harmony – reconciliation)

5.5.1 Reconciliation

In this section we want you to learn ways in which Ubuntu is practised and how we can empower one another with the spirit of Ubuntu.

How Ubuntu connects to reconciliation

In the world we live in we need harmony, love, care, compassion and respect. For this to happen we need political stability as our point of departure. In South Africa this was founded on the spirit of reconciliation. In some countries and communities this is achieved through songs. Dr Kenneth Kaunda, the former president of Zambia and author of an article entitled ‘Humanism,’ used the following song to promote unity among his people: Listen to the song on the video:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lZTE6j27_s
Tiyende Pamodzi mutima umozi (Let us match together with one spirit)
Tiyende pamodzi mutima umozi (Let us match together with one spirit)
One Zambia One Nation!

“No future without forgiveness”, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (2000)
We are aware that you may not know the history of South Africa. That should not be cause for concern. Apartheid system in South Africa was a system of separate development which in itself is a symbol of moral degeneration in society. It is a system that deprived black people of their dignity through harsh laws. Needless to say, apartheid negates collective development and harmonious co-existence of people of different backgrounds. So what role does reconciliation play in building bridges?

**Activity 5.5**

Follow the instructions below:

- Read the excerpt below and or listen to a CD/DVD clip "Together as one", by Lucky Dube, a music legend of South Africa.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIReRYHd1cU

**Together as one**  
(Lucky Dube)

In my whole life, my whole life  
I've got a dream  
I've got a dream

Too many people hate apartheid.  
Why do you like it?  
Why do you like it?

Hey you rasta man.  
Hey European, Indian man

We've got to come together a one.  
Not forgetting the Japanese  
The cats and dogs have forgiven each other.  
What's wrong with us  
What's wrong with us

All those years, fighting each other,  
But no solution  
But no solution
For a video of Lucky Dube singing the song, click on the video link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIReRYHd1cU

Activity 5.5, part 2

2. In your view what is Lucky Dube’s message to his listeners.
4. How does your country promote unity?

Click on Next to go on to the following section.

5.5.2 Ubuntu projects

Let’s look at some Ubuntu projects, from the past few years.

The Ubuntu Youth Project

Read this article and answer questions that follow:

http://www.harmoniousliving.co.za/Community/Charity/The-Ubuntu-Youth-Project/

Wednesday, 18 July 2007

Lerato is a bright, pretty girl who consistently wins prizes at school for her academic progress. Like most of her fellow students, however, she comes from a very impoverished background. Her mother is unemployed and Lerato manages because of help from family members who are all in similar circumstances.

Her brother Hendrik, the older of the two, has twice dropped out of school in order to try and supplement the family income with 'piece jobs' and is considering doing so again in order to help Lerato and his mother. He is well mannered and takes his responsibilities seriously.

The story of Hendrik and Lerato is a universal one of children in the rural Free State. But they are the 'lucky' ones. So many of their acquaintances have been abused. Especially the girls. Alcoholism and family violence is rife among the impoverished. They are children of a lost generation.

But through the Ubuntu Youth project they have regained a feeling of self-worth and it is this which sustains them each day while they walk many kilometres to and from the shacks where they board in order to go to school.

The Ubuntu Youth Project was started by animal activist and author Beatrice Wiltshire on her retirement and subsequent relocation to the Free State. Having decided to put back into society, her dream was to start a permaculture project in order to teach people to grow their own organic food. But her involvement with a local school brought to the fore the great need among the children who lived in impoverished communities.

There were no sports fields. During weekends and school holidays there was nothing to occupy the time of these children who lived in vastly underprivileged circumstances. They were often exposed to a high level of alcoholism in their communities and the resultant abusive practices, not only towards women and children but also towards animals.

There was no hope for the future and this led to a lack of self-esteem among the children, the majority of whom were from broken homes and single parent families. It was a fertile breeding ground indeed for gangs and the shebeen culture as well as criminal elements. Quite clearly, what was needed were good role models and a way of inculcating a sense of self-worth in these leaders of the future.

And so, the Ubuntu Youth project was started three years ago as an experiment at the local school, on an extra mural basis.

The intention was to inculcate a sense of compassion and respect for all life. With violence escalating around the world, social scientists, psychologists and educators have for some time acknowledged that society’s treatment of animals was inseparable from its treatment of people. There was overwhelming evidence that the roots of violence were often embedded in childhood experiences of cruelty to animals.

For the children, the Ubuntu Youth project meant a chance to ‘become someone’.
On joining, they take an oath:

"I promise to show Ubuntu towards all living beings." There is also an Ubuntu greeting. Through passing the modules and showing good behaviour, those with leadership qualities can work towards becoming Team Leaders. These Team leaders lead discussion groups along the lines of Ubuntu and subscribe to a strict code of practice (don't do drugs, drink, smoke or engage in anti-social behaviour).

The next goal to reach for is the status of Teacher, when they take over the teaching of new recruits.

After three years, the first batch of five members who have reached teacher status has now come through. This will be followed regularly by new graduates.

The Ubuntu 'Peace Messengers' are taking their social responsibilities seriously. Once a month they go out in the informal settlements on a door-to-door basis, improving the lives of domestic animals. They also organize games and competitions for the local youth on alternate Saturday afternoons, thereby living up to their promise to show the Spirit of Ubuntu towards all living beings.

Meanwhile, the light of the single candle which has been lit in the Free State is rapidly spreading, hopefully eventually to other provinces and then to the rest of Africa as part of the African Renaissance.

Lerato now holds her head up high. She is proud to be part of this movement.

People who want to support the Ubuntu Youth project can contact Beatrice Wiltshire at:

e-mail: ubuntuyouth@mtnloaded.co.za

cell: 083 4000 262

Postal address:
PO Box 17727
Bainsvlei 9338

1. What does your community do to assist children who are disadvantaged?
2. Discuss the kind of projects you would run to support and promote the lives of orphans and other needy children?

In African communities that are empowered by Ubuntu children are not treated or referred to as orphans and/or destitute children owing to the fact that members of the community go an extra mile to assist and accommodate children of their deceased relatives. However, in the present day and age economic hardships or constraints have negative repercussions on traditional family ties. Hence, disadvantaged communities rely heavily on national and international Non-governmental and Charity organizations like the Ubuntu Youth Project.

Click on Next to go on to the following section.

5.6 Generosity and sharing

The kind of relationship we discussed above calls for mutual respect, caring, sharing and generosity. In this section we focus our attention on sharing and generosity, aspects that we regard as the mainstay of Ubuntu. Now, we want you to carry out the activity that follows.

Good South Africans

We believe that there are many ‘Good’ South African people who go out of their way to help others. We now draw your attention to the fact that the passing of the White Paper for Social Welfare through the National Assembly signals the start of a new era in welfare delivery in South Africa. For the first time in our country’s history delivery in the welfare field will be driven by key principles such as democracy, partnership, Ubuntu, equity, and inter-sectoral collaboration, among others." The policy of Ubuntu is explained in the White Paper, published in August 1997, in Point 24 of Chapter 2. National Developmental Social Welfare Strategy reads:

"The principle of caring for each other’s well-being will be promoted, and a spirit of mutual support fostered. Each individual’s humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others and theirs in turn through recognition of the individual’s humanity. Ubuntu means that people are people through other people. It also acknowledges both the rights and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being."

How would you re-act when you see an ill person?

Communal faithfulness and caring for the health and life of the whole community is actually much closer to the biblical mindset that the prophets and Jesus embodied in their teachings. In the village when someone is ill, the whole village shares the pain. The patient is or the community. Hence they refer to the patient as:

SHONA: murwere wemurai (our patient)
Arara sei murwere wemurai?. (How did our patient spend the night?)
ISIZULU: isiguli sethu (our patient)
Silele njani isiguli sethu? (How did our patient spend the night?)

NORTHERN SOTHO: molwetši wa rena (our patient)
Molwetši wa rena o letše/togile bjang? (How did our patient spend the night/ make it to this morning?)

As you can see, the community feels for the patient and all members get involved in the caring of that individual. They bring food, clothing and the most important gift – words of hope and support. These are:

SHONA: Achanaya hake. (He/she will recover.)

ISIZULU: Uzolulama. (He/she will recover.)

NORTHERN SOTHO: O tla fola. (He/she will recover.)

In this section there are so many activities, that we were afraid to overload you -- especially as you are preparing your Final Portfolio for submission. However, we want you to consider these un-numbered activities -- in Green -- as they will help you to work your way through your ideas and insight about Ubuntu and everything you have learned in this module. This will help you to complete those parts of the Final Portfolio where you complete your final reflection.

Activity

1. How do you practise Ubuntu with regard to Health systems these days?
2. As a caring community people feel pity for their AIDS patients and are expected to help fight the stigma attached to HIV infected persons. In some communities there are polite expressions to refer to AIDS patients and to fight stigma. In Shona, for example, they say:
   - Shamu yatakarohwa nayo (the whip that was used to beat us - AIDS)
   - Chakawana hama hachisekwi. (An ill fortune that has befallen a relative is not a cause for laughter).

Now we draw your attention to the fact that within the African philosophy of Ubuntu it is imperative that members of a community serve as pillars on which an individual can lean on. Members of a community that is empowered with Ubuntu open their hearts to fellowmen. Hence, in times of need members of a community give generously. Just as in the clipping above there is no greater gift that they could have given than moral support, foodstuffs, clothes and blankets. Needless to say, nowhere is this spirit of surrendering one's life for the survival of others more lively than in communities with people who are empowered by the spirit of Ubuntu. This finds expression in the following sayings:

ISIZULU: Ukunika ngehliziyo yakho yonke (to give whole heartedly)

SHONA: Kupa nomoyo wose. (to give whole heartedly)

SESOTHO: Go fa ka moya ka moka. (to give whole heartedly)

NORTHERN SOTHO: Go fa ka pelo ka moka (to give whole heartedly)

Click on Next to go on to the following section.

5.6.1 Helping other people

Human beings who exercise Ubuntu enjoy sharing the little they have. They derive pleasure and fulfilment from helping and sharing with others. In this way members make investments in the sense that in times of need fellow members of the community reciprocate the generosity and care. Normally, you, the individual who is well to do, are expected to give generously to the neighbour who is generally not as wealthy as you materially. You and others who have material possessions are morally bound to share with those who do not have. With regard to this, Mokiti (1988:36) points out that “Members of the African societies are under obligation to help one another – no one is to starve if he is sick or if supplies run out”. The rich are expected to show regard for human life and save it. In most cases Ubuntu pricks the rich’s conscience so that they see reason to share their wealth.

Activity 5.6: Community helping each other

Look at the photo below -- this is a far-too-common sight around many urban areas in South Africa.
2. Discuss this picture and point out whether the donation would sustain the individual.
4. If you have beggars like the one in the picture in your country how do you deal with their plight?
6. Answer the questions below presenting your experience in assisting other people:
   - Have you ever donated for a good cause?
   - How did you feel after donating?
   - You may have given something else not money to an individual in the community and at school. How did the recipient feel?
   - Would you give again if called to assist in one way or another and why?
   - If you were to volunteer to assist the need what role would you play in your venture?
   - Would you volunteer to assist the needy and, to go and donate goods on behalf of an organization?

In African societies the community demonstrates humanity to others in many ways. For example, “...a man who possesses two cows with plenty of milk, ..., will donate the milk of the second cow to the brother who does not possess a cow”, (Dlomo 1991:1). In times of ploughing the rich are expected to give their oxen to the poor or do the actual ploughing for the poor. In this way the rich play a major role in eradicating poverty.

What do you think the rich people get in return for the services rendered to the poor whose fields are ploughed by the rich? During the rain season children of the poor assist by taking turns to herd the rich man’s cattle as a return for the service rendered which is, as alluded to above, permission to use the rich man’s cattle to till the land. For the poor it is social responsibility to assist in one way or another. All this generosity is expressed as follows:

**ISIZULU:**
- ukwabelana (sharing/helping)
- ukusizana (reciprocating)

**NORTHERN SOTHO:**
- go ngwathelana (sharing)
- go thušana (assisting or helping each other)

**SHONA:**
- kudyidzana (sharing)
- kubatsira (assisting)

**SESOTHO:**
- go thušana (assisting or helping each other)

A Northern Sotho proverb sums it up all. It reads: *Bana ba motho ba ngwathelana hlongwana yatšie.* (Siblings share a locust’s head, meaning: Fellow human beings share no matter how small it is that they have).

*Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.*

**5.6.2 Ubuntu & Compassion for others**

So as you can see there is so much generosity, sharing and care for others. Members of the community exude so much COMPASSION which is difficult to quantify.

**Compassion, Health Care & Orphanages**
Before we discuss these aspects presented above we draw your attention to the fact that a complete society is one with people who are wealthy and with people who are poor; with people with power and those without; with people with children and people without children. In this set up, in the African society, people look after each other. As alluded to earlier, looking after or caring for each other is the mainstay of Ubuntu. Owing to the fact that the community is responsible for the well being of each individual, the society exude compassion.

Now, you need to know that compassion is a central part of Ubuntu. In African societies people feel for their fellowman. Africans are known for ukwena (IsiZulu), an act of giving or sharing without expecting returns. Ubuntu translates into attitudes towards profit and wealth as in Ubuntu-based economy, the communal person is prepared to give and share. The more that person shares his wealth, the more she or he is respected. African societies empowered by Ubuntu believe that the only wealth is that which is shared and rendered visible to the community. Hence, the criterion for respect in a world that embodies Ubuntu values is how much wealth is shared with others and not how full one's personal bank balance is.

Another practice called ukusisa (IsiZulu) is a form of investment that does not require collateral and also maintains the dignity of a poor person who has no assets. According to the custom of ukusisa, those who have cattle or sheep give a cow or ewe to those who do not so as to give the family an opportunity to acquire their own cattle and sheep over time. This is how newcomers in villages are helped. And this is how poorer communities and poorer countries could be helped.

The power of giving comes from a selfless act - where you simply give from your heart. This act of giving is not tied to any special event, holiday or celebration - it is merely a time when you give from the heart because you want to share what you have, show your appreciation and give because you truly care. There is no other motive behind it. You don't give so that you can get something in return. When you give, you simply do so from the heart. You are saying to the universe, your higher powers, and you are also sending out energy that others pick up - this message that you communicate by the selfless act of giving is that you truly care and want to share what you have. You also say that you don't care if you don't get anything in return and that you don't care if no one notices.

In African societies, Ubuntu is the capacity to express compassion, justice, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interests of building, maintaining and strengthening community. Ubuntu speaks to our interconnectedness and the responsibility to each other that flows from our connection. It's about mutual affirmation and communal responsiveness. It is about the self being so rooted in the community, that your personal identity is defined by what you give to the community. Thus the cardinal principle of Ubuntu lies in that a person can only be a person through the help of others. 'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am' is a good example of the 'self-in-community' foundation that gives rise to sayings given above that read umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu (A person is a person through other people).

Ubuntu is not a concept easily distilled into a methodological procedure. It is rather the bedrock of a specific lifestyle or culture that seeks to honour human relationships as primary in any social, communal or corporate activity. Ubuntu begins with simply knowing how to greet someone. As you will notice in the exchanges there is that feeling for each other. Examples of Shona greetings (from Zimbabwe) in the morning and lunchtime would be: Mangwani. Marara sei?"(Good morning. Did you sleep well?)"Ndarara, kana mararawo". (I slept well, if you slept well.)"Maswera sei?" (How has your day been?) "Ndawera, kana maswerawo". (My day has been good if your day has been good.)

In other words, we are all so connected to each other, that if you did not sleep well, or if you were not having a good day, how could I sleep well or have a good day? This kind of greeting would apply equally well to a stranger one met on the road as to close family.

Women form of ubuntu was "work as one", that is, through teamwork. The "stokvel" is one of them. Ubuntu was then planned as to be a profit-making organization, but one that intends to share its profits equally with all its workers. It would reflect both feminism and its commitment to women's equality, and equality between those who organize and work at the center. As it develops to see how far Ubuntu, at least under the feminist interpretation it is being given, pushes in the direction of cooperative forms of working together that challenge traditional hierarchies within the workplace.

Activity

1. In your own words start thinking about your own ideas about Ubuntu? What is it?
2. How do women in your culture practise Ubuntu?
3. Would you say there is a link between "stokvels" and Ubuntu?

Now we draw your attention to the fact that "Stokvels" are joint undertakings or collective enterprises, such as savings clubs, burial societies and other (often formally registered) cooperatives. The "stokvel" economy might be described as capitalism with siza (humaness) (Isisulu), or, if you like, a socialist form of capitalism. Making a profit is important, but never if it involves the exploitation of others. Profits are shared on an equal basis. As such, "stokvels" are based on the Ubuntu. It is a family system where all involved are considered as brothers and sisters, members of the same family. (Broodryk, 1997a:4, 11, 13-14).

Here "stokvels" encourage sharing and caring for each other in the community. The community learn not to criticize the ideas of others but to respect the opinion of others. Therefore social cohesion is promoted.

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

5.6.3 Ubuntu ideas & Communal care
Having read about Ubuntu in the African societies how, in your view, do you think it is regarded in your culture and other cultures that you know?

Nussbaum (1996) says: “African values have a great deal to contribute to world consciousness, but Africa is greatly misunderstood in the West. Our world must embrace a sense of interconnectedness as a global community if we are to survive. Perhaps ubuntu is a framework that could inform our thinking in the twenty-first century.” (http://www.resurgence.org/resurgence/issues/nussbaum221.htm)

The South African Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s view of Ubuntu:

"It is the essence of being human. It speaks of the fact that my humanity is caught up and is inextricably bound up in yours. I am human because I belong. It speaks about wholeness, it speaks about compassion. A person with Ubuntu is welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share. Such people are open and available to others, willing to be vulnerable, affirming of others, do not feel threatened that others are able and good, for they have a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that they belong in a greater whole. They know that they are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are. The quality of Ubuntu gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them." (http://www.tutufoundationuk.org/ubuntu.html)

1. Give a critical view of the passage.
2. What role would you play to save mankind in line with Tutu’s views?

How do you practise Ubuntu with regard to Health systems these days?
Communal faithfulness and caring for the health and life of the whole community is actually much closer to the biblical mindset that the prophets and Jesus embodied in their teachings. In the village when someone is ill, the whole village shares the pain.

As a caring community people feel pity for their AIDS patients and are expected to help fight the stigma attached to HIV infected persons. In some communities there are polite expressions to refer to AIDS patients and to fight stigma. In Shona, for example, they say:

Shamu yatakarohwa nayo (the whip that was used to beat us - AIDS)
Chakawana hama hachisekwi. (An ill fortune that has befallen a relative is not a cause for laughter).

Activity

- Would you regard orphanage as Ubuntu?
- Do you consider taking orphans to orphanage homes cruel?

As alluded to earlier, in African communities empowered by Ubuntu there is nothing like Orphanage. Orphans belong to the relatives of the diseased and the community at large. The community goes an extra mile for the sake of the wellbeing of orphans. Every female adult figure is a mother for all children in the African community. All adult males are regarded as fathers. All the youth are brothers and sisters. Orphans therefore are part of the community and are not taken to orphanage homes. They belong to the community and are taken care of by the community.

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

5.7 Tying up the threads

Now we conclude by saying: Ubuntu, the ability to show our humanity to others, manifests in communal life, community wholeness that goes beyond caring for one’s nuclear family. Ubuntu binds the community by fostering a ‘village mentality’ in terms of compassion and care.

This is summed up in this quotation:
"A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished..." (Archbishop Desmond Tutu 2000).

There is a good reason why we have chosen to end this module by speaking about Ubuntu -- it ties together everything we have studied thus far.

In Ubuntu, it is the language that is used to communicate the 'one-ness' within the group. It is expressed in daily structures, such us family, kinship systems and our relationships -- both within and outside of the group. In this last section, we are going to focus on some of these familiar concepts from earlier units and show you how they are connected to the Ubuntu concept.

Click on Next at the bottom of the screen to go to the following section.

References for Unit 5

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