CHAPTER 14

Language Use and Language Shift in Post-Apartheid South Africa

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14.1 Introduction

The term 'language shift', which was introduced into the field of sociolinguistics through the influential work of Weinreich (1953) and Fishman (1964), describes a process whereby a community of speakers gives up their language in favour of another language. In South Africa, the focus of studies on language shift in recent years has been on shifts from the Bantu languages spoken by the indigenous African population to English (see e.g. de Klerk 2000; Kamwangamalu 2003, 2007). In recent work, Posel and Zeller (2016) analyse Population Census data on language use in South Africa to test for evidence of this language shift among Africans. There has also been concern about a language shift to English from Afrikaans, particularly among Coloured communities in the Western Cape (see Anthonissen and George 2003; Anthonissen 2009, 2013; Beukes 2015). However, a comparable quantitative analysis of changes in language use among Coloureds has not been undertaken.

In this chapter, we first review both qualitative and quantitative research on possible language shifts to English in South Africa. We then add to the literature through further analysis of the Population Census data from 1996 to 2011. We describe patterns and trends in first and second home language use among all South Africans, and we consider Coloureds, in particular, to assess whether there is quantitative evidence of a language shift from Afrikaans to English. Because of the focus in the literature on possible language shift among Coloureds in the Western Cape, we also investigate whether there are regional differences in language use among Coloureds.

14.2 Language Shift or Language Maintenance in (Post-Apartheid) South Africa?

Language shift is defined as 'the change from the habitual use of one language to that of another' (Weinreich 1953: 68). This is typically a slow process, marked with intermediate stages of bilingualism; but if language shift is underway, then over generations this bilingualism will change to a monolingualism in the replacement language (Fishman 1964; Gal 1979). Language shift is most often analysed as the loss of a minority language which occurs when immigrant communities adapt to the dominant language of their destination country (e.g. Fishman 1966, 2004; Haugen 1953; Lieberson and Curry 1971; Portes and Schauffler 1994). In South Africa, this process is evident among Indians who immigrated to South Africa through a system of Indian indenture from 1860 to 1911. Although the linguistic background of these immigrants was diverse (and included Dravidian languages such as Tamil and Telugu as well as the Indic languages Gujarati, Urdu, and various forms of Hindi such as Bhojpuri), the overwhelming majority of South African Indians now report English as their first home language (see e.g. Mesthrie 1992, 1996, 2002 and Table 14.2). According to Mesthrie (1992: 32), 'the transition from Indian languages to English generally took place with relative swiftness and without opposition' and 'could be said to be effective within fifty years of the end of indentured immigration'.

Post-apartheid South Africa offers a different, but particularly interesting context for the study of language shift. The 1994 constitution of South Africa grants official status to eleven languages: English and Afrikaans (the two official languages during apartheid) and nine Bantu languages. But English, which is the mother tongue of the minority of the population, has 'established itself as the unquestioned lingua franca in post-1994 South Africa' (Deumert 2010: 15) and is the dominant language of business, public life and education.

Over the past two decades, the emphasis of studies on language shift in South Africa has been on how the dominance of English affects the use and maintenance of the Bantu languages spoken by the majority of South Africans. But there has also been concern about a language shift from Afrikaans to English. With the democratic transition, the status of Afrikaans changed to one of eleven (rather than two) official languages and it ceased being a compulsory subject at school. Much of the recent research on language shift from Afrikaans has focused on language use among Coloureds, which as we show later in the chapter, is the only population

group where the prevalence of Afrikaans as a first home language has declined. Racial segregation during apartheid contributed to the development of non-standard forms of Afrikaans spoken by Coloureds, which differ from standard Afrikaans with respect to several lexical, phonological and morpho-syntactic features (Bosch 2000). Many of the studies in this literature explore language behaviour among Coloureds in the Western Cape, where the variety of Afrikaans spoken ('Kaapse Afrikaans') is perhaps particularly stigmatised as 'low status' Afrikaans (Anthonissen 2009; 2013; Farmer and Anthonissen 2010).

The prediction that multilingualism in South Africa is threatened has been articulated forcefully in the press and popular media (Deumert 2010; Mesthrie 2008), with even *The Economist*[1] declaring that in South Africa, 'tongues [are] under threat' and 'English is dangerously dominant'. But these views have also been expressed in the academic literature. Kamwangamalu (2003: 226), for example, writes of the 'looming demise of the indigenous African languages as a result of contact with a more powerful and prestigious language, English'; while de Klerk and Bosch (1998: 43) argue that 'there is evidence of a steady shift in language allegiance [from Afrikaans] in favour of English'.

The dominance of English raises questions about the effectiveness of language policy, introduced following the democratic transition, in maintaining language diversity in the country. Policy initiatives include the creation of a Language Plan Task Group (LANTAG) in 1995 to advise the government on the implementation of a multilingual language policy; the establishment of the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) in 1996, an independent statutory body designed to develop and promote all the official languages in the country; and the adoption of the National Language Policy Framework in 2003 (DAC 2003), which requires government structures to adopt a multilingual mode of operation and 'strongly encourages the utilisation of the indigenous languages as official languages in order to foster and promote national unity' (DAC 2003: 6).

In 1997, South Africa also adopted a Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP), the core premise of which is 'to maintain the use of home language as the LOLT [language of learning and teaching] (especially in the early years of learning), while providing access to an additional language(s)' (DBE 2010: 6). The policy is informed by research which suggests that before learners can successfully learn through a second language, they first

[1] *The Economist*, 20 June 2011, www.economist.com/node/17963285.

need a thorough grounding in their mother tongue or home language (Cummins 1979, 1980; Heugh 2005).

LiEP has been relatively successful in increasing home language instruction among learners in the Foundation Phase of education (up to the completion of Grade 3). For example, from 1998 to 2007, the share of pupils in public schools who learned in their home language during the Foundation Phase increased from 55 percent to 80 percent (DBE 2010). However, the increase in home language instruction in the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 to 7) has been far more modest, rising from 20 percent in 1998 to 27 percent in 2007. From Grade 4 onwards, the LOLT for the majority of learners is English.

Among all learners in public schools in 2007, approximately 65 percent were learning in English, although English was the home language for only 7 percent of learners (DBE 2010). Although far less dominant, almost 12 percent of learners had Afrikaans as their LOLT, although Afrikaans was the home language for approximately 10 percent of learners.

Decisions about the LOLT at schools are made by the School Governing Bodies, which represent the interests of parents. A number of studies have documented the preference for English language instruction, among both parents and learners whose home language is not English. On first language (L1) speakers of the Bantu languages, see for example, studies by de Klerk (2000), Probyn (2009); Rudwick (2004, 2008), and Webb (2002); and on L1 speakers of Afrikaans; see for example Anthonissen (2009, 2013), Beukes (2015) and Farmer and Anthonissen (2010).

The choice of English as the LOLT derives from the association between English language skills and upward socio-economic mobility. The instrumental value of English is described by respondents in a wide range of studies for both L1 speakers of a Bantu language (Bangeni and Kapp 2007; Coetzee-Van Rooy 2012; Dalvit and de Klerk 2005; de Kadt 2005; Rudwick 2008) and for L1 speakers of Afrikaans (Antonie 2009; Anthonissen 2009; Beukes 2015; Coetzee-Van Rooy 2013). Because of the dominance of English in business and the economy, English language skills are seen as offering 'the greatest financial and political rewards' (de Klerk 2000: 89).

These perceptions of the value of English are supported empirically in a number of studies. Deumert and Mabandla (2006), for example, describe how English language skills enable the economic participation of rural–urban migrants in Cape Town. Qualitative research by Hunter and Hachimi (2012: 551) shows that 'access to call centre work – especially the highest paid niches – is heavily mediated by English language skills'.

Using national micro-data for 2008, Casale and Posel (2011) identify an earnings premium of approximately 50 percent among African men with employment: African men who reported being able to read and write very well in English earned 52 percent more on average than those who provided lower self-reports of their English language skills.

For linguists who have argued that the influence of English threatens the maintenance of language diversity in South Africa (see Heugh and Stroud, Chapter 11 in this volume), perhaps the most telling evidence of a language shift comes from studies which describe the increased use of English in the home environment and among social peers (Anthonissen and George 2003; Anthonissen 2009; de Kadt 2002; de Klerk 2000; Farmer and Anthonissen 2010; Rudwick 2008). For example, in her study of language behaviour among isiXhosa-speaking parents whose children attend English-medium schools in Grahamstown (Eastern Cape), de Klerk (2000: 93) documents reports by parents of a 'steady increase in the use of English at home'. She interprets these findings as evidence of a 'shift to English' that is 'well under way, and ... almost irrevocable' (de Klerk 2000: 105).

In a study of language behaviour among fifty households in an Afrikaans-speaking Coloured community in Paarl, Beukes (2015) finds that although forty-six mothers were L1 Afrikaans speakers, thirty-three were raising their children in English. The study also identified strong evidence of bilingualism: '96 percent of children are either utilising English as a mother tongue whilst having exposure to Afrikaans, or are raised in bilingual settings' (Beukes 2015: 42).

The concern, is that a bilingualism in a home language and in English is not the end point of linguistic contact but rather is the likely precursor to a monolingualism in English. In her research on three generations of three Coloured families in a Western Cape metropolitan area, for example, Anthonissen (2009: 61) identifies a shift from Afrikaans to English by the third generation, which 'presents either a monolingual English identity where Afrikaans has a decidedly second language status, or a strong English-dominant bilingual identity'.

A number of scholars, however, have interpreted an increased bilingualism in English as less threatening to the continued use of a non-English home language (Coetzee-Van Rooy 2012, 2013; Deumert 2010; Mesthrie 2008). Central to the maintenance of home languages, as Dyers (2008a: 50) writes, is 'the role of language in defining people's ethno-cultural identities, in an era where ... ethnic/tribal identities have re-emerged as a central anchoring point for many groups like the Afrikaners, Xhosas and Zulus'.

Many studies of language behaviour in South Africa find that although the instrumental value of English is consistently recognised among respondents, the home languages retain considerable cultural value. For speakers of Bantu languages, see for example Bangeni and Kapp (2007); Coetzee-Van Rooy (2012); Dalvit and de Klerk (2005), Dyers (2008a, 2008b), and Rudwick (2004, 2008); and for speakers of Afrikaans, see Antonie (2009), Coetzee-Van Rooy (2013); Dyers (2008a, 2008b) and Thutloa and Huddlestone (2011).

In one of the few projects to gather quantitative primary data, Coetzee-Van Rooy (2012, 2013) collected information on language behaviour from approximately a thousand first-year students at a tertiary institution in the Vaal Triangle region in Gauteng. In Coetzee-Van Rooy (2012), she analyses responses from 459 home language speakers of Sesotho and isiZulu and finds that even where English is identified as the language in which respondents could express themselves 'most easily' (their 'strongest language'), home languages remained markers of an 'African' and 'traditional' identity. She describes a widening of the students' linguistic repertoires as a 'functional multilingualism' where 'English functions as the language of writing and reading, and the home language (irrespective of its position as strongest or second strongest language) functions in the domain of the family' (Coetzee-Van Rooy 2012: 112).

In keeping with the findings from these studies, Mesthrie (2008: 47) concludes that the Bantu languages of South Africa 'are likely to remain an integral part of the home and community and in some public domains for some time to come'.

Among scholars who have investigated a potential language shift from Afrikaans to English, some argue that the cultural value of Afrikaans as a language of identity is not strongly attested or has been eroded in the post-apartheid period. De Klerk and Bosch (1998: 44), for example, suggest that Afrikaans is 'loaded with negative connotations from decades of association with the apartheid government, which made special effort to favour the language'. Among Coloureds in the Western Cape, Anthonissen (2009, 2013) identifies that a further factor contributing to the desire by middle-class parents for their children to speak English is the low status of the variety of Afrikaans spoken in Coloured communities.

Nonetheless, a number of studies also find positive attitudes to Afrikaans as a marker of both self- and group identity. For example, Coetzee-Van Rooy (2013) provides an analysis of the language attitudes of the 244 Afrikaans home language respondents who participated in her study conducted in the Vaal Triangle. She finds that these participants 'still

regard Afrikaans as the language of the home or family domain and the language related to their identity' and concludes that 'there is no evidence of language shift among Afrikaans home language users' (Coetzee-Van Rooy 2013: 203). Similarly, in her research on Coloured Afrikaans L1 learners (Grades 8 to 10) at a high school in the township Wesbank, located in Greater Cape Town, Dyers (2008a) describes how learners closely identified with Afrikaans, even though the vernacular form of Afrikaans which they speak is considered by some of its speakers as a stigmatised variety with low social status (Anthonissen 2009, 2013). Indeed, Dyers (2004, 2008a) surmises that Afrikaans is 'perhaps **the** main marker of a "Cape Coloured" identity, particularly in the absence of a clear group culture and identity' (Dyers 2008a: 55, emphasis in original). This conjecture is supported by Thutloa and Huddlestone (2011: 57), who studied fifty households in two semi-urban Coloured communities in the Western Cape and found that Afrikaans 'remains a strong marker of identity', although English is largely regarded 'as the language of upward socio-economic mobility'.

Most studies of language shift and language maintenance in South Africa have been based on qualitative research on relatively small and sometimes select samples, while the few studies that have analysed quantitative data (Coetzee-Van Roy 2012, 2013; Deumert 2010) have been regionally specific. In a recent study, however, Posel and Zeller (2016) analyse available census data on first and second home languages to investigate whether there is evidence nationally of a shift from the Bantu languages to English. Their analysis finds that from 1996 to 2011, the share of Africans who reported English as their first home language increased considerably, but from a very low base. By 2011, only 2.9 percent of all Africans, and 2.5 percent of South African-born Africans identified English as their L1. The data display considerable spatial variation in the use of English as L1. The share of Africans who identified English as their first home language was far higher in urban areas compared to rural areas, and highest in the major metropolitan areas (7.6 percent of Africans in Cape Town and 6 percent in Johannesburg reported English as their first home language in 2011). Nonetheless, English remained a minority first home language among Africans throughout South Africa, and the large majority (94 percent in 2011) reported one of the nine Bantu languages as their L1.

Consistent with the findings from several qualitative studies on language behaviour, Posel and Zeller (2016) show that the increased use of English among Africans is associated particularly with the increase in English as a

second home language (L2). In 1996, approximately 3 percent of Africans reported English as their L2; by 2011, this had increased more than eightfold, to 27 percent. However, although there is concern among some scholars that English is being acquired in the home, the age distribution of second language reporting in English suggests that acquisition occurs primarily during the years of schooling and labour force participation.

Although the largest increase in second language reporting from 1996 to 2011 is in English, bilingualism in other languages also increased (and particularly in isiZulu). The census data therefore describe an increase in English language use among Africans that is associated with an increase in multilingualism, rather than with the replacement of the Bantu languages with English, supporting the conclusions of scholars such as Coetzee-Van Rooy (2012), Deumert (2010) and Mesthrie (2008).

In the remainder of the chapter, we undertake a comparable analysis of the Population Census data from 1996 to 2011, first describing patterns and trends in language use among all South Africans (and not only among Africans). We then investigate a possible language shift from Afrikaans to English among Coloureds. Because much of the literature focuses on language use among Coloureds in the Western Cape, we investigate whether and how trends in this province are distinguished from trends among Coloureds living in other provinces in South Africa. We start the analysis by describing and evaluating the collection of information on language use in the Population Censuses.

14.3 Data and Methods

We analyse patterns and trends in language demographics in South Africa using the 10 percent samples from the three Population Censuses that have been conducted in the post-apartheid period (in 1996, 2001 and 2011). The census instruments are comparable in many respects, but there are some differences in the questions which ask about the languages spoken by the population.

The 1996 and 2011 Censuses collected information on the two 'home' languages that people speak. In 1996, respondents were first asked to identify the language spoken 'most often at home', before being asked about a language which was spoken 'next most often'. The 2011 Census asked respondents which 'two languages' they 'speak most often in this household', with the response options ranked as 'first' and 'second' language. In contrast, the 2001 Census collected information only on the one language which people 'speak most often in this household'.

There are also small differences in the response options for the language questions. All three instruments included the eleven official languages, and 'other' languages as response options, but the 2011 Census also included the option of reporting sign language as a home language. As we show in the next section, the extent of sign language reporting in 2011 is very low (0.5 percent of the population identified it as a first home language), and its inclusion will therefore have little effect on the measurement of trends in the other languages (see also Posel and Zeller 2016).

We can use all three censuses to investigate changes in first or main home language reporting, but only the data from 1996 and 2011 to describe trends in second home languages. As we are analysing the 10 percent samples of the census data, we apply the population weights (released with the census datasets) throughout the analysis to generate population estimates for South Africa.

Over the fifteen-year period, the population living in South Africa increased by approximately 12.5 million people, or by 32 percent. However, population changes varied considerably across the different race groups: the number of Africans increased by approximately 11 million (or 36 percent); Coloureds by over one million (32 percent); Indians by approximately 250,000 (25 percent); and Whites by 350,000 (8 percent) (our own calculations from the South African Population Census 1996 and 2011). To take these overall and specific changes in the population into account, we focus on the share of the population who speaks a language, rather than on the absolute number of speakers.

The census data have already been analysed to describe changes in the use of African languages relative to English (Posel and Zeller 2016). We therefore focus here on changes in the use of Afrikaans, and in particular, we investigate evidence of a language shift to English among Coloureds. In the next section, we describe national patterns and trends in first and second home language reporting, and in Section 14.5, we consider language use among Coloureds, distinguishing between Coloureds who live in the Western Cape and those who live elsewhere in the country.

The census data provide the opportunity to paint a broad description of the linguistic topography of South Africa, in ways that are not possible with small-scale studies that probe the complexities of language use. But we also recognise that the quantitative data are limited in several respects. In particular, the language classifications used in the census do not fully reflect the complex nature of multilingualism in South Africa. When languages are treated 'as separate and enumerable categories' (Makoni and Pennycook 2005: 138), for example, the data are not sensitive to the

non-standard varieties of a language which people speak (such as Tsotsitaal, Iscamtho or Kaapse Afrikaans).

In addition, we make several assumptions when we interpret responses on first and second home languages. First, information on the language which individuals speak 'most often at home' is usually viewed as representing the individual's mother tongue or L1 (Posel and Zeller 2016), but we recognise that this may not always be the case. For example, in multilingual households, one language may be spoken most often even if it is not the mother tongue of all household members (see also Webb 2002: 67 for some discussion of the problematic nature of terms like 'mother tongue', 'first language' or 'home language' in the South African context.)

Second, we identify individuals who speak a second language as being bilingual in the sense that they 'actively use more than one language' (Kroll et al. 2015: 378). We thereby assume that when a second home language is reported, individuals have a basic proficiency in the language. However, we cannot establish how proficient individuals are in their L2. Although this applies particularly to languages reported as a second home language, it could also be relevant for a first home language. While we would expect all individuals who report a first home language to be conversationally fluent in the language (that is, to have basic interpersonal communicative skills, in the sense of Cummins 1979, 1980), this need not extend to the acquisition of further reading and writing skills.

Third, although it seems likely that a language reported as a first home language is indeed spoken in the home, the domain of use of a second language is more ambiguous. For example, it is possible that a second language which is identified as being spoken 'in the home' is primarily spoken in school or the labour market (Posel and Zeller 2016). But it is also possible that some respondents interpreted the census questions literally, and only reported a second language if it was indeed spoken at home. If these individuals speak a second language, for example at school or in the labour market, then our measures of bilingualism will be underestimated, and analogously, monolingualism will be overestimated.

14.4 National Patterns and Trends in Language Use in South Africa

14.4.1 First Home Language (L1)

The reporting of first home languages by language group from 1996 to 2011 is described in Table 14.1. Over the fifteen-year period, the share of

Table 14.1 *First home language, 1996–2011*

	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2011 (%)
English	8.6	8.2	9.6
Afrikaans	14.4	13.4	13.5
isiZulu	22.9	23.9	22.8
isiXhosa	18.0	17.6	16.0
Sepedi	9.2	9.4	9.1
Setswana	8.2	8.2	8.0
Sesotho	7.6	8.0	7.6
Tshivenda	2.2	2.3	2.4
Xitsonga	4.3	4.4	4.5
IsiNdebele	1.5	1.6	2.1
SiSwati	2.6	2.7	2.5
Other	0.5	0.5	1.6
Sign	–	–	0.5
Total	100	100	100

South African Population Census (10 percent sample) 1996, 2001 and 2011.
Notes: The data have been weighted to represent the South African population.

the population reporting English as L1 increased, from approximately 9 percent to 10 percent, while the share who reported Afrikaans as L1 decreased, from 14 percent to 13 percent. Changes in the use of Bantu languages as L1 have mostly been even smaller: there is less than half a percentage point change (increase or decrease) in the share of the total population who reported isiZulu, Sepedi, Setswana, Sesotho, Tshivenda, Xitsonga or SiSwati as their first home language.[2] The only Bantu language which has shown a relatively sizeable fall as L1 is isiXhosa, the language shares of which declined from approximately 18 percent to 16 percent of the population.

These overall trends in the use of English and Afrikaans, however, mask significant differences by race (Table 14.2). As discussed in Posel and Zeller (2016), English as L1 increased considerably among Africans from 1996 to 2011. But this increase occurred from a very low base (only 0.4 percent of Africans reported English as their L1 in 1996), and by 2011, less than 3 percent of Africans reported English as their first home language. The use

[2] The share of the population reporting isiNdebele as first home language increased by just over half a percentage point. This increase is probably at least in part a result of immigration: many immigrants from Zimbabwe may have reported isiNdebele as their home language in 2011 (see Posel and Zeller 2016).

Table 14.2 *English and Afrikaans as first home languages by race, 1996–2011*

	African (%)	Coloured (%)	Indian (%)	White (%)
		1996		
English	0.4	16.6	94.9	39.4
Afrikaans	0.7	81.9	1.3	58.4
		2001		
English	0.5	18.8	93.7	39.0
Afrikaans	0.7	79.6	1.7	59.3
		2011		
English	2.9	20.9	86.2	35.8
Afrikaans	1.5	75.7	4.7	60.8

South African Population Census (10 percent sample) 1996, 2001 and 2011.
Note: The data have been weighted to represent the South African population. In 1996 and 2011, 0.9 percent and 0.5 percent of the population respectively did not specify their race.

of English as L1 grew more substantially among Coloureds, from 17 percent in 1996 to 21 percent in 2011. This increase occurred alongside the decline in Afrikaans as the first home language, from approximately 82 percent to 76 percent. (We explore these trends among Coloureds in the Section 14.5.)

However, the language shares of English as L1 declined, rather than increased, among both Whites and Indians (from 39 percent to 36 percent among Whites and from 95 percent to 86 percent among Indians), while the shares who reported Afrikaans as their first home language increased. This is particularly evident among Indians, where the use of Afrikaans as L1 rose more than threefold although from a low base of 1.3 percent in 1996. These trends in language shares among Whites and Indians may derive, at least in part, from higher rates of emigration among English L1 speakers than Afrikaans L1 speakers. Table 14.2 also shows that, although a very small share of Africans reported Afrikaans as their first home language, this share increased from 0.7 percent to 1.5 percent over the period.

14.4.2 Second Home Language (L2)

From 1996 to 2011, the overall growth in English as L1 was relatively modest, rising by only one percentage point nationally. English remained a minority first language in South Africa, and it was the majority first

Table 14.3 *Second home language, 1996 and 2011*

	1996		2011	
First home language	Second language (%)	Share reporting English as L2 (conditional)*	Second language (%)	Share reporting English as L2 (conditional)*
English	33.5	–	61.0	–
Afrikaans	22.2	88.6	74.5	93.8
isiZulu	10.3	44.9	47.6	73.4
isiXhosa	9.6	39.1	48.5	70.1
Sepedi	8.8	19.3	30.1	50.8
Setswana	12.3	26.1	44.8	55.7
Sesotho	16.6	17.7	47.6	38.1
Tshivenda	8.0	18.7	42.2	48.9
Xitsonga	17.6	5.7	50.1	29.0
isiNdebele	22.3	7.2	59.0	33.7
SiSwati	15.5	11.7	54.9	44.4
Other	57.1	75.5	75.0	75.0
Sign	–	–	40.0	57.3
All	15.2	36.7	52.5	59.4

South African Population Census, 1996 and 2011 (10 percent sample).
Note: The data have been weighted to represent the South African population.
*Conditional on a second language being reported.

language only among Indians. However, the use of English as L2 grew dramatically. This trend is described in Table 14.3, which identifies the percentage of the population by L1 language group who reported a second language in 1996 and 2011. For all those who reported a second language, the table also shows the population shares for whom English was the L2.

Since the democratic transition, there has been a marked increase in the reporting of second home languages. In 1996, only 15 percent of the population reported a second home language; by 2011, this had grown to over half the population. An increase occurred across all the L1 language groups, rising more than fourfold among L1 speakers of isiZulu, isiXhosa and Tshivenda. The absolute increase in bilingual rates was largest among L1 speakers of Afrikaans, for whom second language reporting grew from approximately 22 percent to almost 75 percent over the period.

The rise in bilingual rates is associated particularly with the increased use of English as L2. Among speakers who reported a second language, only 37 percent identified English as their L2 in 1996. By 2011, this had increased to 59 percent. English is most likely to be reported as the L2

among L1 speakers of Afrikaans: 94 percent of 'bilingual' Afrikaans speakers reported English as their second language in 2011. English is also the majority second language among L1 speakers of 'other' languages and a number of the African languages, and particularly isiZulu and isiXhosa.

Although English is the most common L2 reported, Table 14.3 also indicates that a substantial share of the population identified a second language which was not English. For example, considerably less than half of all L1 speakers of Sesotho, Xitsonga and isiNdebele who reported speaking a second language in 2011 identified English as their L2. Nationally, second language reporting of all the languages increased from 1996 to 2011. For example, the share of the total population reporting isiZulu as a second language rose from 1.5 percent in 1996 to 3.9 percent in 2011; while the share reporting Afrikaans grew from 2.8 percent to 5.2 percent (data not shown).

As suggested in several studies, the rise in bilingualism therefore reflects a more general increase in the language repertoires of the South African population, rather than an increase only in English as a second language. This is illustrated in Table 14.4, which describes changes in the overall use of languages (whether a language is spoken as L1 or as L2).

The most marked change is in English, which was spoken as the L1 or the L2 by 14 percent of the population in 1996 and by almost 41 percent in 2011. But the overall use of all the other African languages also increased, with the exception of isiXhosa (where the increase in its use as L2 was not sufficient to offset its decline as a first home language). Although the language share of Afrikaans as L1 declined, Table 14.4 also shows that the overall use of Afrikaans increased from 17 percent to almost 19 percent.

14.5 Language Use among Coloureds

The census data from 1996 to 2011 describe a decrease in Afrikaans as L1 only among Coloureds (see Table 14.2). In this section, we explore this trend and investigate whether language use differs among Coloureds living in the Western Cape compared to Coloureds who live elsewhere in South Africa.

The majority of Coloureds in South Africa live in the Western Cape: approximately 60 percent in 1996 and 62 percent in 2011. Although much of the literature on language use among Coloureds has focused on the Western Cape, Table 14.5 shows that the decline in Afrikaans as L1 has not been greater in this province. Rather, Afrikaans as L1 has fallen by slightly more (both absolutely and relatively) among Coloureds living

Table 14.4 *Combined home languages (first and second languages)*

Percentage of the population reporting a home language, as either L1 or L2	1996	2011
English	14.1	40.8
Afrikaans	17.1	18.7
isiZulu	24.2	26.7
isiXhosa	18.5	17.5
Sepedi	9.8	10.5
Setswana	9.0	10.1
Sesotho	8.8	10.1
Tshivenda	2.3	2.7
Xitsonga	4.7	5.8
IsiNdebele	1.7	3.0
SiSwati	2.8	3.2
Other	1.3	3.0
Sign language	–	0.6

South African Population Census, 1996 and 2011 (10 percent samples).
Note: The data have been weighted to represent the South African population. The percentages do not add up to 100 because they include both first and second language reporting.

Table 14.5 *Afrikaans as a first home language among Coloureds, 1996–2011*

	1996	2001	2011
	Percentage reporting Afrikaans as L1		
Western Cape	83.0	81.1	77.3
Elsewhere	80.2	77.2	73.1
	Percentage reporting English as L1		
Western Cape	16.7	18.6	21.0
Elsewhere	16.5	19.2	20.8

South African Population Census, 1996 and 2011 (10 percent samples).
Note: The data have been weighted to represent the South African population.

elsewhere. In 2011, Coloureds in the Western Cape remained more likely than other Coloureds to report Afrikaans as their L1 (77 percent compared to 73 percent). Analogously, the increase in English as L1 has also not been more pronounced among Coloureds in the Western Cape. By 2011, 21 percent of Coloureds, both in the Western Cape and elsewhere in South Africa, identified English as their first home language.

Table 14.6 *Second home language reporting among Coloureds by location, 1996 and 2011*

	1996		2011	
	% reporting a second language	Main second language	% reporting a second language	Main second language
		Western Cape		
All Coloureds	26.7		72.3	
Coloureds with Afrikaans as L1	18.3	English (98.0%)	68.2	English (98.1%)
Coloureds with English as L1	69.1	Afrikaans (99.4%)	88.5	Afrikaans (98.3%)
		Other provinces		
All Coloureds	25.4		65.0	
Coloureds with Afrikaans as L1	20.4	English (77.3%)	63.3	English (89.0%)
Coloureds with English as L1	46.1	Afrikaans (85.8%)	72.6	Afrikaans (83.5%)

South African Population Census, 1996 and 2011 (10 percent samples).
Note: The data have been weighted to represent the South African population.

However, language trends among Coloureds in the Western Cape are distinguished by a larger increase in second home language reporting (Table 14.6). In 1996, Coloureds were slightly more likely to report a second language if they lived in the Western Cape (27 percent compared to 25 percent of Coloureds living elsewhere). By 2011, the difference in second language reporting had widened considerably, to 72 percent of Coloureds in the Western Cape compared to 65 percent of other Coloureds.

Among Coloureds, bilingual rates increased by most among L1 speakers of Afrikaans living in the Western Cape, and they were also more likely than other Coloureds to report English as their second language. Of Afrikaans L1 speakers who reported a second language in 2011, 98 percent of Coloureds in the Western Cape identified English as their L2, compared to 89 percent of other Coloureds.[3]

Second language reporting also increased among Coloureds who are L1 speakers of English, both in the Western Cape and elsewhere, although

[3] However, the relative increase in English as L2 from 1996 to 2011 has been greater among Coloured Afrikaans L1 speakers living elsewhere (from 77 percent to 89 percent).

Table 14.7 *Combined home languages (first and second languages) among Coloureds*

	1996	2011
	All Coloureds	
English	30.6	69.8
Afrikaans	91.0	92.4
	Coloureds in the Western Cape	
English	31.4	73.5
Afrikaans	93.7	95.8
	Coloureds living elsewhere	
English	29.3	63.8
Afrikaans	87.0	87.0

South African Population Census, 1996 and 2011 (10 percent samples).
Note: The data have been weighted to represent the Coloured population in South Africa.

this increase has been less than that among Coloureds who report Afrikaans as their L1. But Coloured Afrikaans L1 speakers are not more likely than English L1 speakers to report a second language. In fact, English–Afrikaans bilingualism remained larger than Afrikaans–English bilingualism among Coloureds both in the Western Cape and elsewhere in South Africa, although differences have narrowed over the period. Among all Coloureds, English L1 speakers living in the Western Cape were most likely to report a second language, both in 1996 and in 2011, and almost all reported Afrikaans as their second language.

When we consider overall language use among Coloureds (Table 14.7), the census data describe an increase particularly in English, which is larger among Coloureds in the Western Cape than those living elsewhere. But the overall use of Afrikaans also increased (from a very high base in 1996), an increase that has been driven by the growth in Afrikaans as L2 among Coloureds in the Western Cape. By 2011, Afrikaans was used as a first or second language by almost 96 percent of Coloureds in the Western Cape and by 87 percent of Coloureds in the rest of the country.

14.6 Summary and Discussion

Many studies on language maintenance and language shift since the democratic transition in South Africa have explored language use among

relatively small samples of speakers typically located in specific communities or regions. These studies provide textured insight into people's attitudes to language and the nature of their language behaviour, in ways that large quantitative surveys cannot. But as descriptions of language use, data from small-sample or regionally specific studies are limited by their lack of generalizability to the population as a whole. Perhaps not surprisingly, therefore, these studies do not find consistent evidence of language shift to English, either from the Bantu languages or from Afrikaans.

Collecting language data through censuses is not without problems (e.g. Busch 2016), and census data are a blunt instrument for describing the complexities of language use or the different varieties of languages that are spoken. However, they are important for sketching broad patterns and trends in language use across South Africa, and as Verdoodt (1997: 42) notes, national quantitative data can 'form the basis for further social investigation of the demography of language groups'.

The most marked national trend described by the census data from 1996 to 2011 is a dramatic increase in the reporting of a second home language, which has been associated particularly, although certainly not exclusively, with the increased use of English as a second home language. By 2011, just over half of the population living in South Africa reported speaking a second language (compared to only 15 percent in 1996), and of these speakers, almost 60 percent reported English as their second language.

In comparison, the overall increase in English as L1 was very modest, with the share of the population who identified English as their first home language increasing by only one percentage point (from approximately 9 percent to 10 percent). Although the census data therefore describe the growing use of English in South Africa, this growth derives far more from the widening of people's language repertories to include English as a second language than from a shift to English as the first home language. The national trend in bilingualism in English therefore mirrors the trend among Africans specifically, described in Posel and Zeller (2016).

Despite concerns about the future of Afrikaans in post-apartheid South Africa, there has also been only a small (one percentage point) decline nationally in the use of Afrikaans as L1. Disaggregating by race, however, reveals that the fall has been specific to Coloureds – growing shares of Whites, Indians and Africans reported Afrikaans as their first home language over the period. But even among Coloureds, where the decline in Afrikaans as L1 is therefore more marked than the national trend, the overall use of Afrikaans (as either L1 or L2) increased because of rising levels of English–Afrikaans bilingualism.

Many of the studies which have investigated potential language shift from Afrikaans to English have focused on Coloureds in the Western Cape. Although the census data show that there are regional differences in language use among Coloureds, they do not suggest that Afrikaans is any less resilient in the Western Cape than among Coloureds elsewhere in South Africa. Trends in the Western Cape are distinctive not because there has been a larger decline in Afrikaans as L1 among Coloureds, but because there has been a larger increase in Afrikaans–English bilingualism. As a result, the overall use of English (as either L1 or L2) is larger among Coloureds in the Western Cape. However, Afrikaans also remained more widely spoken among Coloureds in the Western Cape than among Coloureds elsewhere, both because of a higher prevalence of Afrikaans as L1 and because of higher rates of English–Afrikaans bilingualism.

It is not possible to draw definite conclusions about language shift or language maintenance from the data presented in this chapter because the time period which they span is too short. Studies which analyse data from subsequent censuses will get a better measure of whether the increased use of English as a second language, among both Africans and Coloureds, marks the transition to an increasing monolingualism in English. However, findings from qualitative research would suggest that this bilingualism is likely to remain stable if, notwithstanding the instrumental value of English, languages of origin retain their cultural capital and remain languages of identification.

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