

CHAPTER 9

THE DIFFERENCES IN THE SPELLING RULES BETWEEN SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN NDEBELE

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the comparison between the Spelling Rules of Southern and Northern Ndebele is the main focus. As alluded to in Chapter Three, the latest revised Southern Ndebele Orthography and Spelling Rules was published in 2008 by the Pan South African Language Board whilst the Northern Ndebele Orthography and Spelling rules was published for the first time in 2001 as a special project of the Pan South African Language Board in its Occasional Paper No. 5. The discussion here of the differences in the spelling rules between these two Ndebele languages excludes the orthographical differences that these two Ndebele languages exhibit because these are dealt with in Chapter Three. In the case of Northern Ndebele, where necessary, references to how Ziervogel encrypted this language in his work entitled *A Grammar of the Northern Transvaal Ndebele* (1959) are made. These differences in the spelling rules between Southern and Northern Ndebele is presented and discussed under the following main headings –

- (i) Southern Ndebele spelling rules
- (ii) Northern Ndebele spelling rules
- (iii) Differences in the orthography and or spelling rules between Southern and Northern Ndebele.

9.2 The Southern Ndebele Spelling Rules

The latest revised Southern Ndebele Orthography and Spelling Rules entitled *Imithetho yokuTlolwa NokuPeleda isiNdebele* (2008) is monolingual, i.e., it is written in isiNdebele. In the following paragraphs they are, however, presented in English and isiNdebele according to the following subheadings –



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|---------------------------------|--|
| (i) Pronouns | (ii) Conjunctives |
| (iii) Duplication of stems | (iv) Capitalization |
| (v) Compound moods and tenses | (vi) Vocatives |
| (vii) Enclitics | (viii) Translations and foreign (cluster) sounds |
| (ix) Abbreviations and acronyms | (x) Counting |
| (xi) Punctuation marks | |

9.2.1 Pronouns

The basic sentence position of the demonstrative and possessive pronoun in Southern Ndebele is post nominal. The rules and sub-rules that govern the writing of a noun with its demonstrative and possessive pronoun in Southern Ndebele are as follows –

Rule 1: Demonstrative pronoun

The writing of the demonstrative pronoun in Southern Ndebele is governed by seven sub-rules, namely,

Sub-rule 1.1: When the demonstrative pronoun of the first position precedes the noun it is written conjunctively with its coreferent noun, e.g., / *Isabizwana sokukhomba, sendawo yokuthoma, nangabe silandelwa libizo sitlolwa ngokuhlangana, Isib:*

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|-----|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| (1) | Uyamazi lomuntu na? | ‘Do you know this person?’ |
| | NgeyeSayensi lencwadi . | ‘This is a Science book.’ |

Sub-rule 1.2: The demonstrative pronoun of the 2nd and 3rd positions is written disjunctively with the noun it precedes, e.g., / *Isabizwana sokukhomba indawo yesi-2 neyesi-3 zitlolwa ngokuhlukana nebizo eziliphambako, Isib:*

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (2) | Labo bantu angibazi. | ‘Those people I do not know.’ |
| | Akafuni lezo zitja. | ‘She does not want those dishes.’ |

Ngiqale **laba(ya)** abantu.

‘I’m looking at those people yonder/
over there.’

Uthanda **leya(ya)** intombi.

‘He likes that girl yonder/over there.’

Sub-rule 1.3: When the 2nd and 3rd position demonstrative pronouns precede Classes 8 and 10 nouns, the vowels **-ii-** of the noun class prefixes are not doubled, e.g., / *Nangabe isabizwana sokukhomba, sendawo yesibilli neyesithathu sivela silandelwe mabizo wesigaba sobu-8 nese-10, abokamisa ababili besithomo abo-ii ababuyelelwa, Isib:*

(3) Cl.8: Lezonkolo (< lezo + iinkolo) ‘Those schools’ (and not * **lezoonkolo**)

Cl.10: Lezankomo (leza + iinkomo) ‘Those yonder beasts’ (and not * **lezaankomo**)

Sub-rule 1.4: When the demonstrative pronoun precedes the copulative noun it is written disjunctively, e.g., / *Nangabe isabizwana sokukhomba siphamba isibanjalo sitlolwa ngokuhlukana, Isib:*

- (4) 1st position: **Lesi sisipho** sami. ‘This is my gift’
2nd position: **Labo bantwana** bethu. ‘Those are our children.’
3rd position: **Leza(ya) ziimbuzi**. ‘Those yonder are goats.’

Sub-rule 1.5: When the demonstrative pronoun is preceded by its coreferent noun from the non-nasal class, the noun and the demonstrative pronoun are written conjunctively, e.g., / *Nangabe isabizwana sokukhomba siphanjwa libizo lesigaba esinganaye umakghadlana, ibizo nesabizwana sokukhomba zitlolwa ngokuhlangana, Isib:*

- (5a) Biza **abafundisabo** (< abafundisi labo) ‘Call those pastors.’
Isithombesi (< isithombe lesi) ngesami. ‘This photo is mine.’

Note: In the case of the nasal classes, the demonstrative pronoun and its coreferent noun are written disjunctively. Consider the examples that follow.

Yelega: Eengabeni ezinomakghadlana isabizwana sokukhomba nebizo zitlolwa ngokuhlukana. Isib:

- (5b) Umntwana **lo** uyagula. ‘This child is sick.’
 Imizi **leya(ya)** ngeyabongqongqotjhe. ‘Those yonder houses are of the ministers.’
 Indoda **leyo** yikosi yaKwaMrimitjhi. ‘That man is a chief of KwaMrimitjhi.’

Sub-rule 1.6: When the demonstrative pronoun of Class 16 is preceded by the locative of the same class 16 they are written conjunctively, e.g.; / *Nangabe isabizwana sokukhomba sesigaba se-16 silandela undaweni wesigaba se-16 sitlolwa ngokuhlangana. Isib:*

- (6) Lenyoni yakhele **phezulwa** (<phezulu la). ‘This bird has built its nest up here.’
 Ufunani **phambilapho** (<phambili lapho). ‘What do you want in front there?’

Sub-rule 1.7: When the demonstrative pronoun of the non-nasal class is preceded by the possessive pronoun of the non-nasal class they are written conjunctively, e.g., / *Nangabe isabizwana sokukhomba sesigaba sesithomo esinganaye umakghadlana siphanjwa sisabizwana sobumnini sesigaba esinganaye umakghadlana zitlolwa ngokuhlangana, Isib:*

- (7a) Isiboniboni **samesi** (< sami lesi) siphukile. ‘This mirror of mine is broken.’
 Ngiboleka isikhiya **sakhweso** (< sakho lesi). ‘Lend me that key of yours.’

[Note: When this rule is reversed (i.e., the demonstrative pronoun precedes the possessive pronoun) the demonstrative and possessive pronouns are written disjunctively. Consider the example that follows. / **Yelega:** *Nangabe lomthetho uyahlanakelwa (okutjho bona isabizwana sokukhomba siphamba sobumnini) isabizwana sokukhomba nesobumnini zitlolwa ngokuhlukana. Qala iimbonelo ezilandelako:]*

- (7b) **Lesi sami** isiboniboni siphukile. ‘This one of mine the mirror is broken.’

Ngiboleka **leso sakho** isikhiya. ‘Lend me that one of yours the key.’

Rule 2: Possessive pronoun

There are only two sub-rules governing the writing of the possessive pronouns in Southern Ndebele.

Sub-rule 2.1: When the possessive pronoun is preceded by a noun from the nasal class they are written conjunctively, e.g., / *Nangabe isabizwana sobumnini siphanjwa libizo lesigaba sesithomo esinomakghadlana zitlolwa ngokuhlangana, Isib:*

- (8a) **Umnganami** (< umngani wami) nguSipho. ‘My friend is Sipho.’
Ngiyiphi **imizenu** (< imizi yenu) la. ‘Which are your homes here.’
Amazwakhe (< amazwi wakhe) ayezwakala. ‘His words are clear.’

[Note: In the case of non-nasal classes the possessive pronoun and the preceding coreferent noun are written disjunctively.] Consider that example that follows/
Yeleta: Eengabeni zeenthomo ezinganaye umakghadlana isabizwana sobumnini nebizo eliphamba isabizwana zitlolwa ngokuhlukana, Qala iimbonelo ezilandelako:

- (8b) Ngikhuluma **nabantwana bami**. ‘I speak to my children.’
Phakamisa **ilizwi lakho**. ‘Raise your voice.’

Sub-rule 2.2: When the possessive pronoun precedes its coreferent noun they are written disjunctively, e.g., / *Nangabe isabizwana sobumnini siphamba ibizo sitlolwa ngokuhlukana, Isib:*

- (9) **Zethu** izindlu zakhiwe entabeni. ‘Our houses are built on a mountain.’
Labo ilanga lokugwetjwa liseza. ‘Their day of judgment is still coming.’

Rule 3: Absolute and demonstrative pronouns

When the absolute pronoun of the non-nasal class precedes the demonstrative pronoun they coalesce and are written as one word, e.g., / *Nangabe isabizwana samambala sesigaba sesithomo esinganamakghadlana siphamba isabizwana sokukhomba ziyahlangana bese zitlolwa ngokuhlangana, Isib:*

- (10a) Ngifuna **bonaba** (< bona laba) abantu. 'I want the very same people.'
Bathanda **zonezi** (< zona lezi) iingoma. 'They like the very same songs.'

Note: When this rule is reversed, i.e., the demonstrative pronoun precedes the absolute pronoun, they are written disjunctively. Consider the example that follows / *Lomthetho nangabe uyahlanakelwa okutjho bona isabizwana sokukhomba siphamba samambala zitlolwa ngokuhlukana. Qala iimbonelo ezilandelako:*

- (10b) Ngifuna **laba bona** (abantu). 'I want these ones (the people).'
Lezi zona (iingoma) ngiyazithanda. 'These ones (the songs) I like.'

Rule 4: The inclusive quantitative pronouns

The inclusive quantitative pronouns are written disjunctively e.g., / *Izabizwana ezibuthelelako zitlolwa ngokuhlukana, Isib:*

- (11) Sikhulume nabo **boke** emhlanganweni. 'We spoke to them all at the meeting.'
Umlayezo wafika kithi **soke**. 'The message came to us all.'

9.2.2 Conjunctives

Rule 5: The conjunctive na 'when/if'

The conjunctive **na** is written conjunctively with the predicate it precedes, e.g., / *Isihlanganiso u-na sitlolwa ngokuhlangana nesilandiso esisiphambako, Isib:*



- (12) **Nasilalako** benikuphi ? ‘When we slept where were you?’
Kungcono **nanimakholwa.** ‘It is better if you are Christians.’

9.2.3 Duplication of stems

Rule 6: Duplication of word stems

Words that are used with the purpose of emphasis are duplicated, e.g., / *Amagama asetjenziselwa ukugandelela ayabuyelelwa, Isib:*

- (13) KwaNdebele kumakhaza **khulukhulu** ebusika.
‘At KwaNdebele [it] is cold especially in winter.’

Basebenze **kancanikancani** baqeda.
‘They worked bit by bit and got finished.’

9.2.4 Capitalization

Rule 7: Capitalization of nouns, headings, titles and place names

The rule governing the capitalization of letters of nouns, headings, titles and place names in Southern Ndebele has six sub-rules which are as follows –

Sub-rule 7.1: The first letter at the beginning of a sentence is capitalized, e.g., / *Iledere lokuthoma elisekuthomeni komutjho litlolwa ngegabhahlhela, Isib:*

- (14) **Izolo** beligabhoga. **Abantwana** akhange baye esikolweni.
‘Yesterday it was snowing. Children did not go to school.’

Sub-rule 7.2: The first letter of each word in the heading or sub-heading of a text or title of a book is capitalized, e.g., / *Iledere lokuthoma legama elinye nelinye lesihloko nanyana isihlokwana nanyana ithayitlela yencwadi litlolwa ngegabhahlhela, Isib:*



- (15) Mumuntu-ke Loyo. 'That is typical of a person.'
Ngifanele Ukuzenzela. 'I'm supposed to do things for myself.'

Sub-rule 7.3: The first letter of a vocative word or title of a person should be capitalized, e.g., / *Iledere lokuthoma legama elisikgharameji nanyana ithayitlela yomuntu kufanele itlolwe ngegabhahlhela, Isib:*

- (16) Mfundisi! 'Pastor!'
Phrofesa Mahlathini 'Professor Mahlathini'

Sub-rule 7.4: The first letter after the initial vowel of a proper noun of a title is capitalized, e.g., / *Iledere lokuthoma ngemva kwakakamisa-sithomo webizo- mbala lethayitlela litlolwa ngegabhahlhela, Isib:*

- (17) uMfundisi Mathibela. 'Pastor Mathibela.'
uNomzana Mabhena. 'Mr Mabhena.'

Sub-rule 7.5: In Southern Ndebele official place names beginning with **kwa-** the letter **k** of **kwa-** and the first letter of its stem are capitalized, e.g., / *Amabizo wesiNdebele wangokomthetho weendawo athoma ngo-kwa iledere u-k ka-kwa kanye neledere lokuthoma lesiqu kutlolwa ngamagabhahlhela , Isib:*

- (18) KwaNdebele 'at the place of amaNdebele'
KwaZulu 'at the place of the Zulus'
KwaMrimitjhi 'at the place of Mrimitjhi.'
KwaMabhoko. 'at Mabhoko's place'

Sub-rule 7.6: An official Ndebele place name is written with one capital letter which is the first letter immediately after the initial vowel, e.g., / *Ibizo lesiNdebele langokomthetho lendawo litlolwa ngegabhahlhela elilodwa elilandela ukamisa-sithomo, Isib:*



- (19a) iSiyabuswa ‘Siyabuswa’
 eMathulastand. ‘at Mathula stand’
 eKangala. ‘at Kangala’

Note: In place names beginning with a vowel, the initial vowel and the vowel stem are separated by a hyphen. Consider the example that follows /*Yelesa:Emabizweni weendawo athoma ngokamisa, ukamisa-sithomo nokamisa wesiqu sebizo bahlukaniswa yi-hayifeni, Isib:*

- (19b) i-Ermelo ‘Ermelo’ e-Ogies ‘At Ogies’
 i-America ‘America’ e-Indonesia ‘in Indonesia’

9.2.5 Compound moods and tenses

There are certain specific rules that govern the writing of (compound) moods and tenses comprising various formatives in Southern Ndebele.

Rule 8: The writing of various formatives.

This rule contains eight sub-rules which are as follows –

Sub-rule 8.1: When the auxiliary verb **-be** with the subject concord precedes a verb, it is written jointly with the verb it precedes, e.g., / *Nangabe isiza-senzo u-be silanywa (silandelwa ngemuva) sisenzo esinesivumelwano sehloko sitlolwa ngokuhlangana nesenzo esilandelako, Isib:*

- (20) Ube alele > bekalele ‘He was asleep.’
 Sibe sikhamba > besikhamba ‘We were going.’

Sub-rule 8.2: When the auxiliary verb **-be** or **-se** is used with the subject concord of the remote past tense, the auxiliary verb is written disjunctively with the main verb, e.g., /

Nangabe isiza-senzo u-be nanyana u-se zisebenze nesivumelwano sesikhathi esadlula kade isiza-senzo sitlolwa ngokuhlukana nesenzo esilamako, Isib:

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|------|-------------------------------------|--|
| (21) | Labe ligula (ikonyana) | ‘It was sick (the calf).’ |
| | Sabe sidla | ‘We were eating.’ |
| | Lase lifikile (izulu) | ‘It had arrived (the rain).’ |
| | Zase zithengisiwe (iinkomo). | ‘They were already sold (the cattle).’ |

Sub-rule 8.3: If the auxiliary verb stem **-be** is not used, then the subject concord is written jointly with the verb it precedes, e.g., / *Nangabe isiqu sesiza-senzo u-be asisetjenziswa, isivumelwano sehloko sitlolwa ngokuhlangana nesenzo(esilandelako), Isib:*

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|------|---|-------------------------------------|
| (22) | Lababantu ba(be) balahlekile > Lababantu <u>babalahlekile</u> | ‘These people were lost.’ |
| | Ilanga la(be) litjhisa | > Ilanga <u>lalitjhisa</u> . |
| | | ‘The sun was hot.’ |

Sub-rule 8.4: The copulative stem **-ba/-be** is written disjunctively with the word it precedes, e.g., / *Isiqu sesibanjalo u-ba/-be sitlolwa ngokuhlukana negama esiliphambako, Isib:*

- | | |
|------|--|
| (23) | Kwaba mnandi emnyanyeni kaThoko. ‘It was nice at Thoko’s ceremony.’ |
| | Sibe babili abaphumelelako. ‘We were two who succeeded.’ |

Sub-rule 8.5: When the subject concord does not appear with the auxiliary verb **-be** or **-se** these auxiliary verb stems are written conjunctively with the following verb, e.g., / *Nangabe isivumelwano sehloko asiveli ngaphambi kwaka-be nanyana u-se, leziinsiza-senzo zitlolwa ngokuhlangana nesenzo esilandelako, Isib:*



- (24) Nina **benihlala** (< **nibe nihlala**) esigoga. ‘You were staying in the location.’
Iinkomo **bezidla** (<**zibe zidla**) emasimini. ‘The beasts were grazing in the field.’
Sesidiniwe (<**sise sidiniwe**) kusebenza ebusuku. ‘We are tired of working at
night.’
UMavela **sekasiqedile** (< **use asiqedile**) isikolo. ‘Mavela has finish schooling.’

Sub-rule 8.6: The narratives **–sele** and **–bese(le)** are written disjunctively with the following word, e.g., / *Isinqophisi u-sele no-bese(le) zitlolwa ngokuhlukaniswa negama elilandelako, Isib:*

- (25) Ufike **sele** ngikhambile. ‘He came after I had already gone.’
UNozipho **sele** aneminyaka emine. ‘Nozipho is already four years old.’
Bese(le) ngilahle iinkhiya zami. ‘I had already lost my keys.’
Soke **bese(le)** sizigqaja ngaye. ‘All of us we were already proud of him.’

Sub-rule 8.7: The hortative **(a)khe** is written conjunctively with the following word, e.g., / *Isikateleli u-akhe nanyana u-khe-zitlolwa ngokuhlangana negama elilandelako, Isib:*

- (26) **Akhenilwe/Khenilwe** nizangibona. ‘You dare fight you will see me.’
Akhengibheme/Khengibheme nami lapho. ‘Let me smoke there also.’
Akhesiguqe/Khesiguqe sithandaze. ‘Let us kneel down and pray.’

Sub-rule 8.8: The hortative **(a)khese** is written disjunctively with the word it follows, e.g., / *Isikateleli u-(a)khese sitlolwa ngokhlukana negama elilandelako, Isib:*

- (27) Batjele **(a)khese** bathule balalele. ‘Tell them to keep quite and listen.’
(A)khese sikhambeni. ‘Let us go.’



9.2.6 Vocatives

Rule 9: The vocative: **ye**

The vocative **ye** is written disjunctively with the word it precedes, e.g., /
Isikhgaramaji u-ye sitlolwa ngokuhlukana negama esiliphambako, Isib:

- (28) **Ye** msana! Woza la. 'You boy! Come here.'
Ye madoda! Kumakhaza namhlanje. 'Men! It is cold today.'

9.2.7 Enclitics

Rule 10: The enclitic: **ke**

The enclitic **ke** is separated by a hyphen from the word that it succeeds, e.g., /
Iselulo u-ke sitlolwa sihlukane ngehayifeni negama elisilandelako, Isib:

- (29) Sesisebenzile-**ke**. 'We have then worked.'
Buyani ekhaya-**ke**. 'Come back home then.'

Rule 11: The formative: **ndina**

The formative **ndina** is written disjunctively with the preceding word, e.g., /
Isakhi undina sittelolwa sihlukane negama esililandelako, Isib:

- (30) Uzakufa msana **ndina**. 'You will die you damn boy.'
Khamba vila **ndina**. 'Go you damn sluggard.'

9.2.8 Translations and foreign (cluster) sounds

Rule 12: Translation of foreign words/phrases into Southern Ndebele

The above rule comprises five sub-rules which are as follows –

Sub-rule 12.1: A foreign word/phrase that cannot be translated into Southern Ndebele for whatever reason is written as it is with a different font or underlined, e.g., / *Igama nanyana ibinzana elingatjhugululekiko ngesizathu esithileko litlolwa ngenye indlela ehlukileko nanyana lithalelwe ngaphasi, Isib:*

(31) Sikhulume nge-**mutatis mutandis** yodwa.

‘We spoke of mutatis mutandis only.’

Sikhulume nge-mutatis mutandis yodwa.

‘We spoke of mutatis mutandis only.’

Sikhulume nge-*mutatis mutandis* yodwa.

‘We spoke of mutatis mutandis only.’

Sub-rule 12.2: The subject concord of a foreign word which cannot be translated into Southern Ndebele is separated by means of a hyphen from that word, e.g., / *Isivumelwana sehloko egameni elingakghoni ukutjhugululelwa esiNdebeleni sihlukaniswa ngehayifeni nalelo gama, Isib:*

(32) **Yi-***mutatis mutandis* esikhuluma ngayo.

‘It is mutatis mutandis that we talk about.’

Umhlangano **we-***Common Wealth Organization* ukhambe kuhle.

‘The meeting of the Common Wealth Organization went well.’

Sub-rule 12.3: When a text is translated from a foreign language into Southern Ndebele, the capitalization rules of Southern Ndebele are upheld (i.e., not those of the source language), e.g., / *Nakutjhugululwa umtlolelwa ususwa kwelinye ilimi elitjhili usiwa esiNdebeleni imithetho elandelwako yokutlolwa kwamagabhadlhela kuba ngeyesiNdebele hayi yelimi elimsuka, Isib:*

- (33) Sisebenza emNyangweni wezeeNdlela nokuThutha.
'We work in the Department of Roads and Transport.'

UNgqongqotjhe wezamaPhilo neHlalakuhle
'The Minister of Health and Welfare'

Sub-rule 12.4: Where the names of organizations, titles of books and official programmes, translated into Southern Ndebele appear for the first time, they should be written as they are and be bracketed, e.g., / *Amabizo weenhlango, amathayitlela weencwadi, amahlelo wangokomthetho atjhugululelwa esiNdebeleni la avela khona kokuthoma kufanele atlolwe njengombana anjalo afakwe kibokaki, Isib:*

- (34) IsiTatimende seKharikhyulamu yeliZwelo ke esiBuyekeziweko (**The Revised National Curriculum Statement**) sinikela indlela etja yokufunda nokufundisa.
'The Revised National Curriculum Statement gives a new approach to learning and teaching.'

Sub-rule 12.5: Where an abbreviation in the source language has been given, it is written as it appears in the source language, e.g., / *Lapha kunikelwe khona iinrhunyezo zelimi elimsuka, zitlolwa njengombana sinjalo elimini elimsuka, Isib:*

- (35) IsiTatimende seKharikhyulamu yeliZwelo ke esiBuyekeziweko (**RNCS**) sinikela indlela etja yokufunda.
'The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) gives a new approach to learning and teaching.'

Note: If the text needs an isiNdebele abbreviation, the abbreviation is formed according to the isiNdebele capitalization rules. Consider the examples that follow / *Tjheja-ke: Nangabe umtlolo ufuna isirhunyezo sesiNdebele, leso sirhunyezo sizakubunjwa*

ngokulandela imithetho yesiNdebele yokutlolwa kwamagabdhadhela. Qaka iimbonelo ezilandelako:

(36) UNgqongqotjhe wezeFundo umemezele ukusetjenziswa kwesiTatimende seKharikhyulamu yeliZweloke esiBuyekeziweko (TKZB).

‘The Minister of Education has announced the use of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS).’

Rule 13: The writing of borrowed (cluster) sounds

Sub-rule 13.1: (Some) Afrikaans (cluster) sounds will be written as follows in Southern Ndebele, e.g., / *Eminye yemidumo evela ku-Afrikaans izakutlolwa ngalendlela esiNdebeleni, Isib:*

Afrikaans	>	Southern Ndebele
(37) / dr / as in <i>draad</i>	>	/ dr / e.g. idrada ‘wire’ idromu ‘drum’
/ tr / as in <i>straat</i>	>	/ tr / e.g. isitrada ‘street’ itranka ‘trunk’
/ kr / as in <i>kran</i>	>	/ kr / e.g. ikrani ‘tap’ ikrigi ‘cricket (insect)’
/ vr /,/ fr / as in <i>vloer, fraai</i>	>	/ fr / e.g. ifluru ‘floor’ -fraya ‘toast’
/ bl / as in <i>blaar</i>	>	/ bhl / e.g. ibhlari ‘leaf’ ibhlege ‘tin’
/ br / as in <i>broek</i>	>	/ bhr / e.g. ibhrugu ‘trousers’ ibhrorho ‘bridge’
/ pl / as in <i>ploeg</i>	>	/ pl / e.g. iplurhu ‘plough’ iplani ‘plan’
/ pr / as in <i>prys</i>	>	/ pr / e.g. ipreyisi ‘price’ iprobho ‘cork’

Sub-rule 13.2: (Some) English (cluster) sounds are written as follows in Southern Ndebele, e.g., / *Eminye yemidumo evela esiNgisini ezakutlolwa ngalendlela esiNdebeleni, Isib:*



English

Southern Ndebele

(38)	/gr/	e.g. 'graph'	>	/gr/	e.g. igrafu
	/cr/	e.g. 'crotchet'	>	/khr/	e.g. ikhrotjhedi
	/c/	e.g. 'curry'	>	/kh/	e.g. ikheri
	/p/	e.g. 'pipe'	>	/ph/	e.g. iphayiphu
	/pr/	e.g. 'principal'	>	/phr/	e.g. uphrinsipali

Note: The Afrikaans and English sound /p/ is not pronounced the same in Southern Ndebele. The Afrikaans /p/ is pronounced as an ejective **p[p']** while English /p/ as an aspirated **ph[ph]**, respectively in Southern Ndebele (See the second to last examples in (37) and (38) above.

9.2.9 Abbreviations and acronyms

Rule 14: Abbreviations

Sub-rule 14.1: Relationship and occupational terms are abbreviated as follows / *Amathemu wobuhlobo naweenkhundla arhunyezwa bunje:*

(39)	Mm.	<	umma	'mother'
	Nom.	<	uNomzana	'Mr'
	Gq.	<	uGqwetha	'Lawyer / Attorney'
	Phrof.	<	uPhrofesa	'Professor'

Sub-rule 14.2: Linguistic terms are abbreviated as follows / *Amathemu wehlathululo yelimi arhunyezwa bunje:*

(40)	sz	<	isenzo	'verb'
	bz	<	ibizo	'noun'
	bb	<	isibabazo	'vocative'
	sk	<	isenzukuthi	'ideophone'



nn	< inani	‘numeral’
sn	< isinabiso	‘adverb’
sph	< isiphawulo	‘adjective’
sbl	< isibaluli	‘relative’
sbb	< isabizwana sokubala	‘quantitative pronoun’
sbk	< isabizwana sokukhomba	‘demonstrative pronoun’
njll	< njalonjalo	‘et cetera’
isib	< isibonelo	‘example’
bsz	< ibizo-senzo	‘deverbative noun’
hll	< ihlelo	‘grammar’
shl	< isahluko	‘chapter’
hl	< isihlanganiso	‘conjunctive’
smmm	< isabizwana songumnini	‘possessive pronoun’
sbmb	< isabizwana samambala.	‘absolute pronoun’

Sub-rule 14.3: Southern Ndebele original and adopted calendar month names of the year are abbreviated as follows / *Amabizo wesiNdebele nawokubolekwa weenyanga zomnyaka arhunyezwa bunje:*

Native (original) names		Adopted names	
(41) uTjhirhweni	> Tjhi.	uJanabari	> Jan. ‘January’
uMhlolanja	> Mhl.	uFebherbari	> Febh. ‘February’
uNtaka	> Nt.	uMatjhi	> Mtjh. ‘March’
uSihlabantakana	> Sihlab.	u-Apreli	> Apr. ‘April’
uMrhayili	> Mrh.	uMeyi	> Mey. ‘May’
uMgwengweni	> Mgw.	uJuni	> Jun. ‘June’
uVelabahlize	> Vhl.	uJulayi	> Jul. ‘July’
uRhoboyi	> Rhob.	u-Arhostesi	> Arh. ‘August’
uKhukhulamungu	> Khukh.	uSeptemba	> Sept. ‘September’
uSewula	> Sew.	u-Oktoba	> Okt. ‘October’
uSinyikhaba	> Skhb.	uNovemba	> Nov. ‘November’

uNobayeni > **Nob.** uDisemba > **Dis.** ‘December’

Sub-rule 14.4: Days of the week are abbreviated as follows / *Amalanga weveke arhunyezwa bunje:*

(42)	uMvulo	> Mvl.	‘Monday’
	uLesibili	> Lsb.	‘Tuesday’
	uLesithathu	> Lst.	‘Wednesday’
	uLesine	> Lsn.	‘Thursday’
	uLesihlanu	> Lsh.	‘Friday’
	uMgqibelo	> Mgq.	‘Saturday’
	uSondo	> Snd.	‘Sunday’

Sub-rule 14.5: The measurement of mass is abbreviated as follows / *Iinlinganiso zobudisi zirhunyezwa bunje:*

(43)	imiligremu	> mg.	‘milligram’
	isentigremu	> sg.	‘centigram’
	idesigremu	> dg.	‘decigram’
	igremu	> g.	‘gram’
	idekhagremu	> deg.	‘decagram’
	ihekthogremu	> hg.	‘hectogram’
	ikhilogremu	> kg.	‘kilogram’

Sub-rule 14.6: The measurement of volume is abbreviated as follows / *Iinlinganiso zomthamo zirhunyezwa bunje:*

(44)	imililitha	> ml.	‘millilitre’
	isentilitha	> sl.	‘centilitre’
	idesilitha	> dl.	‘decilitre’
	ilitha	> l.	‘Litre’



idekhalitha	> del.	‘decalitre’
ihektholitha	> hl.	‘hectolitre’
ikhilolitha	> kl.	‘kilolitre’

Sub-rule 14.7: The measurement of distance is abbreviated as follows / *Iinlinganiso zamabanga zirhunyezwa bunje:*

(45)	imilimitha	> mm.	‘millimetre’
	isentimitha	> sm.	‘centimetre’
	idesimitha	> dm.	‘decimetre’
	imitha	> m.	‘metre’
	idekhamitha	> dem.	‘decametre’
	ihekthomitha	> hm.	‘hectometre’
	ikhilomitha	> km.	‘kilometre’

Sub-rule 14.8: An acronym coined from a foreign language(s) is written as it appears in the source language, e.g., / *I-akhronimi evela kwelinye ilimi itlolwa njengombana injalo esiNdebeleni, Isib:*

(46) iSADTU, iNaptosa njll.

9.2.10 Counting

Rule 15: Numerical numbers

Southern Ndebele numerals from 1-10 are written as follows in words / *Iinomboro kusukela kokuku-1 ukuya e-10 ngesiNdebele zitlolwa bunje:*

(47)	1. = -nye	e.g. Unegama linye uSipho.	‘Sipho has one name.’
	2. = -bili	e.g. Ngithenge abokatsu ababili .	‘I bought two cats.’
	3. = -thathu	e.g. Nginezinja ezintathu .	‘I have three dogs.’
	4. = -ne	e.g. Sihlezi amalanga amane .	‘We stayed four days.’

5. = -hlanu e.g. Ngimuphe imigodla **emihlanu**. ‘I gave him five bags.’
 6. = -thandathu /-ntandathu e.g. Izimvu zami **zithandathu**. ‘I have six sheep.’
 7. = -khomba e.g. Sifunda isahluko **sekhomba**. ‘We read chapter seven.’
 8. = -nane e.g. **Sibunane** ekhaya. ‘We are eight at home.’
 9. = -thoba e.g. Li-iri **lethoba** ‘It is 9 o’clock.’
 10. = -tjhumu/-sumi e.g. Bathengise **itjhumu** leembuzi. ‘They sold ten goats.’

9.2.11 Punctuation marks

Rule 16: The hyphen

There are six sub-rules governing the use of a hyphen in Southern Ndebele which are as follows –

A hyphen is used to - / *Ihayifeni isebenza uku-*

Sub-rule 16.1: separate juxtaposed vowels, e.g., / *-hlukanisa abokamisa abahlaleleneko*,
Isib:

- (48) u-Abraham ‘Abraham’
 i-oli ‘oil’
 kwa-A.A.Ndala ‘at A.A.Ndala’s place’

Note: The rule does not apply to double vowels that occur in Classes 8 and 10. Consider the example that follows, e.g./ *Yelega: Lomthetho awusebenzi kibokamisa abalakanyana esigabeni sobu-8 nese-10 samabizo.Qala iimbonelo ezilandelako.*

- (49) Cl.8: iimphongo ‘foreheads’ Cl.10: eendaweni ‘at places’

Sub-rule 16.2: separate compound words /terms with linguistic meaning, e.g., / *-hlukanisa amabizo-mvango / amathemu wehlathululo yelimi, Isib:*

- (50) ibizo-senzo, ‘deverbative noun’ isiza-senzo ‘an auxiliary verb’

ikondlo-sililo ‘an elegy’

umtlolo-phenyo ‘an assignment’

Note: Compound words without such linguistic meaning do not use a hyphen.] Consider the example that follows / *Yelega: Amabizo-mvango anganahlathululo yelimi akayisebenzisi ihayifeni. Qala iimbonelo ezilandelako:*

uVelabahlinze ‘July’

intabamlilo ‘volcano’

Sub-rule 16.3: separate the subject concord from a number, e.g., / *-hlukanisa isivumelwano sehloko nenomboro, Isib:*

- (51a) Isigaba **se-10**. ‘Section 10’ Indlu **yesi-5** ‘The 5th house’
Abantu **abama-20**. ‘20 people’ Isahluko **se-7** ‘Chapter 7’

It is important to note that in the case of: / *Yelega bona*

- (a) a numeral written in words, the hyphen is not applicable, e.g.,
/ nangabe inombero itlolwe ngamagama, ihayifeni ayisebenzi, Isib:

- (51b) Isigaba setjhumi. ‘Section ten.’
Indlu yesihlanu. ‘The fifth house’

- (b) a numeral that is used without a concord, it is written without a hyphen, e.g.,
/ nangabe inombero isetjenziswa ngaphandle kwesivumelwano, itlolwa ngaphandle kwehayifeni, Isib:

- (51c) Umbuzo 2, ‘Question 2’ Isifundo 9 ‘Lesson 9’.

Sub-rule 16.4: separate the enclitic **ke** from the preceding word, e.g., / *-hlukanisa iselulo u-ke negama elisiphambako, Isib:*



- (52) Yidla-ke. 'So eat (then).' Sikimani-ke. 'So stand up (then).'
Selani-ke. 'So drink (then).' Khuluma-ke. 'So speak (then).'

Sub-rule 16.5: separate the concord from an acronym formed from other foreign language, e.g., / *-hlukanisa isivumelwano ne-akhronimi ebunjwe elimini elitjhili, Isib:*

- (53) i-SABC, i-Sita, ama-LO, ngokwe-RNCS

Sub-rule 16.6: separate a concord from a foreign word that cannot be translated into Southern Ndebele, e.g., / *-hlukanisa isivumelwano negama lelinye ilimi elitjhili elingakatjhugulukeli esiNdebeleni, Isib:*

- (54) UNom. Mathibela ulilunga eliyi-*ex officio* kilekomidi yelimi.
'Mr Mathibela is an ex-officio member in this language committee.'

Rule 17: An apostrophe '

An apostrophe is used to indicate vowel elision, e.g., / *Uzitjhana usetjenziselwa ukutjengisa ukamisa oweqiweko, Isib:*

- (55) Ose ngayikunz' erhutjhwe ngomlotha. 'He who is like a bull smeared with
ash'
Uthin' ugogo? 'What says the grandmother?'

Rule 18: Full stop .

A full stop is used at the end of a sentence and abbreviations, e.g., / *Ungci uvela ekugcineni komutjho neenrhubezweni, Isib:*

- (56) Sisebenza edorobheni. 'We working in town.'
Ngihlala kilendlu encani. 'I stay in this small house.'

Rule 19: Comma ,

A comma is used in the middle of a sentence. The reader takes a breath at a comma, e.g., / *Ikhoma isetjenziswa phakathi komutjho, umfundi udosa ummoya nakafika kiyo, Isib:*

(57) Ukube angikarhabi kangaka mzala, bengizokuphekelela.

‘If I was not in such a hurry my dear cousin, I would accompany you.’

Rule 20: Semi-colon ;

A semi-colon is used to divide different parts of a sentence or lists of items, e.g., / *Isemikholoni isebenza ukuhlukanisa iingcenyane ezahlukeneko zomutjho anyana amarherho, Isib:*

(58) Umfundi nomtloli banekghono loku;

-sebenzisa ilimi ngefanelo

-tlola ilimi ngokwemithetho evumelekileko.

‘The reader and author have the skill to

-use correct language;

-write the language according to the approved spelling rules.’

Rule 21: Colon :

A colon comes after a word which tells what are you going to name or enumerate, e.g., / *Ikoloni ilandela igama elitjho bona yini ozoyitjho nanyana ukuyibala ngamagama, Isib:*

(59) Uthanda ukudla: imirorho, inyama yeenyamazana namaqanda weenkukhu.

‘He likes eating: vegetables, meat of animals and chicken eggs.’



Rule 22: Exclamation mark !

An exclamation mark appears after a word which is an exclamation, e.g., / *Isibabazo sivela ngemva kwegama elisibabazo, Isib:*

- (60) Mbulaleni! ‘Kill him!’
Maye! ‘Wow’

Rule 23: Quotation marks “ ”

Quotation marks are used to indicate direct speech or text quoted as is, e.g., / *Abodzubhula/abonokhuluma bavela ekulumeni enqophileko nanyana emtlohlweni odzujulwe njengombana unjalo encwadini, Isib:*

- (61) Ubaba wathi, “Bantwabami hloniphanani nanifuna ipilo emnandi.”
Our father said: “My dear children respect each other if you want an enjoyable life.”

Rule 24: Single quotation marks ‘ ’

Single quotation marks are used to indicate direct speech or a quotation within the main quotation, e.g., / *Abodzubhulana basetjenziswa ukufaka ikulumo enqophileko engaphakathi kwabodzubhula, Isib:*

- (62) Wathi, “Lingisani uJeso nakathi, ‘Kuphelile’ emhlabeni.”
He said; “Emulate Jesus when He said ‘It is over’ on earth.”

Rule 25: Brackets ()

Brackets are used to enclose words or phrases that give more or additional information about what is said, e.g., / *Abokaki / abosibayana basebenza ukufaka amagama ahlathulula banzana ngalokho okukhulunywako nanyana amagama angatjhiywa nanyana asetjenziswe emutjhweni, Isib:*

- (63) Lamalanga abantu (abanzima khulukhulu) baseenkundleni eziphezulu



embusweni.

These days people (especially blacks) are in high positions in government.

Rule 26: Square Brackets [] Commonly square brackets are used in a statement introducing a scene in a play, e.g., / *Aboragelela ngevama bavela emtlohlweni owethula isiqephu emdlalweni, Isib:*

(64) [*Kusemini. UMgidi uhlezi nomkakhe ngaphasi komuthi*

[It's during the day; Mgidi is seated under the tree with his wife.]

9.3 Northern Ndebele spelling rules

In the following paragraphs the Northern Ndebele spelling rules are presented under the following select subheadings –

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| (i) Pronouns | (ii) Conjunctives |
| (iii) Capitalization | (iv) Compound moods and tenses |
| (v) Enclitics | (vi) Punctuation marks |

Thereafter a comparative discussion of three important sets of rules for Northern Ndebele and Southern Ndebele follows (see 9.4 ff.):

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| (i) Orthographical Rules | (ii) Syllabic nasal sounds |
| (iii) Vowel sequences | |

9.3.1 Pronouns

Rule 1: Demonstrative pronoun

The basic sentence position of demonstrative pronouns in Northern Ndebele is post nominal. However, there are three sub-rules governing the writing of a demonstrative pronoun in Northern Ndebele which are as follows;

Sub-rule 1.1: The first position demonstrative pronoun is written conjunctively with the noun it precedes, e.g., / *Sabitwana sekukhombha edute sihlanganiswa nelibito elilandelako, Isib:*

- (65) **Lomunru** andimuwati. ‘This person I do not know.’
Mbitele **lomtlhangana**. ‘Call me this boy.’

Note: Ziervogel writes the first position demonstrative pronoun disjunctively with the noun it precedes. Consider the example that follows.

Le nkxhadi-ke inesiti sayo asiphetheko. ‘This aunt has a present she holds.’
(Ziervogel, op. cit.:206)

Sub-rule 1.2: The second and third position demonstrative pronouns are written disjunctively with the nouns they precede, e.g., / *Sabitwana sekukhombha kude nakudekude sahlukaniiswa elibitweni elilandelako, Isib:*

- (66) **2nd position:** **Loo** mufati gewaNungu. ‘That woman is of Nungu.’
Labo banru asibati. ‘Those people we do not know.’
3rd position: **Leta** tixxomo tifile. ‘Those yonder beasts are dead.’
Laba banrwana mbakho. ‘Those yonder children are yours.’

Sub-rule 1.3: The demonstrative pronoun that appears post nominally is written disjunctively, e.g., / *Tabitwana tekukhombha tigwalwa gekwahlukaniswa nativela emuva kwelibito, Isib:*

- (67) Mmati **lo** gumalume. ‘This carpenter is my uncle.’
Bayeni **labo** babuya ePolokwana. ‘Those visitors are from Polokwane.’
Bulala sixhogu **lesa**. ‘Kill that yonder spider.’

9.3.2 Conjunctives

Rule 2: The conjunctive **na** and **ke** ‘when/if’

The conjunctive **na** and **ke** are written disjunctively, e.g., / *Tihlanganiso na na ke tigwalwa gekwahlukaniswa, Isib:*

- (68) **Na/ke** afuna musebenti akete la. ‘If he wants a job let him come here.’
Gesikhethu **na/ke** usumayela jama. ‘In our tradition if you speak, stand up.’

9.3.3 Capitalization

Rule 3: Capitalization of nouns, headings, titles and place names

Sub-rule 3.1: The first letter of a stem of a noun denoting nationality will be capitalized, e.g., / *Nhlanga yemakxwalo yesikxu selibito elikhombha mihlobo yebanru iba nhlankaxulu, Isib:*

- (69) li**N**debele li**B**hunu
ma**S**wati ma**T**songa

Sub-rule 3.2: The first letter of a stem of a noun denoting languages will be capitalized, e.g., / *Nhlanga yemakxwalo yesikxu selibito elikhombha lilimi iba nhlankaxulu, Isib:*

- (70a) si**N**debele ‘Ndebele language’ si**Z**ulu ‘Zulu language’
si**Y**isimani ‘English’ si**B**hunu ‘Afrikaans language’

However, Ziervogel (1959:182) writes the first letter of a stem of a noun denoting languages in a small letter, e.g.,

- (70b) Wabaphilisa njalo wayenta kuri bakxejise sikhalanga kusunyayelwe siswazi.

‘He treated them in that way and made them stop speaking the Sikhhalanga language and start speaking Swazi.’

Sub-rule 3.3: In the case of all other nouns the first letter of the noun is a capital, e.g., /*Okxe manye mabito akhuliswa gekukhulisa nhlanga yemakxwalo yelibito, Isib:*

- (71) Somandla ‘God’ Musumbhuluko ‘Monday’
Liwandle eliBovu ‘Red Sea’ Mandla ‘(personal name)’
Nhlango yeMaphasi. ‘United Nations’ Mbhibili ‘Bible.’

Sub-rule 3.4: The first letter after the (possessive, adjective, relative) concord will be capitalized, .e.g., / *Nhlanga yemakxwalo emuva kwesivumelwano (sebumnikati, sesiphawuli, sesitataniso) itaba nhlangoxulu, Isib:*

- (72) Mukhosi weMbhasiga ‘Easter / Passover Festival’
Nhlango yeMaphasi. ‘United Nations.’
Moya oMukxhethwa. ‘Holy Spirit.’

Sub-rule 3.5: When a locative noun forms part of a qualificative the first letter of the stem of the locative is capitalized, e.g., / *Lapha libito endaweni liba nkxeto yesihlathululi nhlanga yemakxwalo salo iyakhuliswa, Isib:*

- (73) SiNdebele saseNyakatho. ‘Northern Ndebele.’
Banwana baseLimpopo. ‘Children of Limpopo.’

Sub-rule 3.6: The first letter of every word in the title of books and the heading of essays will be a capital letter, e.g., / *Nhlanga yemakxwalo yelitinyo galinye etihlokwani tetibuka nasetihlokwani tetindaba iba nhlangoxulu, Isib:*

- (74) Mashada Nemithetho Yekugwala KwesiNdebele SaseNyakatho.
‘The Sounds and Spelling Rules of the Northern Ndebele.’

Sub-rule 3.7: Absolute and possessive pronouns referring to the Deity are written in small letters, e.g., / *Sabitwana semambhala nesabitwana sebumnikati esikhombha bukxulukxulu sigwalwa genhlanga enghane, Isib:*

- (75) Banru bekhethu abasalojhi badimu.
‘Our people no longer respect the ancestors.’

Sub-rule 3.8: For place names beginning with the locative prefix **Ka-** the first letter of the word together with the first letter of the stem is capitalised, e.g., / *Mabito yetindawo akxwala gesikxwalo **Ka**-sasendaweni nhlanga yekukxwala yelibito kanye nenhlanga yekukxwala yesikxu iba nhlangakxulu, Isib:*

- (76) **KaZulu** ‘Zululand’ **KaNdebele** ‘Ndebele land’
KaMugombhane ‘Potgietersrust’ **KaMadlala** ‘Settlement in the Limpopo Province.’

Ziervogel (1959:180) writes the letter **k** of the locative prefix **ka-** with a small letter, e.g., *MaNdebele aphuma ebuhlalalanga kaMalaji.*

‘Ndebele’s are from the east at Malaji’s place.’

Sub-rule 3.9: In the case of all other place names, the first letter after the initial vowel will be capitalized, e.g., / *Okxe amanye mabito yetindawo nhlanga yekukxwala elandela nkhamisa yekukxwala iba nhlangakxulu, Isib:*

- (77) **eGiyane** ‘at Giyane’ **eMashashane** ‘at Mashashane’
ePolokwane ‘at Polokwane’ **eTshwane** ‘at Pretoria’

9.3.4 Compound moods and tenses

Rule 4: The auxiliary verb **-be** is never dropped and is written conjunctively to the following word. The following sub-rules apply here: / *Nsitasiyento -be igekhe isukelwe kodwana igwalwa gekuhlanganiswa nalokhu okuyilandelako. Mithetho elandelako isebenta lapha:*

Sub-rule 4.1: when the subject concord of **-be** consists of a vowel only the subject concord is omitted while a semi-vowel is inserted between **-be** and the subject concord that follows it, e.g., / *Nasivumelwano senhloko sa-be siphethe nkhamisa kaphela sivumelwano lesi sisukelwe kuri sigankhamisa ifakwa ekhathi kwa-be nesivumelwano senhloko esilandelako, Isib:*

- (78) Nkxosi (**ibe** isaphila >) beyisaphila 'The chief was still alive.'
(Ube usekhona >) Bewusekhona. 'You were still there.'

Ziervogel (1959:186) writes the auxiliary verb stem **-be** (whose subject concord consists of a vowel) disjunctively with the word it precedes, e.g.,

Mugwalo ubuswa guMungali lo **ibe** inkxosi kaSibindi.

'Mugwalo is governed by Mungali who is the chief at Sibindi's (place).'

Sub-rule 4.2: In the case of subject nouns belonging to Class 1 or 1a the vowel of **-be** is replaced by the subject concord **a** that follows it, e.g., / *Lapha nhloko ilibito elisesithopheni sa-1 gambho la nkhamisa ya-be isukelwa kuri sivumelwano senhloko a esiyilandelako siteka indawo yayo, Isib:*

- (79a) Mufati lo (ube asathagela >) ubasathagela. 'This woman was still dancing.'
Nkhulu (ube asumayela >) ubasumayela. 'My grandfather was talking.'

In the situative mood, Ziervogel (op. cit.:186) uses the auxiliary verb **-be** disjunctively with the verb it precedes, i.e., the subject concord **a-** of the noun belonging to Class 1 or 1a does not (for him) replace the vowel **-e** of the auxiliary verb stem **be**, e.g.,

(79b) Mathetha **ube** ateka iyise agatjho afe...

‘Mathetha was married before his father died...’

Sub-rule 4.3: In instances where the subject concord of **-be** consists of more than a vowel the subject concord is omitted and **-be** is joined to the following word, e.g., / *Lapha sivumelwano senhloko sa-be siphethe nkhamisa nenkhambhisani sivumelwano senhloko siyasukelwa kuri -be ahlanganiswe nelivi elilandelako, Isib:*

(80a) **libe** linetha > **belinetha** ‘It was raining.’

sibe sithandana > **besithandana.** ‘We were fond of each other.’

According to Ziervogel (1959:189) the subject concord of **-be** which consists of more than a vowel is not discarded and **-be** is disjunctively written with the word it precedes, e.g.,

Llanga **libe** libalele nkxosi yalayela butimbha.

‘The weather was clear and the chief called a hunt.’

Sub-rule 4.4: The copulative verb stem -ba

The copulative verb stem **-ba** is written conjunctively, e.g., / *Sikxu lesi sigwalwa gekuhlanganiswa nalokhu okusilandelako, Isib:*

(80b) Sivile kuri **ubagawune.** ‘We heard that he is getting better.’

Litab**amadoda.** ‘You will be men.’

Ziervogel (op. cit.:193) writes the copulative verb stem **-ba** disjunctively with the word that follows, e.g.,

- (80c) **Ntaba** nkxosi enjani nalokhwa ngaphola.
‘What sort of chief will I be when I get well.’

Rule 5: The negative formative –gasi-

The negative formative **–gasi-** is written conjunctively with a word it precedes, e.g., / *Siyakhi sekulandula –gasi-sigwalwa gekuhlukaniswa nelivi elilandelako, Isib:*

- (81a) Abathandi tidlo **etigasimunandi**. ‘They don’t like food that is not nice.’
Sifuna laba **bagasilapho** bete la. ‘We want those who are not there to
come here.’

Ziervogel writes the negative construction **–gasi** disjunctively with the word it precedes, e.g.,

- (81b) Babe **bagasi** gawune. ‘They were not better’
Titabe **tigasi** lapha. ‘They will not be here.’ (Ziervogel.1959:155).

Rule 6: The negative formative asi-

The negative formative **asi-** in negative copulatives is written conjunctively, e.g., / *Siyakhi sekulandula asi-sigwalwa sihlanganiswa nalokhu okusilandelako, Isib:*

- (82a) Munru lo **asikubhabha**. ‘This person is not my father.’
Timbuti leti **asitokxe** la. ‘These goats are not all here.’

Ziervogel writes the negative formative **asi** disjunctively with the word that follows as can be seen in the following examples –



- (82b) Nteko **asi** nro ya jeje. ‘It is not a ladle.’ (Ziervogel, op. cit.:214)
Asi mugegulu. ‘It is not an old woman.’ (Ziervogel, op. cit.:96)

Rule7: The progressive copulative –sese-

The progressive copulative –**sese-** is written conjunctively, e.g., / *Siyakhi lesisisaya selibanjalo sigwalwa sihlanganiswa nalokhu okusilandelako, Isib:*

- (83a) Labo **base**sebatlhangana. ‘Those are still boys.’
Sikxabula lesi **sise**sensami. ‘This shoe is still mine.’

Ziervogel writes the progressive copulative **sese** disjunctively, e.g.,

- (83b) Nrimbha wafumana miti le ibe ibuswa guMungali **isese** nebanru laba basele...
‘Nrimbha found that the kraals which were ruled by Mungali still have people who remained...’

Kure **isese** nkusasa likxhuwa leli lateka sithunya latheukela gemuNgeti...
‘During the morning the European took his gun and went down to the San River...’ (Ziervogel.1959:189)

9.3.5 Enclitics

As noted earlier, according to Ziervogel (1959:173), enclitics are not suffixes in Northern Ndebele but separate words that are spoken as part of the word to which they are attached.

Rule 8: The enclitic –**ke** is separated from the preceding word with a hyphen, e.g., / *Siwongeto –ke sigwalwa sihlukaniswe gehayifeni nelivi elisilandelako, Isib:*

- (84) Sumayela-**ke** sive. ‘Speak then let us hear.’
Khamba-**ke**. ‘Go then.’



Rule 9: The enclitic **ni** is written conjunctively, e.g., / *Siwongeto ni sigwalwa gekuhlanganiswa nelivi elisilandelako, Isib:*

- (85a) Ufunani ? ‘What do you want ?
Sinani ? ‘What do we have?’

Ziervogel is inconsistent with regard to the writing of the enclitic **ni** in his work. In certain instances, he inserts the hyphen between the enclitic **ni** and the word that comes before the enclitic while in other cases he writes it conjunctively, e.g.,

- (85b) Bari: ‘Na ubina-**ni**?
‘They said: ‘What is your totem?’

Sifanele **kuyentani** gekuba nenje siya eSwazini.

‘What are we supposed to do because we are now going to Swaziland.’

(Ziervogel, op. cit.:182).

Rule 10: The enclitic **phi** is written conjunctively, e.g., / *Siwongeto phi sigwalwa gekuhlanganiswa, Isib:*

- (86) Liyaphi? ‘Where are you going?’
Baphi? ‘Where are they?’

Rule 11: The enclitic **ndina** is written conjunctively, e.g., / *Siwongeto ndina sigwalwa gekuhlanganiswa, Isib:*

- (87a) Mutlhangan**andina** ‘You (damn) boy!’
Nnj**andina** ! ‘You (damn) dog!’

Ziervogel inserts a hyphen between the preceding word and the enclitic **ndina**, e.g.,

(87b) Mufati-**ndina**! ‘You (damn) woman!’

9.3.6 Punctuation marks

Rule 12: The hyphen

The hyphen is used in the following instances: / *Nhayifeni isebentiswa nje*:

Sub-rule 12.1: When a numeral is preceded by any formative, e.g., / *Lapha linani likhanjelwa embhili gesinye siyakhi, Isib*:

(88) Sithenge tixxomo eti-6. ‘We bought 6 cows.’
Sifuna banru aba-18. ‘We want 8 people.’

Sub-rule 12.2: For practical reasons in lengthy compound words, e.g., / *Emabitoni amande, Isib*:

(89) Sidudla-mafehlefehle. ‘a stout woman.’

Rule 13: The apostrophe

The apostrophe is used to indicate elision which mainly occurs in poetry and dialogue, e.g., / *Lititjhana lisebentiswa kukhombha kusukelwa okuvame kuvela etibongweni nasekusabetisaneni, Isib*:

(90) Munru’ kxomo. ‘A person who is a beast’
Ndaba’ kxulu. ‘A big matter/issue.’

9.4 Differences in the orthographical and spelling rules between Southern and Northern Ndebele

The two Ndebele languages differ in many respect in as far as their spelling rules are concerned, i.e., there are rules that

- (a) have been developed for one and not both Ndebele languages, and
- (b) rules that are applied differently in the two Ndebele languages.

In the following paragraphs the differences in the orthographical and spelling rules of the two Ndebele languages are discussed under the following subheadings –

The spelling rules that

- (i) have been developed for the Southern Ndebele but not for the Northern Ndebele, and
- (ii) those that are applied differently in the two Ndebele languages.

9.4.1 The Spelling rules that have been developed for Southern Ndebele but not for Northern Ndebele

There are numerous language aspects that have been developed for Southern Ndebele but not for Northern Ndebele. The following are the Southern Ndebele language aspects for which spelling rules related to their writing and formation have been developed while in Northern Ndebele such rules have not been developed and documented (yet):

- (i) Translations and foreign (cluster) sounds
- (ii) Abbreviations and acronyms of the following;
 - (a) Relationship and occupational terms
 - (b) Linguistic terms
 - (c) Months of the year
 - (d) Days of the week
 - (e) Measurement of: -mass

-volume, and

-distance

(iii) Duplication of stems

(iv) Numerals

(vii) Punctuation marks

9.4.2 The spelling rules that are applied differently in Southern and Northern

Ndebele

There are differences in the use or application of the orthographical and spelling rules in Southern and Northern Ndebele. There is a difference in the use of the hyphen and word division rules regarding the conjunctive, formative **ndina**, the copulative verb stem **-ba**, demonstratives and possessives. There are also differences regarding capitalization rules and rules governing vowel juxtaposition.

9.4.2.1 The hyphen: /-/

Southern Ndebele has six sub-rules governing the use of the hyphen, while Northern Ndebele has three. The common rule governing the use of a hyphen in compound words in both languages differs. In Southern Ndebele, according to **Sub-rule 2**, the hyphen is only used in compound words or terms with a ‘linguistic meaning’, while in Northern Ndebele it is, for practical reasons, only used in “lengthy compound words” (cf. Sub-rule 12.2 in Northern Ndebele). Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

Northern Ndebele

Linguistic terms (only)

Practically long compounds (only)

(91) Ibizo-senzo ‘deverbative noun’
Ibizo-nto ‘common noun’

Sidudla-mafehlefehle ‘fat woman’



9.4.2.2 Conjunctive: **na / ke**

The Southern Ndebele conjunctive **na** ‘if/when’ is written conjunctively with the word it precedes, while in Northern Ndebele the conjunctives **na** and **ke** ‘if / when’ are written disjunctively from the following word. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele	Northern Ndebele
(92) Bewungekho nasifikako . ‘You were not there when we arrived.’	Bewugekho na / ke sifika.
Nakangafuni ukuza mbize. ‘If he does not want to come call him.’	Na /ke agafuni kuta mbite.

9.4.2.3 The enclitic: **ndina**

The enclitic **ndina** occurs in both Ndebele languages, but is written disjunctively with the preceding word in Southern Ndebele and conjunctively in Northern Ndebele. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele	Northern Ndebele
(93) Khamba vila ndina! ‘Go you damn sluggard!’	Khambha livilandina!
Ufunani mfazi ndina! ‘What do you want you damn woman!’	Ufunani mufatindina!

9.4.2.4 The copulative verb stem **-ba**

The copulative verb stem **-ba** is written disjunctively with the word it precedes in Southern Ndebele, while in Northern Ndebele this formative is written conjunctively with the following word. Compare the following examples in this regard.



Southern Ndebele

Northern Ndebele

(94) Umntwanakhe **waba** ngcono. Munswana wakhe **wabagaxune**.
‘His child became better.’

Bazaba khona emnyanyeni. **Batabakhona** emunyanyeni.
‘They will be present at the ceremony.’

9.4.2.5 The non-nasal noun classes and their demonstrative pronouns

When a demonstrative pronoun appears post nominally with a noun from a non-nasal noun class in Southern Ndebele, the demonstrative coalesces with the preceding noun (while in the case of nasal noun classes it does not). In Northern Ndebele, when the demonstrative appears post nominally it is written disjunctively in all classes. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

Northern Ndebele

(95) Bulalani **isiwebeso** (< isiwebu + lesu). Bulalani **sixugulu lesu**.
‘Kill that spider.’

Ngilinyazwe **lilitjeli** (< lilitje + leli). Nkhubatwe **liye leli**.
‘I’m injured by this stone.’

The rule governing the coalescence of nouns from non-nasal noun classes with demonstrative pronouns in Southern Ndebele, is that all nouns ending on the vowel **-a**, **-e** or **-i** drop the final vowel when precedes a demonstrative pronoun whilst the demonstrative pronoun loses its initial consonant (Skhosana,1998:89). Compare the following examples in this regard.

(96) Abafaz(i) + (l)aba > abafazaba ‘These women’
 Ilahl(e) + (l)elo > ilahlelo ‘That coal’

Isibh(a) + (l)esa(ya) > isibhesa ‘That soap yonder’

9.4.2.6 The nasal noun classes and their possessive pronouns

Southern Ndebele nouns in the nasal classes coalesce with their possessive pronouns, while in Northern Ndebele this is not the case. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

Northern Ndebele

(97) Indaw(o) + (y)ethu > indawethu Ndawo + yethu > ndawo yethu.
‘Our place.’

Amanz(i) + (w)akhe > amanzakhe Mant̩i + wakhe > mant̩i wakhe
‘His water.’

Umuz(i) + (w)akho > umzakho Mut̩i + wakhe > mut̩i wakhe.
‘His home.’

9.4.2.7 The demonstrative pronoun of Class 16 and a locative noun

In Southern Ndebele when the demonstrative pronoun of Class 16 is preceded by a locative noun the demonstrative and the locative are written conjunctively, whereas in Northern Ndebele these two word categories are written disjunctively. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

Northern Ndebele

(98) Jama **phambilapho** (<phambili + lapho). Jama **embhili lapho**.
‘Stand there in the front.’

Hlala **phezulwapho** (<phezulu + lapho). Hlala **phezulu lapho**.
‘Stay up there.’



9.4.2.8 Capitalization

Northern Ndebele **Sub-rule 3.4** which governs the capitalization of the qualificatives states that

‘The first letter after the (possessive, adjective, relative) concord will be capitalized.’

The Southern Ndebele rule equivalent to the above is catered by the **Sub-rule 7.4** that states

‘The first letter after the initial vowel of a proper noun of a title is capitalized.’

Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

Northern Ndebele

(99) umNyango weze**F**undo

Nkxundla ye**M**fundo

‘Department of Education.’

umNyango wezemi**S**ebenzi.

Nkxundla yete**M**isebenti.

‘Department of Works.’

From the above examples, it can be deduced that the rule requires the first letter(s) of a stem to be capitalized in Southern Ndebele while in Northern Ndebele it requires the first letter after the (possessive, adjective or relative) concord to be capitalized (see examples (99) above).

9.4.2.9 Vowel juxtaposition

In Southern Ndebele vowel juxtaposition is impermissible except in the noun class prefixes of Classes 8 and Class 10 where the vowels **i** and **e** are doubled. To avoid vowel juxtaposition, like all other Nguni languages, Southern Ndebele applies various phonological rules such as vowel elision, vowel coalescence, consonantalization and glide insertion. In Northern Ndebele, in contradistinction, vowel juxtaposition is a permissible phonological feature. Compare the following Southern and Northern Ndebele examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

Northern Ndebele

(100) Udlala **noyise** (< **na uyise**).

Udlaluka **naiyise** (< **na iyise**).

‘He plays with his father.’

Abantu bayay**isaba** (< **baya isaba**) ipi. Banru bay**aisaba** (**baya isaba**) nndwa.

‘People are afraid of war.’

Sibuya **komunye** (<**ku omunye**) umuzi. Sibuya **kuomunye** (<**ku omunye**)
muti.

‘We are coming from another homestead.’

Regarding the origin of this phonological feature in Northern Ndebele, Wilkes (2007:168) points out that

‘A remarkable feature that Northern Ndebele phonology has acquired from Northern Sotho is that it allows the juxtaposition of vowels with a glottal stop between them to occur within the boundaries of the same word. This is typical of the Sotho languages but atypical of the Nguni languages...’.

9.5. Conclusion

In this chapter the differences between Southern and Northern Ndebele spelling have been discussed. The discussion has revealed that very little has been done with regard to



the development of the Northern Ndebele spelling rules. There are spelling rules that are only applicable in Southern Ndebele but not in Northern Ndebele as well as those that occur in both languages but with different meanings. The detailed general conclusion of the study is dealt with in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 10

AN OVERVIEW OF THE MOST IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS IN THE LINGUISTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN NDEBELE

10.1 Introduction

As stated from the outset the main aim of this study has been to investigate the linguistic affinity between Southern and Northern Ndebele. This relationship or (lack thereof) will be summarized here in the concluding chapter of this study. Wilkes (2001:312) points out that the linguistic relationship between Northern and Southern Ndebele has in the past always been a problematic one in so far as linguists differed in their opinion as to whether these two speech forms should be regarded as variant forms of the same language as Doke, for example, argued in 1954, or whether they should be recognized as two separate languages as Van Wyk (1966) and Ziervogel (1969) maintained. This study has revealed how distinct the two Ndebele languages are from each other. In the following paragraphs, only the salient differences between these two Ndebele languages are highlighted and summarized according to the

- (i) existing perspectives on the origins and history of the Southern and Northern Ndebele people of the Republic of South Africa
- (ii) sound systems of Southern and Northern Ndebele
- (iii) phonological features of Southern and Northern and
- (iv) morphophonological feature of Southern and Northern Ndebele
- (v) morphological structures of the Southern and Northern Ndebele
- (vi) spelling rules of Southern and Northern Ndebele.

This discussion is then followed by a number of concluding remarks.

10.2 An evaluation of the existing perspective(s) on the origins and history of the Southern and Northern Ndebele speaking people of the Republic of South Africa

It is clear that the existing perspectives on the origins and history of the two Ndebele languages spoken within the boundaries of the Republic of South Africa are fragmented, largely incoherent and inconclusively handled in most sources.

Three main conclusions can be drawn in this regard. They are that

- (a) the historical background regarding the exact place of origin of the Ndebele people in KwaZulu-Natal and that of the Northern Ndebele section, in particular, is still a debatable issue that needs further research.
- (b) the name “Ndebele” simply bears no significance in regard to the origin of the so-called Ndebele people found within as well as outside the Republic of South Africa (known as the Zimbabwean Ndebele).
- (c) though the Southern (viz. Nzunza and Manala subgroups) and the Northern Ndebele people (viz. Gegana or Kekana group) are historically related to each other through direct descent from chief Musi, as stated earlier, they no longer constitute a single ethnic group. The main split referred to earlier has led to the formation of two separate Ndebele groups that differ linguistically as well as culturally from each other.

10.3 The phonological dissimilarities between Southern and Northern Ndebele

One of the basic criteria applicable in comparative linguistics is the determining correspondence of the compared languages in regard to their phonemic inventories. Phonologically there are several salient differences that have been found that make these two Ndebele languages less close to one another. These distinctions pertain to

- (i) their sound system
- (ii) Zunda Nguni vs Tekela Nguni phonological features, and
- (iii) the ndrondroza phonological feature.

10.3.1 The Sound System

In as far as the sound systems of these two Ndebele languages are concerned there are several salient differences that differentiate these languages. There are numerous phonemic sounds that occur in Southern Ndebele that do not occur in Northern Ndebele, while Northern Ndebele also has a number of sounds that do not occur in Southern Ndebele. In Northern Ndebele, for instance, there are no click sounds as is the case of Southern Ndebele, where all click sounds occur except the lateral click sound /x/. In addition, Northern Ndebele also has inter-dental sounds that do not occur in Southern Ndebele.

Despite the phonemes that only occur in one language and not in the other (such as the click sounds) there are several phonemic sounds that occur in both languages, but that are orthographically not written in the same way, for instance, the voiceless affricative velar sound which in Southern Ndebele is orthographically written as /rh/ and the aspirated counterpart as /kgh/ in Northern Ndebele are written as /x/ and /kxh/, respectively. In addition to these velar sounds, the glottal voiced in Southern Ndebele is written as /h/ while in its northern counterpart the equivalent sound is written as /hh/.

10.3.2 Zunda Nguni vs Tekela Nguni phonological features

Phonologically there are two major features that distinguish Southern Ndebele as a Zunda Nguni language from Northern Ndebele as a Tekela Nguni language.

10.3.2.1 The phoneme /z/ versus /t/

As in all other Tekela Nguni languages such as siSwati, for instance, Northern Ndebele employs the ejective inter-dental explosive phoneme **t** [t̪] (e.g., **man̪ti** ‘water’, **mufat̪i** ‘woman’ etc.) in all phonological environments where Southern Ndebele employs the voiced lateral alveolar fricative phoneme **z** [z] (e.g., **amanzi** ‘water’, **umfazi** ‘woman’).

10.3.2.2 Vowel coalescence v/s Vowel substitution

In addition to the above phonemic difference, Southern Ndebele practises the so-called vowel coalescence strategy like all other Zunda Nguni languages whereby the

combination of the vowel /a/ plus the high vowel /i/ or /u/ gives rise to the new vowel /e/ or /o/ respectively (e.g., **w**a-**i**ndoda > **w**e**n**doda ‘of a man’, **n**a - **u**mntu > **n**o**m**untu ‘with a person’), while Northern Ndebele, as a Tekela language, practises the so-called “substitution of *e*” rule whereby the combinations of **a** + **a**, **a** + **i**, and **a** + **u** are always substituted by the vowel /e/, e.g., **n**a + (**u**)m**n**ru > **n**e**m**unru ‘with a person.’, **w**a + (**a**)bafati > **w**e**b**afati ‘of a woman.’

10.3.3 The ndrondroza phonological feature

Ndrondrozafication is a phonological feature that occurs in both Ndebele languages but not in the same phonological environment. In Southern Ndebele, for instance, the so-called **ndrondroza** phenomenon occurs in both the primary and secondary Ur-Bantu nasal compounds /nd/ and /nt/ (e.g., **into** > [**indr**] ‘something’, **indawo** [**indraw**] ‘place’), while in Northern Ndebele it is only the Ur-Bantu nasal compound /nt/ that is **ndrondrozafied** (e.g., **nto** > [**nr**] ‘something’ but , **ndoda** > [**nd**]da ‘man’).

The **ndrondrozafication** of the Ur-Bantu nasal compound /nd/ has for unknown reasons been abandoned as it no longer occurs in modern Northern Ndebele. This nasal compound /nd/ is currently pronounced in a non-**ndrondrozafied** form, that is, as [**nd**]. In addition to the above phonological feature, while in Northern Ndebele **drondrozafication** does not occur in words borrowed from Afrikaans and English, in Southern Ndebele it does, (e.g., **uSondro** ‘Sunday’)

10.4 Morphophonological features of the Southern and Northern Ndebele

In Chapter 4 the differences in the morphophonological features of Southern and Northern Ndebele are discussed at some length and a number of morphophonological features occurring in Southern Ndebele have been shown to be dissimilar to those occurring in Northern Ndebele in respect of the following aspects –

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| (i) consonant assimilation | (ii) syllabification |
| (iii) palatalization | (iv) vowel elision |
| (v) consonantization | (vi) labialization, and |

(vii) denasalization.

10.4.1 Consonant Assimilation

In Southern Ndebele, consonant assimilation only involves the assimilation of the alveolar nasal /n/ that occurs in the class prefix of Classes 9 and 10 nouns as well as the adjective concords of these classes, whereas in Northern Ndebele the so-called consonant assimilation feature applies to the

- (i) alveolar nasal /n/,
- (ii) bilabial fricative phoneme b[ɛ] and
- (iii) the lateral phoneme /l/.

10.4.1.1 The alveolar nasal /n/

The assimilation of the alveolar nasal /n/ in Northern Ndebele occurs when it forms part of the class prefixes of Classes 9 and 10 nouns as well as when it functions as the subject and object concord, respectively, of the 1st person singular. (Note that the adjective concords of Classes 9 and 10 do not contain a nasal in Northern Ndebele).

10.4.1.2 Bilabial fricative phoneme b[ɛ]

In as far as the bilabial fricative consonant b[ɛ] is concerned, whenever this bilabial consonant is preceded by the syllable **mu-**, the consonant /b/ assimilates to the preceding nasal /m/ thus causing the sequence **mu - b** to become **mm** in Northern Ndebele (e.g., **mu-bala** > **mmala** ‘colour’, **mu-bulale** > **mmulale** ‘kill him’, etc.), whereas this rule does not occur in Southern Ndebele.

10.4.1.3 The lateral phoneme /l/.

Besides the assimilation of the nasal /m/ and the bilabial consonant b[ɛ] in Northern Ndebele, the alveolar consonant /l/ in the perfect suffix **-ile** also has the tendency to assimilate to the preceding nasal /n/ or /m/ when these nasals appear in disyllabic stems, meaning that the consonant **l** in the perfect suffix **-ile** merges with the preceding nasal,

causing the consonant **l** to take on the same form as the preceding nasal **n** or **m**, (i.e., **n-l** > **nn** and **m-l** > **mm**) as can be seen in **n-l** > **nn**: **unonne** ‘he is fat’, **-bonne** ‘have seen’.

10.4.2 Syllabification

Unlike Northern Ndebele, Southern Ndebele syllabification occurs in three grammatical environments, as in all other Nguni languages, namely,

- (a) the ‘real’ class prefix of Class 1 and 3, (i.e., **-mu-** e.g., **umsana** ‘boy’, **umlambo** ‘river’ etc.),
- (b) the adjectival concord of these classes, (that is, **omu-**, e.g., Cl. 1: **omdala** ‘an old one’, Cl 3: **omkhulu** ‘a big one’), and
- (c) the object concord of Classes 1 and 1(a), (i.e. **-mu-**, e.g., Cl. 1: **Ngimtjelile (umfazi)** ‘I told her (a woman)’, **Umsizile (ugogo)** ‘You have helped her (the grandmother’).

In all three instances the nasal **-m-** is syllabified when the vowel **-u-** drops off and the syllabic features of the elided vowel are then transferred to the preceding nasal. This usually happens when these formatives appear before polysyllabic stems.

In Northern Ndebele, in contrast, this phonological process is much more prolific in that it is also found in grammatical environments where syllabification never occurs in Southern Ndebele such as, for instance, in the subject and object concords of the 2nd person singular and in the prefix of Class 1a nouns. When nouns in Class 1a have an initial phonemic sequence of /N + V/ in their stems in Northern Ndebele, the nasal is doubled in which case the first nasal becomes a syllabic nasal **n̩** and simultaneously acts as the class prefix of these nouns (e.g., Cl. 1(a) **nina** > **n̩nina** ‘his/her mother’, **nyoko** > **n̩nyoko** ‘your mother’ and so on). The same rule applicable to the syllabification of the nasal in the prefixes of some Class 1a nouns is also applied to the nasal in the prefix of certain Class 9 nouns, meaning that when a Class 9 noun has an initial phonemic sequence /N + V/ in its stem, the nasal is doubled and the first nasal becomes syllabic and also acts as the class prefix of these nouns (e.g., Cl 9: **nosi/nyosi** > **n̩nosi** ‘bee’, **nyoni** > **n̩nyoni** ‘bird’).

In addition to the syllabification of the nasal /n/ in Northern Ndebele, the nasal /m/ in the basic noun class prefix **mu-** of Classes 1 and 3, respectively becomes syllabic when this syllable precedes the bilabial fricative phoneme /b/, in which case the vowel /u/ of **mu-** falls away causing the phoneme /b/ to change to the nasal /m/ (according to the rule **mu-b >mm** alluded to under consonant assimilation earlier) and the nasal /m/ of **mu-** to become syllabic (e.g., Cl 1: **mu-bati** > **mbati** > **mmati** ‘carpenter’, **mu-boya** > **mboya** > **mmoya** ‘wind’). (Also cf. 10.4.1(ii) above.)

Syllabification of the nasals /n/ and /m/ in the subject and objectival concord of the first person singular **ndi-** is another peculiar feature which Northern Ndebele demonstrates that it differs from its Southern Ndebele. The subject and object concords of the first person singular has three variants in Northern Ndebele, namely, an alveolar nasal /n/, a bilabial nasal /m/ and a velar nasal **n[J]** that occur before consonants. (The basic variant **ndi-** only appears before vowels, semi-vowels, subject and object concords). Most importantly the nasal variants mentioned above are all syllabic and usually assimilate to the consonant phoneme that follows them.

10.4.3 Palatalization

Even though both Ndebele languages recognize palatalization as one of their phonological features, there are important differences between these two Ndebele languages in as far as the grammatical environments where this phonological process occurs is concerned. In Southern Ndebele, for instance, palatalization occurs in the formation of the passive, the diminutive and locatives, while in Northern Ndebele this phonological feature occurs in the formation of passives and diminutives but not in the formation of locatives.

In the formation of passive verbs and diminutive nouns, palatalization follows the same pattern in these two Ndebele languages except for the bilabial fricative phoneme [β] in Northern Ndebele and its implosive bilabial equivalent [ɓ] in Southern Ndebele. In Northern Ndebele, the bilabial fricative sound [β] becomes a pre-palatal semi-vowel **y[j]**

(e.g., -goba > -goywa ‘be bent’, ngubo > nguyana ‘small blanket’), while its bilabial implosive counterpart **b**[ɓ] in Southern Ndebele becomes the palatal ejective affricate **tj**[tʃʰ] (e.g. ikabi > ikatjana ‘young ox’, -saba > -satjwa ‘be feared’).

In as far as the formation of the locatives in these languages is concerned Northern Ndebele has two strategies for forming locative adverbs, while Southern Ndebele recognizes only one. One strategy in Northern Ndebele (especially the Mugombhane variant) triggers so-called palatalization (i.e., bilabial phonemes are palatalized) and the other (the Lidwaba variant) not (i.e., bilabial phonemes do not become palatalized). There is virtually no difference between Southern Ndebele and the Mugombhane variant form of Northern Ndebele with regard to the palatalization of locative adverbs.

10.4.4 Vowel elision

Two types of vowel elision strategies are distinguished by linguists, namely, voluntary and obligatory vowel elision. The salient differences in as far as the vowel elision between Southern and Northern Ndebele is concerned are that in Southern Ndebele obligatory vowel elision occurs in all instances of vowel juxtaposition where coalescence, consonantisation and glide insertion do not take place (e.g., -sosa (<s(i) + osa) inyama ‘we roast meat’, nomkhulu (<n(a) + omkhulu) unelungelo ‘even the old one has a right’), while in Northern Ndebele obligatory vowel elision occurs basically in two environments, that is, between two /l/ phonemes (e.g., llanga < lilanga) ‘sun’, mullo (<mulilo) ‘fire’) and in instances of vowel juxtaposition. In the case of obligatory vowel elision as a result of vowel juxtaposition, this basically occurs in three grammatical environments. In such instances, the final vowel /a/ of the formative or concord falls away (e.g., n(a) + omukxulu > nomukxulu ‘and the big one’, ndaba (y(a) + embhi > yembhi ‘bad news’ etc.). However, according to contemporary Northern Ndebele speakers the retention of juxtaposed vowels in these instances appears to be the rule, or, alternatively, a glide is inserted between juxtaposed vowels (e.g., na + omukxulu > naomukxulu or nawomukxulu or nomukxulu ‘and the big one’).

In addition to the above, the Northern Ndebele Class 3 prefix **mu-**, in contrast to Southern Ndebele, normally discards its vowel **-u** when appearing before stems commencing with the bilabial explosive **ph**, while before other consonant phonemes the **-u** is retained, e.g., **mphini** ‘axe handle’ **mphako** ‘food for the journey’ but **mubhalo** (and not ***mbhalo**) ‘writing/literature’, **mulandu** (and not ***mlandu**) ‘case’ and so on.

10.4.5 Consonantization

The two Ndebele languages demonstrate further dissimilarities in as far as consonantization is concerned. Unlike the other Nguni languages where the combination of the subject concord /a/ of Class 6 with the possessive formative /a/ does not result in the consonantization of the subject concord, in Southern Ndebele the combination of the subject concord /a/ of Class 6 with the possessive formative /a/ results in the subject concord /a/ consonantizing to /w/ (e.g., **amagama** (a + a + mi >) **yami** ‘my words’, etc.). In Northern Ndebele, however, the subject concord **a** consonantizes to /y/ (e.g. **mavi** (a + a + mi>) **yami** ‘my words’, etc.).

10.4.6 Labialization

Labialization is not a Zunda Nguni (including Southern Ndebele) phonological feature but occurs in Tekela Nguni languages such as siSwati. In Northern Ndebele, labialization is encountered in the voiceless sound **s** and the aspirated **th** resulting into **sw** and **tʰ**, respectively, when appearing before vowels **o**, **u** and **û** (e.g., **nso** > **nswo**[**nsw**]] ‘kidney’, **thuma** > **tʰuma** [**tʰuma**] ‘send’. However, according to the current Northern Ndebele orthographical and spelling rules, labialization is no longer a feature, so that words such as **nswo**, **-swuga**, **-tʰuma** are today pronounced as **nso**, **-suka**, **-thuma**.

10.4.7 Denasalization

Although denasalization occurs in both Ndebele languages, it does not occur in the same grammatical environments.

10.4.7.1 Denasalization in the prefixes of Classes 9 and 10 nouns

Denasalization in the noun class prefixes of Classes 9 and 10 nouns in Southern and Northern Ndebele occurs in opposite ways. In Southern Ndebele, it is only the Class 9 noun prefix that is denasalized (e.g., **ikosi** ‘chief’, **ipandla** ‘forehead’ etc.), while in Northern Ndebele this phonological process occurs in the class prefix of Class 10 nouns only (e.g., **tikxomo** ‘beasts’, **tikxukxu** ‘fowls’ etc.). In Southern Ndebele, on the other hand, Class 9 nouns drop the nasal in their class prefix before stems beginning on a voiceless consonant whilst retaining it before stems beginning on a voiced consonant. In Northern Ndebele, on the other hand, all Class 9 nouns retain the nasal in their class prefixes.

10.4.7.2 Denasalization in the adjectival concords of Classes 9 and 10 in

Southern Ndebele

There are two rules that apply to denasalization in the adjective concords in Southern Ndebele, whilst in Northern Ndebele, with the exception of the stem **-(n)hle** ‘beautiful’ where the nasal may or may not be discarded, it is obligatory (e.g., **Tikxomo tetibovu** (and never ***tetimbovu**) ‘Red beasts’).

In Southern Ndebele, the first rule is that denasalization in the adjectival concords of Classes 9 and 10 is optional before adjective stems that begin on voiced or semi-voiced consonant (e.g., Cl.9: **Bekukubi/bekukumbi emtjhadweni** ‘It was bad at the wedding’, Cl.10: **Iinkomo ezidala / ezindala zitjhiphile** ‘Old beasts are cheap’).

The second rule is that before adjectival stems that begin on a voiceless consonant, denasalization in the adjectival concord is obligatory (e.g., Cl. 9: **Ikoloyi etja iyabiza** ‘A new car is expensive’, **Indawo ehle ngeyaKwaZulu-Natal** ‘A beautiful place is that of KwaZulu Natal.’

10.4.7.3 Denasalization in the formatives with the nasal compound –ng[J g] in

Southern and Northern Ndebele.

In contrast to other Nguni languages including Southern Ndebele, in addition to the denasalization environments discussed above, this phonological feature in Northern

Ndebele has spread to almost all formatives that contain the nasal compound **-ng[ɟg]**. In Northern Ndebele, for instance, the potential formative **-nga-**, instrumental formative **-nga-**, copulative prefix **-ngu-/ngi-**, comparative prefix **njenga-**, (non-indicative) negative formative **n-nga-**, all occur denasalized in this language, while in Southern Ndebele, the nasal is retained throughout in the above formatives.

10.5 The morphological features of Southern and Northern Ndebele

The investigation of the morphological differences between Southern and Northern Ndebele has been the focus of four chapters, i.e., Chapters Five to Eight. In Chapter Five the nouns and pronouns of the two Ndebele languages were discussed, while Chapter Six focused on the qualificatives. Chapter Seven continued with morphological differences in the copulatives and adverbs between these two Ndebele languages while moods, tenses, verbs, auxiliary verbs, conjunctives and ideophones are the focus of Chapter Eight. These four chapters discuss the morphological differences between these two Ndebele languages, under the following sub-headings –

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| (i) nouns | (ii) pronouns |
| (iii) qualificatives | (iv) copulatives |
| (v) adverbs | (vi) moods |
| (vii) tenses | (viii) verbs |
| (ix) auxiliary verbs | (x) conjunctives, and |
| (xi) ideophones | |

10.5.1 The morphological features of the nouns

Two salient differences have been noted in this study in as far as the morphological structure of Southern and Northern Ndebele nouns are concerned

First, the most striking difference concerning the morphological structure of the nouns of the two Ndebele languages is that Southern Ndebele noun class prefixes, as in all other Zunda Nguni languages, comprise an initial vowel (or pre-prefix) plus a basic prefix plus a stem (e.g., **umuntu** ‘person’, **ilitje** ‘stone,’), while in Northern Ndebele the class prefix occurs minus the initial vowel, so that here, the morphological structure of a noun in

Northern Ndebele is like those of the other Tekela Nguni (as well as Sotho) languages (e.g., (⊥)**munru** ‘person’, (⊥)**liye** ‘stone’ etc.).

Secondly, despite the differences observed in the noun class prefixes between the two Ndebele languages, the noun class prefix of Southern Ndebele Class 8 contains a noun class prefix with a homorganic nasal /N/ before all polysyllabic nouns stems (e.g., **iimphondo** ‘one eyed persons’, **iinkhova** ‘owls’ etc.) except in the case of stems beginning on the vowels, semi-vowels and the monosyllabic stems, (e.g., **izakhi** ‘formatives’, **iiwebu** ‘spiders’, **izifo** ‘diseases’ etc.). The Northern Ndebele Class 8 noun class prefix, as is the case in all other Nguni and Sotho languages, does not contain a nasal (e.g., **tidlayela** ‘fools’, **tihlahla** ‘trees’ etc.).

10.5.2 The morphological features of pronouns

The two Ndebele languages differ in the formation of the three types of pronouns, that is, the absolute, demonstrative and quantitative pronouns, is concerned.

10.5.2.1 The absolute pronouns

There are only two major differences that the two Ndebele languages exhibit in the morphological form of their absolute pronouns. The form of the absolute pronoun of the second person plural, for instance, is **nina** in Southern Ndebele whilst in Northern Ndebele is **lina**. Consequently, the agreement morpheme of the 2nd person plural in Southern Ndebele is **ni-** (e.g., **Nifunani?** ‘What do you want?’), while in Northern Ndebele, as in isiNala - one of the Southern Ndebele variant forms, and Zimbabwean Ndebele, it is **li-** (e.g., **Lifunani?** ‘What do you want?’).

In addition to the above, the Southern Ndebele absolute pronoun of Class 6 is **wona** while Northern Ndebele recognizes second alternative form **ona**. This investigation, however, has found that **ona** is no longer popular among speakers of this language.

10.5.2.2 The demonstrative pronouns

The morphological forms of the demonstrative pronouns of the two Ndebele languages are similar except in the 2nd position and position 4. In Southern Ndebele, for instance, despite the first strategy of suffixing **-wo** to the 1st demonstrative position, there is an alternative 2nd position demonstrative form for Classes 1, 1a, 3 and 6 where the suffix **-yo** is added to the 1st position demonstratives (e.g., **umuntu loyo** or **lowo**) ‘That person’. In Northern Ndebele, this position is derived from the 1st position by means of the suffix **-wo** only (e.g., **munru lowo**) ‘That person’. The 4th demonstrative position only occurs in Southern Ndebele (e.g., Cl. 5: **le:la(ya)** ‘that yonder’) and not in Northern Ndebele.

10.5.2.3 The quantitative pronouns

10.5.2.3.1 The inclusive quantitative pronouns

Although the inclusive quantitative pronouns of the two Ndebele languages are without a nasal, their major difference is that the Southern Ndebele inclusive quantitative pronoun suffix occurs as **-ke** (e.g., **Abantu boke** ‘All the people’, while Northern Ndebele has two quantitative suffixes, namely, **-kxe** (which is the most frequently used form) and **-hle**, respectively, (e.g., **Banru bokxe/bohle** ‘All the people’). However, this investigation has further observed that Northern Ndebele speakers also have a popular third inclusive quantitative form **gemuga** that has the same semantic and syntactic features that the other inclusive quantitative pronouns have, except that **gemuga** does not normally precede the noun it relates to as other inclusive quantitative pronouns sometimes do.

In as far as the usage of these so-called inclusive quantitative pronoun stems is concerned, only nouns that are in the plural classes make use of inclusive quantitative pronouns in Northern Ndebele which is not the case in Southern Ndebele.

Moreover, the formation of the Class 6 pronoun in these two Ndebele languages also differs. In Southern Ndebele, for instance, the agreement morpheme of Class 6 changes from **a-** > **w**, (e.g., **amalanga** (< **a** + **o** + **ke**) **yoke**, ‘every day’), whereas in Northern Ndebele, as in other Nguni languages, this agreement morpheme is dropped, (e.g., **malanga** (**a**) + **o** + **kxe** / **hle**) **okxe** / **ohle**. ‘every day’).

10.5.2.3.2 The exclusive quantitative pronoun

In Southern Ndebele, as in all Nguni languages except Northern Ndebele, the exclusive quantitative pronoun is formed by means of an agreement morpheme (that resembles the subject concord of the class concerned) plus a pronominal **-o-** plus an exclusive quantitative suffix **-dwa**, while in Northern Ndebele this exclusive quantitative suffix does not exist. Instead, a noun **nedwa** ‘alone/only’ is used for this purpose and only used as part of a copulative construction that occurs in the situative mood (e.g., **Sisebenta sinedwa nemunhla** ‘We work alone today’).

10.5.3 The adjectives in Southern and Northern Ndebele

Adjectives in Southern and Northern Ndebele differ in regard to the adjective stems and the concord system.

10.5.3.1 The adjectival stems

One of the main differences in the adjective stems between Southern and Northern Ndebele is the fact that in Northern Ndebele the stems of the numerals 2 to 5 as well as the stem **-ngai** ‘how many’ (**-ngaki** in Southern Ndebele) may be used as either adjective stems or as enumerative stems, that is, they may either be used with an adjective concord or with an enumerative concord. In Southern Ndebele, and other Nguni languages, these numerals are always used as adjectives, meaning that they employ a concord that is formed by means of a ‘relative **a**’ plus a class prefix.

Phonologically in Southern Ndebele some adjective stems may occur with or without a nasal, while in Northern Ndebele it is only the stem **-(n)hle** that can do so. Northern Ndebele also has two adjective stems (i.e., **bovu** ‘red’ and **-ntima** ‘black’) that are not used as adjective stems but as relative stems.

10.5.3.2 The adjective concords

The major difference between the two Ndebele languages in as far as their adjective concords is concerned is that, unlike as is the case with Southern Ndebele, in Northern Ndebele (particularly in the Lidwaba dialect of Northern Ndebele which also represents

the standard form of this language) the consonant in the adjective concord of nouns belonging to the non-nasal classes is repeated (e.g., Cl.5: **Likxuni lelinde**. ‘A long piece of wood’). This is not the case in Southern Ndebele (cf. **Ikhuni elide** ‘A long piece of wood’).

In Northern Ndebele, the full adjective concord **omu-** of Classes 1, 1(a) and 3 is retained throughout (e.g., **omunde** ‘a tall one’, **omunghane** ‘a small one’), while in Southern Ndebele the full form of this concord only occurs with monosyllabic adjective stems (e.g., **omude** ‘a tall one’) and, with multi-syllabic adjective stems, it occurs in its abbreviated form (e.g., **omncani** ‘a small one’).

10.5.4 The relatives in Southern and Northern Ndebele

The major morphological feature that distinguishes Southern Ndebele from its northern counterpart regarding relatives is that Northern Ndebele has two types of relative concords (i.e., the so-called Nguni type, e.g., **Likxhedla elikhubeleko** ‘An injured shoulder’ and Sotho type, e.g., **Likxhedla leli likhubeleko** ‘An injured shoulder’), while Southern Ndebele recognizes only one type, (i.e., the Nguni type, e.g., **Ihlombe elilimeleko** ‘An injured shoulder’).

In Southern Ndebele, there are two types of relative concords for the 1st and 2nd persons, that is, the first type where the relative concords of Class 1 and Class 2 are used while in the case of the second type the relative concords of the 1st and 2nd person singular and plural are used (e.g., **Mina engikhulumako / okhulumanko** ‘I, who am speaking’). In Northern Ndebele, only a single (Sotho) relative form for its 1st and 2nd person singular and plural is used by way of the concords for Classes 1 and 2 (in addition to the demonstrative pronoun of these classes) (e.g., **Nna/Mina lo asumayela**, ‘[It is] I, who is speaking’).

In addition to the above, as in the other Nguni languages, Southern Ndebele has basic (or primitive relative) stems, while Northern Ndebele, according to the findings of this investigation, has none.

10.5.5 Enumeratives in Southern and Northern Ndebele

Southern and Northern Ndebele differ substantially from one another as far as the number and type of enumerative stems are concerned. While Southern Ndebele has three enumerative stems (i.e., **-ni**, **-nye**, and **-phi**), Northern Ndebele has seven, of which five are the stems of the numerals from 1-5.

10.5.6 Possessives in Southern and Northern Ndebele

When the possessor noun is a noun in Class 1a and the possession a noun from a nasal class, the possessive construction consists of the regular possessive concord (of the noun referred to) plus possessive formative **-ka-** plus the nominal stem, or the possessive formative **ka-** plus the nominal stem in Southern Ndebele. In Northern Ndebele, on the other hand, the possessive concord with **-ka-** does not apply, thus, the possessive consists of the regular possessive concord plus the nominal stem.

However, when both the possessor and the possession are nouns in Class 1a in Southern Ndebele, the possessive concord may consist of either the possessive particle **ka-** plus the nominal stem, or a Class 5 subject concord **li-** plus the possessive formative **-ka-**, or the regular Class 5 possessive concord **la-** plus the possessive formative **-ka-** in Southern Ndebele, whereas in Northern Ndebele the regular possessive concord of Class 1/1a (i.e., **wa-**) is used in this instance.

The other salient difference between Southern and Northern Ndebele in as far as the possessives are concerned, is that in Northern Ndebele when the possessive stem is a locative noun with an initial **e-**, an intervocalic **s** is inserted between the possessive concord and this initial **e-** (e.g., **Sipho (sa-ekhaya) sa_sekhaya**, 'A gift of home'), while in Southern Ndebele, this is not the case, instead, the vowel of the possessive concord is dropped (e.g., **Isipho (s(a)-ekhaya >) sekhaya** 'A gift of home').

10.5.7 Copulatives in Southern and Northern Ndebele

The two Ndebele languages also differ substantially in regard to their copulative formations. In Southern Ndebele, for instance, the formation of identificative copulatives from nouns with monosyllabic stems occurs by doubling the true prefix of the noun and lowering the tone of the initial syllable, except for Class 9 nouns where a semi-vowel **y** is added to the prefix and the tone of the prefix lowered (e.g., Cl.1: **Ubabakho mùmúntù** (<**úmúntù**) **othulileko**, ‘Your father is a quiet person’). In the case of polysyllabic stems, except for Class 1a, the initial vowel of the noun class prefix is discarded when it becomes a copulative, except for Classes 5, 8, 10, 14 and 15 nouns, where the consonant that is similar to the consonant contained in the true prefix is prefixed to the noun and, in the case of Class 9 nouns, where a semi-vowel **y** is added to the prefix.

By contrast, in Northern Ndebele all nouns are made copulative without any morphological change, that is, by lowering the tone of the (basic) prefix only, except in the case of nouns belonging to Classes 1a and 2a (e.g., Cl.2: **Bokxe labo bàfáti** (<**báfáti**) **baBulongo**, ‘All those are the wives of Bulongo’). In the case of Class 1a, the copulative formative **gu-** is prefixed to the noun while copulative nouns in Class 2a in this language take the prefix **m-** (e.g., Cl.1a **Mapela gumalume waMaraba**. ‘Mapela is Maraba’s uncle,’ and Cl.2a: **Banru labo mbobhabha**. ‘Those people are our fathers’.)

In regard to the negation of the copulatives formed from nouns in Northern Ndebele, identificative copulatives constructed from noun classes other than Class 1a are negated by means of the indicative negative morpheme **a-** and the negative copulative formative **si-**, while the noun retains its non-copulative tone pattern (e.g., **Banru labo asimbobaba** ‘Those people are not our fathers’. In Southern Ndebele, the negative formative **akusi** or **a...si** is prefixed to the copulative noun (e.g., **Uyihlo akusimumuntu / akasimumuntu** ‘Your father is not a person’).

While there is no substantial difference between Southern and Northern Ndebele in the formation of the positive and negative copulative from pronouns, the main differences between these languages are that Southern Ndebele uses the indefinite concord **ku** (e.g.,

1st p.s: **Akusingimi / akusimi** (<**ngimi**) **obizako**, ‘It is not me who calls.’), while Northern Ndebele does not, and that in Northern Ndebele, the positive form of the copulative prefixes **gu** and **gi-** changes to **ku** and **ki**, respectively, (e.g., **Asikuye** (<**guye**) **lo aziko**, ‘It is not he who knows.’ and **Asikili** (<**gili**) **laba banetjhu**, ‘It is not you (plural) who are lucky’).

The construction of copulatives from possessive pronouns in Southern Ndebele, unlike in Northern Ndebele, comprises the copulative formative **nge-** that is prefixed to the possessive pronoun in all classes (e.g., **Imizi le ngeyami**, ‘These homes are mine.’), while in Northern Ndebele:

- (a) a syllabic nasal [N] is prefixed to possessive pronouns that commence with a consonant to which it also assimilates, (e.g. **Mbute kuri lihloka leli n^llakhe**, ‘Tell him that this axe is his.’), and
- (b) the vowel **i-** is prefixed to possessive pronouns that commence with the semi-vowel **y-**, while the vowel **u** is prefixed to possessives pronouns that begin with the semi-vowel **w**. (e.g., **Munrwatanyana lo u^wwami**. ‘This little girl is mine.’).

Southern and Northern Ndebele further differ in regard to the semantic significance of their descriptive copulatives. A crucial difference that needs to be pointed out is that Northern Ndebele descriptive copulatives have both “descriptive” and “identificative” significance while, in all the other Nguni languages including Southern Ndebele, they exclusively have a “descriptive” significance.

With the exception of the 1st and 2nd person singular and plural, the adjectives in all the noun classes in Southern Ndebele are copulativized by deleting the initial vowel of the adjective concord, except in the case of the adjectives of Class 9 where (y)i- replaces the initial vowel of this concord (e.g., Cl.1: **USibongile muhle** (<**omuhle**), ‘Sibongile is beautiful.’). In the case of the 1st and 2nd person adjectives, the subject concord of these

persons is prefixed to the copulativized adjective which has the same form as those of Classes 1 and 2, respectively. In Northern Ndebele, in contrast, the formation of copulatives from adjectives entails the prefixation of:

- the copulative prefix **u** plus the glide **w-** to adjectives beginning with the vowel **o-** and a copulative prefix **i** plus the glide **y-** to those adjectives that begin with the vowel **a-** or **e-** (e.g., **Munswana wami uwomukxulu** (< **omukxulu**) ‘My child is old /is the old one.’).
- the variant syllabic nasal [N] before adjectives that commence on consonant. This syllabic nasal, which acts as a copulative prefix in this instance, assimilates to the initial consonant of the adjective (i.e., **n** > /**m**/ before bilabial **b** [ɓ], > [J] before velar consonants and > /**n**/ before alveolar consonants), (e.g., **Bafati laba mbabande** (<**babande**) **bokxe**. ‘These women are all tall (the tall ones).’).
- The adjectives of Class 5 are the exception, as they take a copulative prefix **i** instead of the syllabic nasal.
-

With regard to the descriptive copulatives formed from relative stems, the differences between these two Ndebele languages is that the formation of the descriptive copulatives from relatives with primitive and nominal relative stems in Southern Ndebele is by replacing the relative concord with the subject concord in the case of the nasal classes and by deleting the initial vowel of the relative concord in the case of the non-nasal classes, while in Northern Ndebele, the copulatives formed from relative stems have both a descriptive and identificative form and they are constructed by prefixing the subject concord to the relative stem.

In the formation of negation, the same rule employed in the negation of copulatives formed from adjectives is applicable in Southern Ndebele (i.e., by means of the negative **a-** plus the subject concord plus **-si-** e.g., **Umfazakhe akasimhlophe** (< **umhlophe**). ‘His wife is not light’). In Northern Ndebele, on the other hand, the negation of the copulatives formed from relatives with a descriptive significance is by prefixing **a-** to the positive

relative copulative (e.g., **Banrwana bakhe abajalo (< bajalo) ke baseTshwane.** ‘His children are not like that when they are in Pretoria’).

10.5.8 The adverbs

Although Southern and Northern Ndebele in most instances use the same derivational morphemes to form locatives there are, however, important morphological differences between these two languages. The most salient difference between Southern and Northern Ndebele in as far as the formation of the locative adverbs is concerned, (despite the numerous locative formatives **e...ini, e..., ka-/ kwa-, ku-/ ki-** which occur in both languages), is the fact that Northern Ndebele has a locative prefix **nnga-** that expresses the concept of ‘besides/ next to’ (e.g., **Bajame nngami (<nnga-mina).** ‘They stood beside me.’), that does not occur in Southern Ndebele.

The locative prefixes **kwa-** and **ka-** in these two Ndebele languages are also used differently. Southern Ndebele, for instance, uses the locative prefix **kwa-** (e.g., **Sibuya kwamfundisi.** ‘We are coming from the pastor’s place’) before Classes 1 and 1a as well as with the demonstratives and absolute pronouns of all classes, while Northern Ndebele prefixes both **ka-** and **kwa-** (e.g., **Sibuya ka- / kwamufundisi.** ‘We are coming from the pastor’s place’).

10.5.9. Mood

No significant morphological distinction could be found between Southern and Northern Ndebele in as far as the different moods are concerned. The few differences that could be observed pertain to the Southern Ndebele subject concord of Classes 1, 1a and 6 of the indicative mood, which is negated by means of **-ka-** (e.g., Cl.1: **umsana lo akasebenzi nami** ‘This boy is not working with me’ / Cl.6: **amanzi la akabili** ‘This water is not boiling.’), while in Northern Ndebele it is negated by either **-a** or **-ka-** (e.g., **mufati wakhe akasebenti/aasebenti** ‘His wife does not work.’).

In regard to the subjunctive mood, unlike Northern Ndebele, Southern Ndebele applies a second negation strategy in which the terminal vowel **-a** of the negative verb does not

change to **-i** (e.g., Cl.1: **Umma wathi ngingaya** (cf. **ngingayi**) **kwagogo iveke ephelileko**. ‘My mother said I must not go to my grandmother’s place last week.’).

In the negation of the potential mood, Southern Ndebele negates by means of the negative auxiliary verb **(a)ngekhhe** (e.g., **Umuntu lo (a)ngekhhe ahlale nawe**. ‘This person cannot stay with you.’), while in Northern Ndebele this mood is negated by means of the construction **-gasi-** (e.g., **Munru lo agasi hlali nawe**. ‘This person cannot stay with you.’).

10.5.10 Tenses

Morphologically, no remarkable differences exist between Southern and Northern Ndebele in as far as the positive forms of the verbs in the present, perfect, future and past tenses are concerned, except in the negation of the future tense of the indicative mood. In Southern Ndebele the future tense of the indicative mood is negated by means of a negative vowel **a-** while in Northern Ndebele this tense is negated by **∠gasi-** or the negative vowel **a-**.

Then, the perfect tense of the indicative mood is negated by means of either the negative indicative formative **a-** plus the perfect negative morpheme **-ka** or the (negative) auxiliary verb **(a)zange** or **(a)khange** in Southern Ndebele, while in Northern Ndebele, this tense form is negated by means of the negative vowel **a-** plus the perfect negative morpheme **-ka** which is prefixed to the verbal stem. In addition, while the past tense of the indicative mood in Southern Ndebele is negated by means of **(a)zange**, in Northern Ndebele it is negated by a negative construction **agabe khe**.

10.5.11 Verbs

The differences between Southern and Northern Ndebele in as far as their verbal stems are concerned are that there are:

- (a) verbal stems that have the same meaning but that are completely or slightly

different in form,
(b) verbal stems that have the same form but with different meanings, and (c)
vowel verb stems that are not the same.

Morphologically, Southern Ndebele also differs from Northern Ndebele in expressing diminutivized actions through verbs. While Southern Ndebele duplicates the monosyllabic verbal stems and repeats the first two syllables of the polysyllabic verbal stems to express the diminutive actions of verbs (e.g., **khambakhamba** ‘go a little bit’) Northern Ndebele prefixes the diminutive formative **-anyana** (e.g., **khambanyana** ‘go a little bit’).

10.5.11.1 Latent vowel verb stems

The most important difference between Southern Ndebele in as far as the latent vowel verb stems are concerned is that while Southern Ndebele has two vowel verb stems (i.e., **(i)za** and **-(i)zwa**) Northern Ndebele has none.

10.5.11.2 Auxiliary verbs

No difference exists between Southern Ndebele and Northern Ndebele in as far as their auxiliary verb stems are concerned except a few auxiliary verb stems that are phonologically completely or partially different and a few that occur in Northern Ndebele with no equivalents in Southern Ndebele (and vice versa).

10.5.12 Ideophones in Southern and Northern Ndebele

The differences between Southern and Northern Ndebele in as far as the ideophones are concerned are that the two Ndebele languages have ideophones that are:

- (a) the same in form but with different meaning,
- (b) different in form but with the same meaning, and
- (c) ideophones that occur in Northern Ndebele but not Southern Ndebele, and vice versa.

10.6 Spelling rules of Southern and Northern Ndebele

The two Ndebele languages differ radically in as far as their spelling rules are concerned. There are numerous language aspects that have spelling rules that govern their writing in Southern Ndebele which have not yet been developed for Northern Ndebele.

10.6.1 Language aspects that have spelling rules in Southern Ndebele but not yet in Northern Ndebele

The following Southern Ndebele language aspects have spelling rules related to their writing, while comparable Northern Ndebele spelling rules have not yet been developed:

- (i) Translations and foreign (cluster) sounds
- (ii) Abbreviations and acronyms of the following;
 - a) Relationship and professional terms
 - b) Months of the year
 - c) Days of the week
 - d) Parts of speech
 - e) Mass
 - f) Volume
 - g) Distance
- (iii) Duplication of word stems
- (iv) Counting.

10.6.2. Spelling rules that occur in Southern and Northern Ndebele but with different applications

There are numerous spelling rules that Southern and Northern Ndebele share but with different interpretations and applications. While Southern Ndebele has sixteen sub-rules under punctuation marks, Northern Ndebele only has two, they are, an apostrophe and a hyphen. The rule governing the apostrophe demonstrates no difference in application in the two Ndebele languages, but there is a difference in the application of a hyphen, conjunctive, enclitic **ndina** and the demonstratives.



10.6.2.1 A hyphen: (-)

Southern Ndebele has six sub-rules governing the use of a hyphen, whereas Northern Ndebele has three. In all other rules governing the use of a hyphen, no distinction exists except for the rule governing the use of a hyphen in compound words which differs. In Southern Ndebele, according to **Sub-rule 18.2**, a hyphen is used only in compound words (or terms) with “linguistic meaning” (e.g., **ibizo-mbala** ‘proper noun’) while in Northern Ndebele, for practical reasons, it is used in “lengthy compound words” (e.g., **sidudla-mafehlefehle** ‘a stout woman’, (cf. **Sub-rule 9.2.5** in Northern Ndebele)).

10.6.2.2 Conjunctive: na / ke

The conjunction **na** ‘if/when’ in Southern Ndebele is written conjunctively with the word it precedes (e.g., **Ngiyamthanda nakadlala umakhakhulwararhwe**. ‘I like him when he plays rugby’), while in Northern Ndebele the conjunctive **na** and **ke** ‘if / when’ are written disjunctively (e.g., **Na /Ke afika mbute kuri ete la**. ‘When he arrives tell him that he must come here’).

10.6.2.3 The enclitic: ndina

The enclitic **ndina** is written disjunctively with the preceding word in Southern Ndebele (e.g., **Msana ndina uyaphi?** ‘You damn boy where are going to.’ while in Northern Ndebele this enclitic is written conjunctively (e.g., **Mufatindina**. ‘You damn woman.’).

10.6.3 Non-nasal noun classes and their demonstrative pronouns

When a demonstrative pronoun appears post nominally with nouns in non-nasal classes in Southern Ndebele it coalesces with the preceding noun (e.g., **isibheso** ‘that soap’) while in nasal classes it does not (e.g., **Amarubhi la:wa(ya)** ‘Those yonder ruins’). In Northern Ndebele, in contrast, when the demonstrative appears post nominally it is written disjunctively in all classes (e.g., **Maye lawo** ‘Those stones.’).

10.6.4 Nasal noun classes and their possessive pronouns

Southern Ndebele nouns from the nasal classes coalesce with their possessive pronouns (e.g. **Umsebenzami** ‘My work’) while nouns from all non-nasal classes do not (e.g., **Isikhwama sakhe** ‘His bag’). In Northern Ndebele this is not the case (e.g., **Mufati wakhe** ‘His wife’, **Sikxabula sami** ‘My shoe.’).

10.6.5 The demonstrative pronoun of Class 16 and its locative class noun

When the demonstrative pronoun of Class 16 is preceded by its locative, the demonstrative and the locative are written jointly in Southern Ndebele, whereas in Northern Ndebele these two word categories are written disjunctively.

10.6.6 Capitalization

Northern Ndebele **Sub-rule 3.4** which governs the capitalization of the qualificatives states that

‘The first letter after the (possessive, adjective, relative) concord will be capitalized.’

The rule equivalent to the above is catered for by the examples of **Sub-rule 14.4** in Southern Ndebele.

As can be seen from these examples, the rule requires “the first letter of a stem” to be capitalized in Southern Ndebele while in Northern Ndebele it requires “the first letter after the (possessive, adjective or relative) concord” to be capitalized.

10.6.7 Vowel juxtaposition

In Southern Ndebele, vowel juxtaposition is impermissible except in the noun class prefixes of Classes 8 and 10 where the vowels **i** and **e** are doubled. To avoid vowel juxtaposition, as in all other Nguni languages, Southern Ndebele applies various phonological rules such as vowel elision, vowel coalescence, consonantization and glide insertion. In Northern Ndebele, vowel juxtaposition is always a permissible phonological feature.

10.6.8 Vocabulary of Southern vs Northern Ndebele

While both Ndebele languages have some of its vocabulary drawn from the Northern Sotho (e.g., Southern Ndebele: **umukghwa**, Northern Ndebele **mukxwa** < Northern Sotho: **mokgwa** ‘manner’), a study of Northern Ndebele vocabulary reveals that the language has adopted more vocabulary than its southern counterpart from Northern Sotho. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Northern Ndebele	Northern Sotho	Southern Ndebele	
Nominal stems			
sithunya	sethunya	isigidi	‘gun’
marixa	marega	ubusika	‘winter’
lixedla	legêtle	ihlombe	‘shoulder’
mugegulu	mokgêkolo	isilukazi	‘old woman’
mukgalabi	mogalabje	iqhegu	‘old man’
ndwa	ntwa	ipi	‘war/fight’
liphuthi	lephôtse	umgade/ithanga	‘pumpkin’
liwobu	leôbu	inwabu	‘chameleon’
ngweji	ngwêtsi	umakoti/umlobokazi	‘bride’
Verbal stems			
-sinya	-senya	-ona	‘destroy/damage’
-xana	-gana	-ala	‘refuse’
-bina	-bina	-vuma	‘sing’
-ri	-re	-thi	‘say’
-thobala	-rôbala	-lala	‘sleep’
-khuja	-khutša	-phumula	‘rest’
-khunama	-khunama	-guqa	‘kneel down’
-ribha	-ripa	-qunta	‘cut’
-thuntjha	-thuntšha	-dubula	‘shoot’
-duma	-duma	-funa	‘want/wish’

-khombela

-kgopêla

-bawa

‘ask’

10.7 Conclusion and recommendations

This extensive investigation has shown that although the Southern and Northern Ndebele people genealogically share the same historical background and origin, their linguistic status is that they are two different languages and not variant forms of the same language as Doke (1954: 24) and Mashiyane (2002: 67) maintain and as some government authorities assume. This study has conclusively demonstrated that the linguistic dissimilarities that these two Ndebele languages exhibit run through all linguistic aspects such as the phonology, morphophonology, morphology as well as throughout their vocabulary (as given in Annexure A - C). These differences are more than sufficient to warrant the two Ndebele languages being regarded as two autonomous languages that need to be independently developed. Reviewing the differences in the vocabulary and the grammatical structure of Southern and Northern Ndebele, the conclusion must be drawn that there is insubstantial intelligibility between them. Despite the influence of Afrikaans and English that both these languages demonstrate, Northern Ndebele has revealed itself to be more influenced by Northern Sotho than Southern Ndebele and, in addition, it also manifests some elements of siSwati, TshiVenda and Xitsonga.

To reiterate, the overall findings of this research reveal that Southern and Northern Ndebele are two distinct languages that deserve autonomous development and should be regarded as two independent languages that trace their origin from the same historical source. The mutual unintelligibility between the two Ndebele languages also reduces the possibility of harmonizing the two languages.

The findings of this research project show that further investigation, particularly into etymological aspects of both Southern and Ndebele, may be warranted to reveal such aspects as borrowing, derivation and transliteration, aspects not covered in any detail in this present study.