

CHAPTER 3

PHONOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN NDEBELE

3.2 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the phonological differences between Southern and Northern Ndebele. As already articulated, the aim of this investigation is to analyse these languages as they are currently spoken, a synchronic approach (i.e., the way the phonemic inventories of the two languages are currently found) is adopted in the description of the phonemic differences displayed by these two languages. Where possible, the phonemic differences are diachronically explained in order to account for any historical changes that have occurred in the phonemes concerned.

As was stated in Chapter One, the two main sources that were consulted in the investigation of the phonemic inventory of Southern Ndebele are Skhosana's Master's dissertation entitled 'Foreign Interferences in the Sound, Grammatical and Lexical System of Southern Ndebele' (1998) and the latest official orthography and spelling rules of Southern Ndebele which appeared in 2008 under the title *Imithetho Yokutlola Nokupeleda IsiNdebele*.

With regard to Northern Ndebele, Ziervogel's work of 1959 entitled *A Grammar of Northern Ndebele* and the *Northern Ndebele Orthography and Spelling Rules*, published in 2001, are the basic sources of information in the investigation of the sound system of this language. This, however, does not underestimate other pertinent scholastic works that have also touched upon the sound systems of these two languages. A work that needs to be mentioned in this regard is Msimang's doctoral thesis entitled 'Some Phonological Aspects of the Thekela Nguni Dialects', (1986). In addition to the sources referred to above, information has also been obtained through personal investigation of the sound system of these two languages.

The phonological differences between Southern and Northern Ndebele are discussed in this chapter (i.e., Chapter Three). The content of this chapter is discussed under the following headings –

- (i) the sound system of Southern Ndebele
- (ii) the sound system of Northern Ndebele
- (iii) some remarks on the differences between the Southern and Northern Ndebele sound system revised in 2001 and that distinguished by Ziervogel (1959)
- (iv) a tabular outline of the sound systems of Southern and Northern Ndebele, and finally,
- (v) phonological differences between Southern and Northern Ndebele.

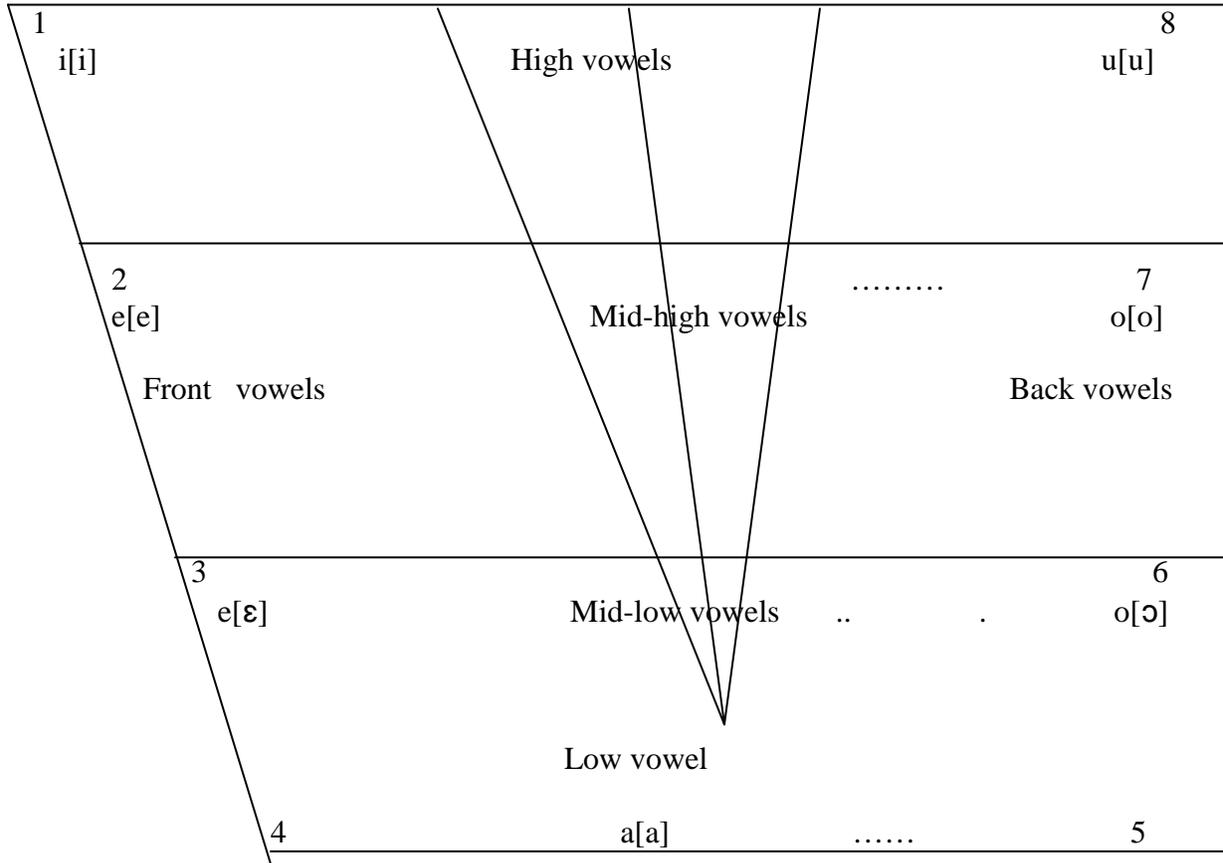
3.2 The sound system of Southern Ndebele

In April 1982, the first preliminary outline of the Southern Ndebele Orthography and Spelling Rules was finalized by the then Southern Ndebele Language Board. It was published for the first time in a school circular magazine known as *Educamus* of July 1982 issued by the then Department of Education and Training. This guideline has since been revised and was reissued in 1995, 2000 and 2008. In the following paragraph, the latest sound system of Southern Ndebele is outlined.

3.2.1 The vowel system

Phonetically, Southern Ndebele recognizes seven vowel sounds which can be illustrated as follows in a vowel chart.

SOUTHERN NDEBELE VOWEL CHART



The Southern Ndebele vowels shown above are described as follows –

/a/ [a]: A neutral vowel that occurs between the cardinal point no. 4 and 5 of the vowel chart, e.g.

- (1) -sala [sala] 'remain' -gada [gaɗ a] 'watch'

/i/ [i]: A high close front vowel that occurs slightly below the cardinal point no. 1 of the vowel chart, e.g.

- (2) isimbi [isimbi] 'iron' ibisi [i, isi] 'milk'

/u/ [u]: A high close back vowel that occurs slightly below cardinal point no. 8 of the vowel chart, e.g.

(3) ubusuku [uɓuɔ u ɔku] 'night' -khulu [khulu] 'big'

/e/ [ɛ]: A mid-low front vowel that occurs slightly below the cardinal point no. 2 of the vowel chart, e.g.

(4) -lele [lɛlɛ] 'asleep' -neka [n ɛkɑ] 'hang'

/e/ [e]: A mid-high front vowel that occurs slightly below the cardinal point no. 3 of the vowel chart, e.g.

(5) leli [leli] 'this' benu [ɓenu] 'yours'

/o/ [ɔ]: A mid-low back vowel that occurs slightly below the cardinal point no. 6 of the vowel chart, e.g.

(6) izolo [izɔlɔ] 'yesterday' lokho [lɔkhɔ] 'that'

/o/ [o]: A mid-high back vowel that occurs slightly below cardinal point no. 7 of the vowel chart, e.g.

(7) bonile [ɓonilɛ] 'have seen' ngabomu [ŋgabomu] 'purposely'

3.2.2 The consonant system

The following consonants, including their phonemic variants, occur in Southern Ndebele.

3.2.2.1 Explosives

/p/ [p']: An ejective bilabial explosive, e.g.

(8) ipumulo [ip'umulɔ] 'nose'
ipendulo [ip'endulɔ] 'an answer'

/ph/ [ph]: An aspirated bilabial explosive, e.g.

(9) -phapha [phapha] 'fly'
-phuma [phuma] 'get out'

/b/ [b]: A voiced bilabial explosive that occurs only as part of the nasal compound [mb], e.g.

- (10) -namba [namba] 'let us go'
-lamba [lamba] 'get hungry'

/bh/ [b̥]: A devoiced bilabial explosive that occurs outside nasal compounds, e.g.

- (11) -bhema [b̥ɛma] 'smoke'
umbhemi [um̄b̥emi] 'heavy smoker'

/t/ [ṭ]: An ejective alveolar explosive that also occurs in nasal compounds, e.g.

- (12) isitolo [isiṭ'ɔlɔ] 'shop'
itiye [iṭ'ijɛ] 'tea'
iintethelelo [iinṭ'ɛthɛlɛlɔ] 'blessings'
iintuthuko [iinṭ'uthu ɔ] 'developments'

/th/ [tḥ]: An aspirated alveolar explosive, e.g.

- (13) -thula [tḥula] 'keep quiet'
-thela [tḥɛla] 'pour'

/d/ [ḍ]: A devoiced alveolar explosive that occurs outside nasal compounds, e.g.

- (14) idolo [iḍɔlɔ] 'knee'
isidalwa [isiḍalwa] 'a cripple'

/dr/ [dṛ]: A devoiced vibrant alveolar explosive which occurs:

(a) as the equivalent of the voiceless explosive /t/ in the Ur-Bantu nasal compound [nt], e.g.

- (15) intombi [inḍrombi] (or [indombi]) 'lady/girl'
umkhonto [um̄khonḍrɔ] (or [um̄khondɔ]) 'assegai/spear'



into [ind rɔ̌] (or [indɔ̌])	'thing/something'
isonto [isɔ̌nd rɔ̌] (or [isɔ̌ndɔ̌])	'church/sermon/Sunday'

[Note: In the present Southern Ndebele orthography, the Ur-Bantu nasal compound /nt/ is written as /nt/ despite the fact that it is pronounced by most Southern Ndebele speakers as [(n)d r] or [nd]]

(b) in words borrowed from Afrikaans and English in which it represents the voiced apico-alveolar affricate [dr] of Afrikaans and English, respectively, e.g.

(16) idrada[id rɑ̌ dɑ̌ a]	'wire'	(< Afrikaans 'draad')
idrayi[id rɑ̌ ji]	'corner/curve'	(< Afrikaans 'draai')
idrama[id rɑ̌ ma]	'drama/play'	(< English/Afrikaans 'drama')
idribhu[id rǐ b u]	'drip'	(< English 'drip')

/dr/ [dr] A voiced alveolar vibrant explosive which in Southern Ndebele represents the voiced explosive /d/ in the Ur-Bantu nasal compound [nd]. Compare the following examples in this regard.

(17) indawo [indrawɔ̌]	'place'
induna [indruna]	'headman/foreman'
indoda [indrɔ̌d a]	'man'

[Note: Despite the fact that most Southern Ndebele speakers pronounce the nasal compound /nd/ as /ndr/, in the present Southern Ndebele orthography the Ur-Bantu nasal compound /nd/ is written as /nd/ instead of [ndr]. See also the discussion of the equivalents of the Ur-Bantu nasal compounds [nt] and [nd] in par. 4.3.]

/k/ [k']: An ejective velar explosive, e.g.

- | | | |
|------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| (18) | ikabi [ik'abi] | 'an ox' |
| | -kokoda [k'ɔk'ɔd̥a] | 'knock/hammer' |
| | kakarela [k'ak'arɛla] | 'hold firm/ stick' |

/k/ [k̤] A partially voiced velar explosive, e.g.

- | | | |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (19) | akekho [a k̤ɛkhɔ] | 'he/she is not there' |
| | akakopi [a k̤ak'op'i] | 'he/she doesn't copy' |

/kh/ [kh]: An aspirated velar explosive, e.g.

- | | | |
|------|-------------------|--------------|
| (20) | ikhehla [ikhɛt̪a] | 'an old man' |
| | -khetha [khɛtha] | 'choose' |

/g/ [g]: A voiced velar explosive sound that occurs in the nasal compound [ŋg] only, e.g.

- | | | |
|------|----------------|----------------|
| (21) | ngimi [ŋgimi] | 'it is me [I]' |
| | -ngena [ŋgɛna] | 'get in' |

/g/ [g̊]: A devoiced velar explosive that occurs outside nasal compounds, e.g.

- | | | |
|------|---------------|----------------|
| (22) | -guga [g̊uɡa] | 'pick up/lift' |
| | -gida [g̊ida] | 'dance' |

3.2.2.2 The bilabial implosive b[b̤], e.g.

- | | | |
|------|---------------|-------------|
| (23) | -bala [b̤ala] | 'count' |
| | -baba [b̤aba] | 'be bitter' |

3.2.2.3 Fricatives

/f/ [f]: A voiceless dentilabial fricative, e.g.

- | | | |
|------|------------------|--------------------|
| (24) | -fafaza [fafaza] | 'spray with water' |
|------|------------------|--------------------|



-fa [fa] 'die'

/v/ [v]: A voiced dentilabial fricative, e.g.

- (25) -vuma [vuma] 'sing/agree'
-vuvuka [vuvu ɬa] 'swell'

/s/ [s]: A voiceless alveolar fricative, e.g.

- (26) -kusasa [kʰusasa] 'tomorrow'
-sala [sala] 'remain/stay behind'

/z/ [z]: A voiced alveolar fricative, e.g.

- (27) -zaza [zaza] 'doubt'
izulu [izulu] 'rain/heaven'

/dl/ [ɬ]: A voiced lateral alveolar fricative, e.g.

- (28) -dlula [ɬula] 'pass'
-dla [ɬa] 'eat'

/dlh/ [ɬh]: A voiced lateral aspirated alveolar fricative, e.g.

- (29) isidlhahlha [isihahɬha] 'a fool'
idlhari [ihɬhari] 'lightning'

/h/ [h]: A voiced glottal fricative, e.g.

- (30) iholo [ihɔɓɔ] 'hall'
ihogo [ihɔgɔ] 'pigsty'

/hl/ [ɬ]: A voiceless lateral alveolar fricative, e.g.

- (31) hleba [ɬɛba] 'whisper/ gossip'
ihloko [ihɔ ɬɔ] 'head'



/rh/ [x]: A voiceless velar fricative, e.g.

- (32) -rhola [xɔla] 'get paid/lead'
-rhorha [xɔxa] 'pull'

3.2.2.4 Affricatives

/ts/ [ts']: An ejective alveolar affricative, e.g.

- (33) itswayi [its'waji] 'salt'
itsetse [its'ɛts'ɛ] 'tsetse fly'

/tsh/ [tsh]: An aspirated alveolar affricate, e.g.

- (34) -tshwenya [tshwɛŋa] 'annoy'
ilitsha [ilitsha] 'lake'

/tl/ [tʰ]: A lateral ejective alveolar affricative, e.g.

- (35) -tlola [tʰɔla] 'write'
umtletle [um̄ tʰɛtʰɛ] 'line/strip'

/tlh/ [tʰh]: A lateral aspirated alveolar affricative, e.g.

- (36) -tlhama [tʰhama] 'start/begin'
-tlhoga [tʰhɔ̌ga] 'need'

/tj/ [tʃ']: An ejective prepalatal affricative, e.g.

- (37) -tjela [tʃ'ɛla] 'tell'
-tjatha [tʃ'atha] 'carry on the shoulder'

/tjh/ [tʃh]: A voiceless aspirated pre-palatal affricative, e.g.

- (38) -tjheja [tʃhɛdʒa] 'take care/note'
-tjhisa [tʃhisa] 'burn'



/kgh/ [kxh]: A voiceless aspirated velar affricative, e.g.

- (39) ikghuru [ikxhuru] 'tortoise'
-kghama [kxhama] 'strangle/squeeze'

/j/ [dʒ]: A devoiced prepalatal affricative, e.g.

- (40) ijasi [id̥ʒasi] 'coat'
ijele [id̥ʒɛɛ] 'jail'

/dz/ [dz]: A voiced alveolar affricative, e.g.

- (41) idzinyani [idziŋani] 'chicken'
-dzubhula [dzubula] 'pick up/quote'

/(m)f/ [ɸfʰ]: An ejective dentilabial affricative, e.g.

- (42) iimfene [iimɸfʰɛn ɛ] 'baboons'
iimfundo [iimɸfʰundɔ] 'types of education'

/(m)v/ [ɸv]: A voiced dentilabial affricative, e.g.

- (43) imvelo [imɸvɛɔ] 'nature'
iimvunulo [iimɸvunulɔ] 'types of attire'

3.2.2.5 The voiced lateral alveolar liquid /l/[l], e.g.

- (44) -lola [lɔla] 'sharpen'
-lula [lula] 'elongate'

3.2.2.6 The voiced alveolar vibrant /r/[r], e.g.

- (45) -rera [rɛra] 'plan secretly'
-rara [rara] 'surprise'

3.2.2.7 Semi-vowels

/y/ [j]: A prepalatal semi-vowel, e.g.



- (46) -yakha [jakha] 'build'
uyaya [ujaja] 'he/she goes'

/w/ [w]: A velar semi-vowel, e.g.

- (47) isiwewe [isiwεwε] 'young male goat'
wami [wami] 'mine'

3.2.2.8 Nasals

/m/ [m]: A bilabial nasal, e.g.

- (48) -mumatha [mumatha] 'keep in the mouth'
-mema [mεma] 'invite'

/m/ [m]: A dentilabial nasal that occurs in combination with [ɸf] and [ɸv], e.g.

- (49) iimfuyo [iimɸf'ujɔ] 'live stocks'
iimfengwana [iimɸf'εŋwana] 'whistles'
imvu [imɸvu] 'sheep'
iimveke [iimɸvεk'ε] 'weeks'

/n/ [n]: An alveolar nasal, e.g.

- (50) isinini [isinini] 'relative'
-nina [nina] 'avoid/keep away from'

/n/ [ŋ]: A velar nasal that occurs in the nasal compounds [ŋk'] and [ŋg] only, e.g.

- (51) iinkosi [iink'osi] 'chiefs'
iinkolo [iink'ɔlɔ] 'schools'
ingoma [iŋgɔma] 'song'
-ngena [ŋgɛna] 'come/get in'



3.2.2.9.2 Palatal clicks

/q/ [!]: A voiceless palatal click, e.g.

- (58) iqanda [i!anda] 'an egg'
iqaqa [i!a!a] 'polecat'

/qh/ [!h]: An aspirated palatal click, e.g.

- (59) -qhaka [!ha ɬa] 'be poor'
-qhaqha [!ha!ha] 'loosen/dismantle'

/gq/ [!g]: A voiced palatal click, e.g.

- (60) -gqaba [!gaβa] 'inject'
amagqubu [ama!guβu] 'begrudge'

/ngq/ [ŋ!g]: A voiced nasalised palatal click, e.g.

- (61) ingqwangqwa [iŋ!gwaŋ!gwa] 'soft porridge'
ingqondo [iŋ!gɔndɔ] 'brain/idea/mind'

3.2.2.9.3 Lateral clicks

Only the nasalised lateral click sound is found in Southern Ndebele and has a limited distribution in this language. It only occurs in onomatopoeic ideophones as well as in verbs derived from these ideophones, e.g.

(a) Ideophones

- (62) nx [ŋ//] 'interjective of annoyance'
nxanxa [ŋ//aŋ//a] 'interjective of feeling sorry'

(b) De-ideophonic verbs

- (63) -nxafa [ŋ//afa] 'utter click of annoyance'
-nxanxabeza [ŋ//aŋ//aβεza] 'utter click of feeling sorry/handling with care'

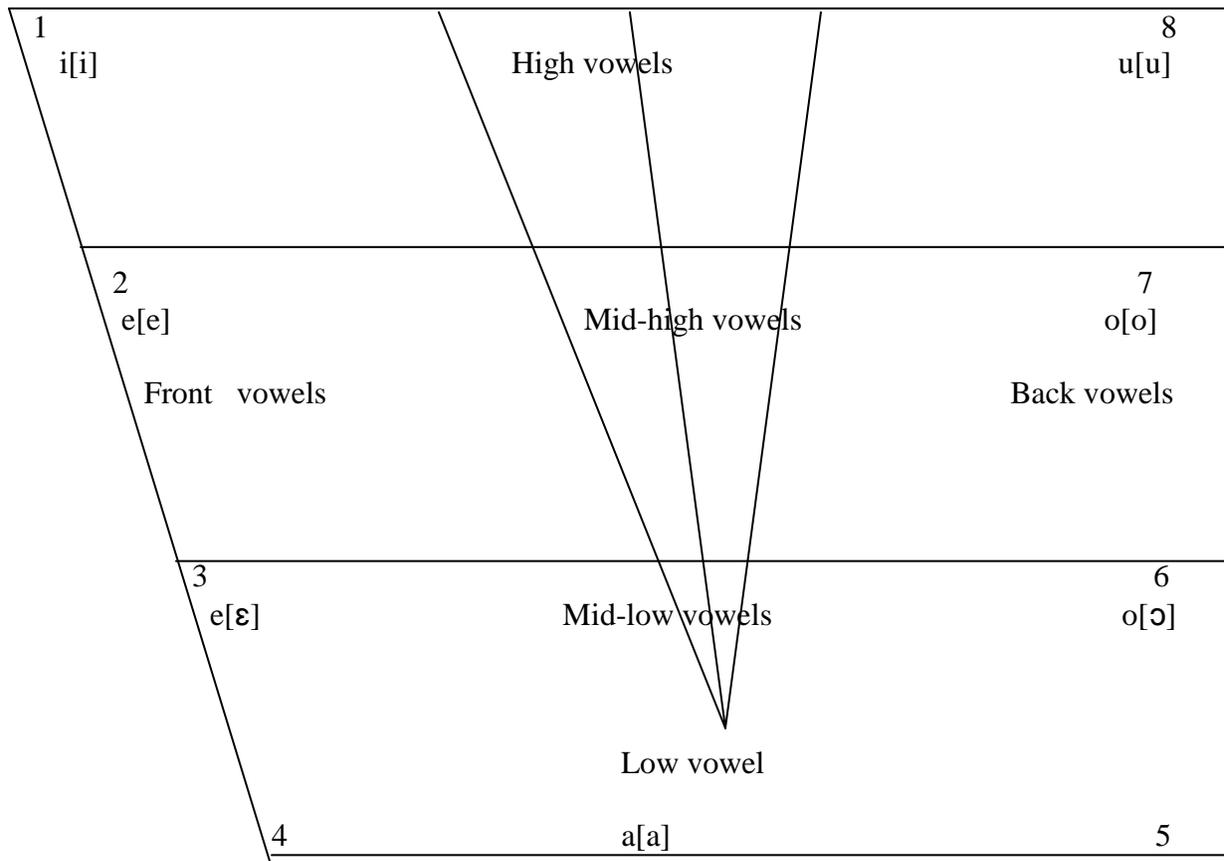
3.3 The sound system of Northern Ndebele

The Northern Ndebele sound system as published by the Pan South African Language Board under the title, '*Northern Ndebele Orthography and Spelling Rules*' (2000) is as follows –

3.3.1 The vowel system

Northern Ndebele, just as is the case with its southern counterpart, also recognizes seven vowel phonemes which can be illustrated as follows in a vowel chart.

NORTHERN NDEBELE VOWEL CHART



The above Northern Ndebele vowel phonemes can be described as follows–

/a/ [a]: A neutral vowel that occurs between the cardinal point no. 5 and 6 of the vowel chart, e.g.

(64) yakha [jakha] 'build' -lala [lala] 'sleep'

/e/ [e]: A mid-high front vowel that occurs below the cardinal point no. 2 of the vowel chart, e.g.

(65) -bhedile [b̥edilɛ] 'talked nonsense' mphendule [mphendulɛ] 'answer me'

/e/ [ɛ]: A mid-low front vowel that occurs below the cardinal point no. 3 of the vowel chart, e.g.

(66) -bheda [b̥ɛda] 'talk nonsense' -phethe [phɛthɛ] '(have) held'

/i/ [i]: A high front vowel that occurs below cardinal point no. 1 of the vowel chart, e.g.

(67) nsimbhi [nsimbi] 'iron'

/o/ [o]: A mid-high back vowel that occurs below the cardinal point no. 7 of the vowel chart, e.g.

(68) bonile [βonilɛ] 'saw'

/o/ [ɔ]: A mid-low back vowel that occurs below the cardinal point no. 6 of the vowel chart, e.g.

(69) bona [βɔna] 'see'

/u/ [u]: A high back vowel that occurs below cardinal point no.8 of the vowel chart, e.g.

(70) muva [muva] 'back'

3.3.2 Ziervogel's observations regarding the Northern Ndebele vowel system

In his Northern Ndebele Grammar (1959), Ziervogel claims that Northern Ndebele has a 9 vowel system in that the vowels /i/ and /u/ both have a close variant /î/ and /û/, respectively. Posselt (1975:23-24) also confirms Ziervogel's claim on the occurrence of these two close variants. These vowels mainly occur in the roots and stems of words (Ziervogel, op. cit.:18) and are phonetically similar to the close high vowels [e̞] and [o̞] found in Northern Sotho, respectively.

/i/ [î] A close high front vowel /i/ which is derived from the Ur-Bantu high close vowel [î] and which is similar to Northern Sotho high front vowel e [e̞].

Compare the following examples in this regard.

	Northern Ndebele	Northern Sotho
(71)	lima [lima]	[le̞ ma] 'plough'
	lina [lina]	[le̞ na] 'you'

/u/ [û] A semi-close high back vowel /u/ which is derived from the Ur-Bantu high back vowel [û] and it is similar to the Northern Sotho medial vowel o [o̞], as in the following examples;

	Northern Ndebele:	Northern Sotho
(72)	-thunga [thuŋga]	roka [ro̞ k'a] 'stitch'
	munru [munru]	motho [mo̞ tho̞] 'person'

According to Meinhof and Van Warmelo(1932:26), in most Bantu languages there is no longer any difference between the 'close' and 'open' vowels of Ur-Bantu, and even where a slight variation might be distinguished, it no longer exists in the mind of native speakers. Ziervogel (1959: 19) concurs with Meinhof when he says:

‘We distinguish between *i* and *î*, *u* and *û* . . . for the sake of giving a clear picture of the vowels in Northern Ndebele. It is evident, however, that although in cautious speech one does hear a difference between *i* and *î*, *u* and *û* there is undoubtedly a tendency to use the respective pairs indiscriminately. We may, for practical purposes, regard Northern Ndebele as a language with five vowel phonemes, hence the use of *i* and *u* only in the body of this work.’

3.3.3 The Consonant System

3.3.3.1 Explosives

/k/ [k']: An ejective velar explosive, e.g.

(73) kukala [kuk'ala] 'to weigh'

/kh/ [kh] An aspirated velar explosive, e.g.

(74) khambha [khamb̥a] 'walk/go'
nkhaya [ŋkhaja] 'at home'

/t/ [t̥']: A voiceless inter-dental ejective explosive, e.g.

(75) mmanti [m̥ant̥i] 'water'

/th/ [th]: A voiceless aspirated alveolar explosive, e.g.

(76) kuthetha [kuthɛtha] 'to discuss'
-thutha [thutha] 'move'

/p/ [p']: A voiceless ejective bilabial explosive, e.g.

(77) -pana [p'ana] 'inspan an ox'
-pura [p'ura] 'fly'

/ph/ [ph]: An aspirated bilabial explosive, e.g.

(78) -phuma [phuma] 'go out/exit'



-phila [phila] 'live'

/g/ [g̊]: A devoiced velar explosive, e.g.

- (79) gugu [g̊uɡu] 'grandmother'
-guga [g̊uɡa] 'lift/carry'

This velar sound also occurs in nasal compounds, e.g.

- (80) ilanga [ilaŋɡa] 'sun/day'
-linga [liŋɡa] 'try'

/k/ [k̊]: A radical velar explosive, e.g.

- (81) akufani [ak̊ufani] 'it's different/not the same'
kibo [k̊iβɔ] 'to them'

/d/ [d̊]: A de-voiced alveolar explosive, e.g.

- (82) -duda [d̊uɖa] 'swim'

This alveolar sound also occurs in nasal compounds, e.g.

- (83) ndoda [nd̊ɔɖa] 'man'

/b/ [b]: A voiced bilabial explosive which only occurs in combination with the nasal **[m]** in a limited number of Class 9 and 10 nouns, e.g.

- (84) mbuti [mbut'i] 'duiker'

/bh/ [b̥]: A devoiced bilabial explosive which also occurs in combination with the nasal [m], e.g.

- (85) bhabha[b̥ḁb̥a] 'father'
mbhuti [mb̥u t̥i] 'goat'



3.3.3.2 Fricatives

/hl/ [ɬ]: A voiceless alveolar lateral fricative, e.g.

(86) -hlala [ɬala] 'stay/sit down'

/b/ [β]: A bilabial voiced fricative, e.g.

(87) -baba [βaβa] 'be sour/ be bitter'

/hh/ [ɦ]: A voiced glottal fricative, e.g.

(88) lihhashi [liɦaɦi] 'horse'

/h/ [ħ]: A radical prevelar fricative, e.g.

(89) lehumo [leħumo] 'wealth'

/dl/ [ɖ]: A voiced lateral alveolar fricative, e.g.

(90) -dla [ɖla] 'eat'
ndlala [nɖala] 'hunger'

/s/ [s]: A voiceless alveolar fricative, e.g.

(91) -sala [sala] 'remain/stay behind'
lesa [lesa] 'that one'

/z/ [z]: A voiced alveolar fricative, e.g.

(92) -zama [zama] 'try'
muzenda [muzɛnd̥a] 'ambassador'

/sh/ [ʃ]: A voiceless palatal fricative, e.g.

(93) eMashashane [ɛmaʃaʃanɛ] 'at Mashashane'
-shili [ʃili] 'different/strange'

/x/ [x]: A voiceless velar fricative, e.g.

- | | | |
|------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| (94) | -xuda [xuḁa] | 'suffer from diarrhoea' |
| | marixa [marixa] | 'winter' |

/v/ [v]: A voiced dentilabial fricative, e.g.

- | | | |
|------|--------------|---------|
| (95) | -vala [vala] | 'close' |
| | -vula [vula] | 'open' |

/f/ [f]: A voiceless dentilabial fricative, e.g.

- | | | |
|------|--------------|-----------------------|
| (96) | -fa [fa] | 'die' |
| | -fuya [fuja] | 'keep/rear something' |

3.3.3.3 Affricatives

/tʰ/ [tʰ]: An aspirated lateral alveolar affricative, e.g.

- | | | |
|------|---------------------------|-----------|
| (97) | mutlhangana [mutlhaŋgana] | 'boy' |
| | -tlhala [tlhala] | 'divorce' |

/tʰ/ [tʰ]: An ejective alveolar lateral affricative, e.g.

- | | | |
|------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| (98) | -tlinya [tl'iŋa] | 'throttle' |
| | -tletla [tl'ɛt'l'a] | 'milk into the mouth' |

/tʃh/ [tʃh]: A voiceless aspirated palatal affricative, e.g.

- | | | |
|------|------------------|--------|
| (99) | -tjha [tʃha] | 'burn' |
| | -tjhuma [tʃhuma] | 'work' |

/tʃ/ [tʃ]: An ejective palatal affricative, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|------------------------|------------------------|
| (100) | mtjekelo [mtʃ'ɛkɛlɔ] | 'a cloth' |
| | kutjetula [kutʃe tula] | 'to cut a small piece' |

/j/ [d͡ʒ]: A semi-voiced palatal affricative which becomes voiced in nasal

compounds, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|----------------|------------|
| (101) | -jama [d͡ʒama] | 'stand up' |
| | nnja [ɲd͡ʒa] | 'dog' |

/tsh/ [tʃh] An aspirated voiceless alveolar affricative, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|---------------------|----------|
| (102) | tshetlha [tʃhɛtlha] | 'yellow' |
| | tshele [tʃhɛlɛ] | 'grudge' |

/dz/ [d͡z]: A voiced alveolar affricative, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| (103) | mudzukxwa [mud͡zʊkx'wa] | 'manure' |
| | mudzingitane [mud͡ziŋgi t͡ʃanɛ] | 'species of grass' |

/kxh/ [kxh]: An aspirated velar affricative, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|-------------------------------|---------|
| (104) | nkxhokxhobha [ŋkxhɔkxhɔba] | 'aloe' |
| | nkxhokxhokxho [ŋkxhɔkxhɔkxhɔ] | 'velum' |

/kx/ [kx']: An ejective velar affricative, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|--------------------|---------|
| (105) | nkxomo [ŋkx'ɔmɔ] | 'beast' |
| | nkxukxu [ŋkx'ukxu] | 'fowl' |
| | nkxabi [ŋkx'aβi] | 'ox' |

3.3.3.4 The voiced alveolar lateral sound /l/ [l], e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|--------------|---------|
| (106) | -lala [lala] | 'sleep' |
| | leli [leli] | 'this ' |
| | lelo [lɛlɔ] | 'that' |

3.3.3.5 The voiced alveolar vibrant sound /r/ [r], e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|-------------|------------|
| (107) | bare [βarɛ] | 'they say' |
|-------|-------------|------------|



-rara [rara]	'cause problem/wonder'
-ribha [rib _h a]	'cut'

This sound also occurs in combination with the alveolar nasal [n], e.g.

(108) nro [nrɔ]	'thing'
banru [βanru]	'people'
nraba [nraβa]	'mountain'

3.3.3.6 Semi-vowels

/y/ [j]: A prepalatal semi-vowel, e.g.

(109) kuya [kujə]	'to go'
yakha [jakha]	'build'
yena [jɛna]	'he/she'

/w/ [w]: A bilabial semi-vowel, e.g.

(110) kuwa [kuwa]	'to fall'
wami [wami]	'mine'
wena [wɛna]	'you'

3.3.3.7 Nasals

/n/ [n]: An alveolar nasal, e.g.

(111) -nona [nɔna]	'become fat'
nani [nani]	'you too'
-nina [nina]	'avoid'

/m/ [m]: A bilabial nasal, e.g.

(112) mulomo [mulɔmɔ]	'mouth'
-mila [mila]	'grow'
-mema [mɛma]	'invite'

/n/ [ŋ]: A velar nasal which occurs in the nasal compound **ng [ŋg]** and **nk[ŋk]**, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|--------------------|-----------|
| (113) | -linga [liŋg̱a] | 'try' |
| | ngubo [ŋg̱ubɔ] | 'blanket' |
| | nkxomo [ŋkx'ɔmɔ] | 'beast' |
| | nkxukxu [ŋkx'ukxu] | 'fowl' |

In the ordinary orthography, outside nasal compounds, this sound is written as **-ngh-**, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|------------------|-----------|
| (114) | -nghwaya [ŋwaja] | 'scratch' |
| | -nghane [ŋanɛ] | 'small' |

/ny/ [ɲ]: A palatal nasal, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|------------------------|---------|
| (115) | <u>ny</u> yoka [ɲɔg̱a] | 'snake' |
| | <u>ny</u> yama [ɲama] | 'meat' |
| | <u>ny</u> oni [ɲoni] | 'bird' |

Note that the nasal **/ny/[ɲ]** is syllabic here.

/m/ [ɱ]: A dentilabial nasal, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|-------------------|--------------|
| (116) | (m)fene [ɱɸf'ɛnɛ] | 'baboon' |
| | (m)vu [ɱɸvu] | 'sheep' |
| | (m)fe [ɱɸf'ɛ] | 'sweet reed' |

/n/ [ɳ]: An inter-dental nasal that only occurs in combination with the inter-dental ejective plosive [ɰ], e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|------------------|---------|
| (117) | yenta [jɳɰt'a] | 'do' |
| | mmanti [m̄ ɳɰti] | 'water' |

(121) kuguga [ɠuḡuḡa] 'to pick up/lift up'

None of the Nguni languages share this sound with Northern Ndebele. In Southern Ndebele it appears as a radical velar sound **k[k]**, (e.g. [ukuḡ uḡa] 'to pick/ lift up'), whilst in the revised Northern Ndebele sound system it is recognized as a radical velar plosive **k[k]** (cf. example 81 above).

gy[gy]: A voiced velar implosive, e.g.

(122) gyibo [gyiḃo] 'to them'

Both Ziervogel and Posselt (1975:34) confirm the existence of this sound in Northern Ndebele. In the revised Northern Ndebele sound system, this sound has, however, been replaced by the radical velar **k[k]** (cf. example 81 above).

3.4.3 Fricatives

/hy/ [hy]: A voiceless pre-velar fricative, e.g.

(123) lihyudu [lihyûdû] 'mortar'

According to the revised sound system of Northern Ndebele, this sound no longer forms part of its sound system.

/ɣ/ [ɣ]: A voiced velar fricative, e.g.

(124) muɣolo [muɣoɭo] 'throat'
liɣedla [liɣeɬa] 'shoulder'

In the current Northern Ndebele orthography this sound is represented by the voiceless velar fricative **x[x]**, for instance as in example (94) above.

3.4.4 Affricatives

/psh/ [pʃh]: An aspirated labio-palatal affricative.

Ziervogel lists this sound in his table of the Northern Ndebele sound system but does not give any example(s) where the sound occurs. It is possible that he may have been influenced by the Northern Sotho aspirated bilabial pre-palatal affricate **pšh [pʃh]**, e.g.

(125) **Northern Sotho:** pšhatla 'break/shatter'

3.5 A tabular outline of the sound systems of Southern and Northern Ndebele

The sound systems of the two Ndebele languages that have been discussed above are outlined in tabular form below. Table 3.1 outlines the Southern Ndebele sound system, while Table 3.2 gives the Northern Ndebele sound system.



Table 3.1: SOUTHERN NDEBELE SOUND SYSTEM

MANNER OF AIR RELEASE		CONTINUANTS											STOPS														
		RESONANT				FRICATIVE							IMPLOSIVE	AFFRICATE							EXPLOSIVE						
		Medial	Vibrant	Lateral	Nasal	Medial		Lateral			Medial	Medial		Lateral	Medial			Medial	Vibrant	Medial							
Voiced	Voiced	Voiced	Voiced	Voiceless	Voiceless	Voiceless	Voiced	Aspirated	Radical	Voiced	Voiceless	Semi-voiced	Voiceless	Aspirated	Ejective	Ejective	Aspirated	Voiced	Devoiced	Radical	Devoiced	Voiced	Aspirated	Voiced	Ejective		
Place of articulation	Bilabial	w			m							ɓ								ɓ̥					ph	b	p'
	Dentilabial				ɱ	f				v																	
	dental																										
	Alveolar		r	l	n	s	ʈ	ɸ	ɸh		z			tsh	tlh	tl'			dz	ɖ		ɖ _r	dr	th		t'	
	Palatal				ɲ	ʃ						ɕ	tʃh			tʃ'											
	Velar				ŋ	x											kx'	kxh		g̊	k				kh		k'
	Glottal										h																
Prepalatal	j																										

Note: The table is according to the revised Southern Ndebele Sound System (2008)



Table 3.2: NORTHERN NDEBELE SOUND SYSTEM

MANNER OF AIR RELEASE		CONTINUANTS									STOPS											
		RESONANT				FRICATIVE					AFFRICATE						EXPLOSIVE					
		Medial	Vibrant	Lateral	Nasal	Medial		Lateral			Medial	Medial	Lateral	Medial			Medial					
Voiced	Voiced	Voiced	Voiced	Voiceless	Voiceless	Voiced	Voiced	Radical	Voiced	Semi-voiced	Voiceless	Aspirated	Ejective	Ejective	Aspirated	Voiced	Devoiced	Radical	Aspirated	Voiced	Ejective	
PLACE OF ARTICULATION	Bilabial	w			m					β								ɸ		ph	b	p'
	Dentilabial				ɱ	f				v												
	Interdental				ɲ																	t
	Alveolar		r	l	n	s	ʃ	ɸ	ɸ	z		tsh	tlh	tl'			dz	ɖ		th		
	Palatal				ɲ	ʃ					ɖ	tʃh			tʃ'							
	Velar				ŋ	x									kx'	kxh		g	k	kh		k'
	Prevelar								h													
	Glottal									ɦ												
	Prepalatal	j																				

Note: The table is according to the first revised Northern Ndebele Sound System (2000)

3.6 Phonological differences between Southern and Northern Ndebele

There are numerous differences as well as similarities between the sound system of Southern and Northern Ndebele. The phonological differences these languages display can, to a large extent, be attributed to their contact with other, mainly, non-Nguni languages. Ziervogel (1959:43), for instance, points out that Northern Ndebele has more phonemes than any other written Nguni language. Wilkes (1997:76) remarks in this regard that

‘One of the effects of widespread borrowing is that it may introduce new phonemes into the borrowing language.’

In the following paragraphs, the various differences in the sound system of Southern and Northern Ndebele are analysed and discussed under the following sub-headings –

- (i) Differences in the phonemic inventories of Southern and Northern Ndebele
- (ii) Zunda vs Tekela features in Southern and Northern Ndebele
- (iii) The “(uku)ndrondroza” nasal compounds in Southern and Northern Ndebele, and finally,
- (iv) Some salient phonological differences between Southern and Northern Ndebele.

3.6.1 Differences in the phonemic inventories of Southern and Northern Ndebele

Phonemically, Southern and Northern Ndebele differ substantially from each other in that each of these languages contains phonemes that do not occur in the other. Wilkes (2001:8) remarks that

‘... Southern Ndebele has no less than 14 phonemes that do not occur in Northern Ndebele while the latter has 12 phonemes that do not occur in Southern Ndebele.’

He cites the nasal clicks /**nc**/ and /**nq**/ as well as the palato-alveolar click /**q**/ as examples of clicks that have been replaced by non-click sounds in Northern Ndebele. According to Ziervogel, the former two clicks (i.e., /**nc**/ and /**nq**/) have been replaced by the velar nasal **ngh** [ŋ] and latter (i.e., /**q**/) by the ejective velar affricative **kx** [kx'] in Northern Ndebele. Compare the following isiZulu and Northern Ndebele examples in which the isiZulu click sounds /**nc**/, /**nq**/ and /**q**/ have been substituted by the sounds **kx**[kx'] and **ngh**[ŋ], respectively, in Northern Ndebele.

	IsiZulu		Northern Ndebele	
	Palato alveolar (nasal) click (n)q [ŋ!]		=	Ejective velar affricate kx[kx']
(127a)	-qala		-kxwala	'begin'
	-eqa		-enkxa	'jump'
	-qeda		-kxeja	'finish'
	iqanda		likxanda	'egg'
	Alveolar nasal click nc [ŋ]		=	The velar nasal ngh[ŋ]
(127b)	-ncane		nghane	'small'
	inciliba (isiXhosa)		nghiliba	'ostrich'

Msimang (1989:127) and Wilkes (2001) both concur with Ziervogel regarding the absence of click sounds in Northern Ndebele. Wilkes (op. cit.:10) states that

'Northern Ndebele ... has no click sounds. How this came about is not clear, especially as the presence of clicks is a prominent distinctive feature of all the other Nguni languages. It is possible, however, that in some instances at least, strong influence from the neighbouring Northern Sotho language could have been responsible for their demise and subsequent replacement by Northern Sotho sounds.'

3.6.2.1.2 Clicks in Southern Ndebele

When Southern Ndebele is compared with Northern Ndebele, a remarkable gap exists between these two languages in that almost all click sounds that occur in other Nguni languages, such as isiZulu, are also found in Southern Ndebele. The following click phonemes occur in Southern Ndebele –

(i) Dental Clicks

/c/ [ʄ]: A voiceless dental click, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|---------------|-----------------|
| (128) | -coca [ʄ/a] | 'talk, discuss' |
| | -cina [ʄ/ina] | 'be strong' |

/ch/ [h]: An aspirated dental click, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|---------------|---------------------------|
| (129) | -chisa [hisa] | 'make a bed/ lay a table' |
| | -chaza [haza] | 'make happy' |

/gc/ [g]: A voiced dental click, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|-------------------------|-------------|
| (130) | -gcugcuzela [gu/guzɛla] | 'encourage' |
| | -gcina [gina] | 'end/stop' |

/nc/ [ŋ]: A nasalised dental click, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|------------------|-----------------|
| (131) | -ncama [ŋ/ama] | 'be determined' |
| | -ncenga [ŋ/ɛŋga] | 'beg/pursue' |

(ii) Palato-alveolar Clicks

/q/ [!]: A voiceless palato-alveolar click, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|-----------------|-----------|
| (132) | iqanda [i!anda] | 'an egg' |
| | iqaqqa [i!a!a] | 'polecat' |

/qh/ [!h]: An aspirated palato-alveolar click, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|------------------|--------------------|
| (133) | -qhaka [!ha [a] | 'be poor' |
| | -qhaqha [!ha!ha] | 'loosen/dismantle' |

/gq/ [!g]: A voiced palato-alveolar click, e.g.

- (134) -gqaba [!gaba] 'inject'
amagqubu [ama!guɓu] 'begrudge'

/ngq/ [ŋ!g]: A voiced nasalised palato-alveolar click, e.g.

- (135) ingqwangqwa [iŋ!gwan!gwa] 'soft porridge'
ingqondo [iŋ!gɔndɔ] 'brain/idea/mind'

(iii) Lateral Clicks

None of the lateral clicks found in other Nguni languages such as isiZulu occur in Southern Ndebele except for the nasal click **nx** [ŋ//], which only occurs in onomatopoeic ideophones and verbs derived from these ideophones. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

- (136) nx [ŋ//] 'interjective of annoyance'
nxafa [ŋ//afa] 'utter click of annoyance'
nxanxabeza [[ŋ//aŋ//aβɛza] 'handle with care/cautiousness'

3.6.2.2 Southern Ndebele Implosives

/b/ [ɓ]: A bilabial implosive sound, e.g.

- (137) -bala [ɓala] 'count'
-baba [ɓaba] 'be bitter'

Northern Ndebele uses a devoiced bilabial explosive **bh**[ɓ̥] for this sound. Compare the following example in this regard.

Northern Ndebele

- (138) bhabha [ɓ̥aɓ̥a] 'father'

3.6.2.3 Fricatives

/dlh/ [ɸh]: A voiced lateral aspirated alveolar fricative, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|-------------------------|-------------|
| (139) | isidlhahlha [siɸhahɸha] | 'a fool' |
| | idlhari [liɸhari] | 'lightning' |

This sound does not occur in Northern Ndebele. In Southern Ndebele it is the equivalent of the Northern Sotho alveolar affricative [tʃ]. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

- | | | |
|-------|-------------------------|---|
| (140) | isidlhahlha [siɸhahɸha] | 'a fool' (< Northern Sotho: setlatla) |
| | idlhari [liɸhari] | 'lightning' (< Northern Sotho: letladi) |
| | idlhamedlhu [iɸhameɸhu] | 'bullfrog' (< Northern Sotho: letlametlu) |

3.6.3 Phonemes that occur in Northern Ndebele but not in Southern Ndebele

As is the case with phonemes that occur in Southern Ndebele but not in Northern Ndebele, there are no fewer than eleven phonemes in Northern Ndebele that do not occur in Southern Ndebele. These sounds are listed in the paragraphs that follow.

[Note: The phonemes distinguished by Ziervogel in Northern Ndebele but which are not recognized in the current revised Northern Ndebele spelling rules are indicated by 'Ziervogel'.]

3.6.3.1 Inter-dental phonemes

Northern Ndebele is unique in that it is the only Nguni language that has inter-dental phonemes. Wilkes (2001:9) remarks in this regard that

'Inter-dental sounds are a very rare phenomenon in the sound systems of Nguni languages. Northern Ndebele is, in fact, the only Nguni language

that has inter-dental sounds and has, no doubt, acquired them from Venda during the Northern Ndebele people's prolonged contact with Venda people during earlier times ...' (cf. Chapter Two)

According to the above statement, the inter-dental sounds found in the Northern Ndebele phoneme system have their origin in the language of the Venda people. In contrast, Ziervogel (1959) maintains that the inter-dental sounds found in Northern Ndebele are derived from the neighbouring Sotho dialects with which Northern Ndebele is in perpetual contact. Ziervogel (1959:12) remarks as follows in this regard.

'However, note has to be taken of the fact that some of the Sotho dialects of those regions where the (Northern) Ndebele contacted the Sotho are of the type that do not employ laterals, but inter-dentals instead... One may assume that Ndebele's inter-dental **t̪** and post alveolar **th** came from contact with these dialects.'

The following inter-dental sounds occur in Northern Ndebele:

/t/ [**t̪**]: A voiceless ejective inter-dental explosive, e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------------|---------|
| (141) | <u>m</u> manti [ma: t̪ 'i] | 'water' |
| | tisa [t̪ 'isa] | 'bring' |

/d/ [**d̪**]: A voiced inter-dental explosive (Ziervogel.1959), e.g.

- | | | |
|-------|-----------------------|--------|
| (142) | dana [d̪ ana] | 'come' |
|-------|-----------------------|--------|

[Note: Msimang (1989:124) regards the inter-dental **d̪** as not forming part of the Northern Ndebele sound system but an ideolectical variant of the flapped **[d]**.]

/n/ [**n̪**]: An inter-dental nasal that only occurs in combination with the inter-dental ejective plosive [**t̪**], e.g.



- (143) yenta [jɛnt̪'a] 'do'
mmanti [m:ant̪i] 'water'

3.6.3.2 Explosives

The following non-inter-dental explosive phoneme occurs in Northern Ndebele:

/gy/ [g̊y]: A devoiced palatal velar explosive, e.g.

- (144) gyibo [g̊yibɔ] 'it is they'
emirag̊yeni [emirag̊yeni] 'at the cattle post'

Ziervogel (1959:36) implicitly regards the palato-velar explosive **gy**[g̊ y] and its implosive counterpart **gy**[gy] as palatal variants of the velar explosive [g̊] and the velar implosive [g̃] as they only occur before the vowels [i], [î] and [ɛ] (cf. examples in (119) above). However, in the revised Northern Ndebele spelling rules these sounds have been replaced with the devoiced velar explosive **g**[g̊] and the radical velar plosive **k**[k] (cf. examples in (79) and (81) above.)

3.6.3.3 Fricatives

/h/ [h̥]: A radical prevelar glottal fricative, e.g.

- (145) lehumo [leh̥umɔ] 'wealth'

In Southern Ndebele this sound appears as a voiced glottal sound [h̥], (cf. examples in (30) above).

/sh/ [ʃ]: A voiceless palatal fricative, e.g.

- (146) sheba [ʃɛβa] 'eat porridge with something'
lishumi [lifumi] 'ten'

Southern Ndebele uses the voiceless aspirated prepalatal affricative [tʃh] for this sound.

Compare the following examples in this regard;



- (147) -tjheba [tʃhɛba] 'eat porridge with something'.
itjhumu [itʃhumi] 'ten'

/b/ [β]: A bilabial voiced fricative, e.g.

- (148) kubaba [kuβaβa] 'to be sour or bitter'

In Southern Ndebele this sound occurs as a bilabial implosive **b[ɓ]** (cf. examples in (23) above).

/hy/ [hy]: A voiceless prevelar fricative (Ziervogel), e.g.

- (149) lihyudu [lihyûdû] 'mortar'

In Southern Ndebele this sound is represented by **h[h]** as for instance in **ihumo [ifumɔ]** 'wealth'. (See also the examples in (30) above.)

3.6.3.4 Affricatives

kx [kx']: A voiceless ejective velar affricate, e.g.

- (150) nkxomo [ŋkx'ɔmɔ] 'beast'
tikxukxu [t'ikx'ukx'u] 'fowls'

In Southern Ndebele this sound is represented by the ejective velar explosive **k[k']** (cf. examples in (18)).

3.6.3.5 Implosives (Ziervogel:1959)

Ziervogel distinguishes the following implosive variants as they occur in Northern Ndebele.

/k/ [g]: A voiced velar implosive, e.g.

- (151) kuguga [gugũgũgũ] 'to pick up/lift up'

None of the Nguni languages shares this sound with Northern Ndebele. In Southern Ndebele it appears as a radical velar sound k[**ḵ**], e.g.

(152) [uḵuḵuḵa] 'to pick/ lift up'

/gy/ [gy]: A voiced palatal-velar implosive, e.g.

(153) gyibo [gyiḶo] 'to them'

This voiced palatal-velar implosive **gy [gy]** is, in fact, a variant form of the velar explosive **g[ḡ]** that according to Ziervogel (1959:36), occurs before the front vowels [i], [ī] and [ɛ]. (cf. examples in (122) above.) None of the other Nguni languages has this sound. In Southern Ndebele, it occurs as a radical velar sound **k[ḵ]** as in the following examples –

(154) kibo [ḵiḶo] 'to them'
ukufa [uḵufa] 'death/to die'

The phonemic sounds that occur in Southern Ndebele only but not in Northern Ndebele as well as those that occur in the latter and not in the former language are summarized in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3: Sounds that Southern and Northern Ndebele do not have in common.

	SOUTHERN NDEBELE		NORTHERN NDEBELE	
SOUND	Place /Manner of articulation	Ordinary & Phonetic representation	Place/Manner of articulation	Ordinary & Phonetic representation



Clicks	Dental Palatal-alveolar Lateral	c[/], ch[/h], gc [g], nc[ŋ] q[!],qh[!h],gq [!g],ngq[ŋ!q] nx[ŋ//]	NO CLICK SOUNDS	
Implosives	Bilabial	b[b]	Voiced velar	k[g]
			Voiced palatal-velar	gy[gy]
Fricatives	Lateral aspirated alveolar	dlh[ʃh]	Radical pre-velar glottal	h[h]
			Voiceless palatal	sh[ʃ]
			Bilabial voiced	b[β]
			Voiceless pre-velar	hy[hy]
Affricatives	Lateral ejective velar		Voiceless ejective velar	kx[kx']
Inter-dentals	NO INTER-DENTALS		Voiceless explosive	t[t̪]
			Voiced Explosive	d[d̪]
			Nasal	n[n̪]



Explosives	Voiced velar	g[g]	Devoiced palato-velar	gy[gy]
	Devoiced velar	g̥[g̥]		

Despite the numerous phonemes that are unique in each language, there are also several phonemic sounds that occur in both languages but that are not written in the same way in these languages. These sounds are listed in table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4: Sounds that occur in both languages but are written differently

SOUND	SOUTHERN NDEBELE	NORTHERN NDEBELE
Affricatives		
Voiceless velar	rh[x]	x[x]
Aspirated velar	kgh[kxh]	kx[kx]
Glottal		
Voiced	h[h]	hh[h]

3.6.4 Zunda versus Tekela phonemic features in Southern and Northern Ndebele

The classification of the Bantu languages of the so-called South Eastern Zone into Zunda and Thekela Nguni language groups is mainly based on the fact that where the languages in the Zunda language group, such as Southern Ndebele for instance, employ the voiced alveolar fricative phoneme **z[z]**, languages belonging to the Thekela language group, such as Northern Ndebele for instance, employ the ejective inter-dental explosive phoneme **t [t̪]**. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele	Northern Ndebele	
Zunda	Thekela	
(155) lezi [lezi]	leti [let̪i]	'these ones'
umuzi [umuzi]	muti [mut̪i]	'homestead'



umfazi [umfazi]	mufati [mufa t̪i]	'woman'
zikhona [zikhɔna]	tikhona [t̪ikhɔna]	'they are there'

In addition to the above phonemic differences, Southern Ndebele, as a Zunda Nguni language, practises the so-called *vowel coalescence* strategy whereby the combination of the low neutral vowel **a** plus the high vowel **i** or **u**, gives rise to a new vowel /e/ or /o/, respectively. By contrast Northern Ndebele, as a Thekela 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/. Compare the following examples in this regard.

(156) **Southern Ndebele**

wa + umuzi > womuzi
nga + izinto > ngezinto
na + abafazi > nabafazi

Northern Ndebele

wa + (u)muti > wemuti 'of a home'
ga + (i)tinro > getinro 'by means of things'
na + (a)bafati > nebafati 'with women'

3.7 Phonological differences in the nasal compounds of Southern and Northern Ndebele

There are numerous phonological differences that occur in the nasal compounds of Southern and Northern Ndebele. These differences will be discussed under the following sub-headings –

- (i) the Ur-Bantu nasal compounds in the Nguni languages
- (ii) the ndrondroza nasal compounds in Southern and Northern Ndebele
- (iii) denasalization in the nasal compounds of Southern and Northern Ndebele.

3.7.1 The Ur-Bantu nasal compounds in the Nguni languages

Meinhof (1932:85) distinguishes two kinds of nasal compounds in the African languages namely the so-called

- (i) original nasal compounds which are the nasal compounds that occur in word stems, and
- (ii) the nasal compounds formed by means of the Ur-Bantu class prefix of class 9, (i.e., /ni/) and that of Class 1 and Class 3 (i.e., /mu-/).

In comparative Bantu linguistics it is customary to refer to the original nasal compounds as the primary Ur-Bantu nasal compounds or just primary nasal compounds and to the later compounds as the secondary Ur-Bantu nasal compounds or secondary nasal compounds.

In most Nguni languages the vowel of the Ur-Bantu Class prefix of Classes 1 and 3 (i.e., /mu/) normally drops out before polysyllabic stems causing the nasal to become syllabic as is shown in the following Southern Ndebele examples.

Before polysyllabic stems (vowel /u/ dropped)	Before monosyllabic stems (vowel /u/ retained)
(157) Class 1: um-sana ‘boy’	(cf. umu-ntu ‘person’)
um-ntwana ‘a child’	(cf. umu-Thwa ‘Bushman’)
um-khethwa ‘initiate’	(cf. umu-fi ‘the deceased’)
Class 3 um-thunzi ‘shadow’	(cf. umu-zi ‘village’)
um-thombo ‘fountain’	(cf. umu-thi ‘tree’)
um-khono ‘arm’	(cf. umu-no ‘finger’)

Northern Ndebele is the only Nguni language where vowel elision in the case of Classes 1 and 3 does not occur at all, which means that the vowel /u/ of the basic prefix /mu/ is retained before both polysyllabic and monosyllabic stems. Compare the following Northern Ndebele examples in (158a) and (158b) in this regard.

Before monosyllabic stems (vowel /u/ retained)

(158a)	mu-nru	‘person’
	mu-no	‘finger’
	mu-ti	‘village’

Before polysyllabic stems

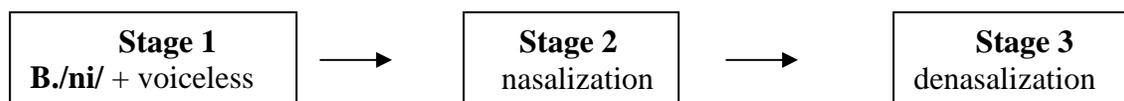
(158b)	mu-lomo	‘mouth’
	mu-dlaluko	‘game’
	mu-fati	‘woman’
	mu-gegulu	‘old woman’

Vowel elision also occurs in the case of the Ur-Bantu Class 9 prefix /**ni**/. This happens in all Nguni languages, resulting in the nasal of this prefix becoming juxtaposed to the following consonant. As a result of this juxtaposition various phonemic changes involving this nasal as well as the following consonant take place. Van Eeden (1956:35) refers to this process as ‘*nasalisasie*’ (nasalisation). Consider, for instance, the following isiZulu examples in this regard where this prefixal juxtaposed nasal /**n**/ has caused the following aspirated consonant to drop its aspiration and become ejective.

IsiZulu

(159)	/ni- + khonza /	> inkonzo [iŋk’ɔnzɔ]	‘sermon’
	/ni- + phila /	> impilo [imp’ilo]	‘life’
	/ni- + thanda /	> intando [int’andɔ]	‘will’

In Southern Ndebele this elision has gone a step further in so far as the nasal of this class prefix is concerned. This nasal drops off when followed by a voiceless consonant, but not before it had effected certain changes in the phonemic features of the following consonant. This process of (de)nasalisation can be illustrated as follows.



Compare in this regard the following examples where the prefixal nasal /n/ had first changed the aspirated plosives /kh/; /th/ and /ph/ to become ejective as in isiZulu after which it falls away as in Southern Ndebele.

Stage 1		Stage 2		Stage 3	
(Ur-Bantu)		(IsiZulu)		(Southern Ndebele)	
(160) /ni + khomo /	>	[iŋk'ɔmɔ]	>	[ik'ɔmɔ]	'beast'
/ni + phumula	>	[imp'umɛlɛlɔ]	>	[ip'umɛlɛlɔ]	'success'
/ni + phila /	>	[imp'ilɔ]	>	[ip'ilɔ]	'life'
/ni + thanda /	>	[int'andɔ]	>	[it'andɔ]	'free will'

Before voiced consonants, however, this nasal does not drop off, which means that the denasalization rule that applies before voiceless consonants as in the examples given in (160) above does not apply here. This nasal may, however, generate changes in the phonemic structure of the following voiced consonant as can be seen in some of the examples given in (161) below. Compare, in this regard, the following Southern Ndebele examples where the Class 9 nasal has been retained.

Stage 1		Stage 2	
(161) /ni + duna/		induna [induna]	'headman'
/ni + goma/		ingoma [iŋgɔma]	'song'
/ni + βu/		imvu [iŋɔvu]	'sheep'
/ni + βulî/		imbuzi [imbuzi]	'goat'

3.7.2 (Uku)ndrondroza nasal compounds in Southern and Northern Ndebele

The word **ukundrondroza** (or **ndrondroza** for short) is the name used by many Nguni speakers to refer to the peculiar vibrant nasal compounds found in some of the Nguni languages, notably in the two Ndebele languages and in Mpondo, whereby the equivalents of the Ur-Bantu nasal compounds /**nd**/ and /**nt**/ are rendered with a vibrant phoneme /r/, i.e., as [nr], [nḍ r] and [ndr], respectively. Loosely translated, the name **(uku)ndrondroza** signifies how to pronounce the nasal compound /**nd**/ or /**nt**/ as /**ndr**/. Compare in this regard the following Southern Ndebele words containing the **ndrondroza** nasal compounds with their isiZulu counterparts.

	Southern Ndebele		isiZulu	
(162)	isonto [isɔ̣nḍrɔ̣]		[isɔ̣nt'ɔ̣]	'Sunday'
	isiphundu [isiphundru]		[isiphundu]	'back of head'
	into [inḍrɔ̣]		[int'ɔ̣]	'thing'

3.7.2.1 Ndrondroza nasal compounds in Southern Ndebele

The so-called **(uku)ndrondroza** phenomenon affects four nasal compounds in Southern Ndebele. They are the Ur-Bantu primary nasal compounds /**nd**/ and /**nt**/ and the Ur-Bantu secondary nasal compounds **nt** (< B. **ni-t**) and **nd** (< B. **ni-l**). The primary and secondary nasal compound /**nt**/ has, apart from its **ndrondroza** form, a variant form [nḍ] in Southern Ndebele as shown in the following examples.

Southern Ndebele

(163)	umkhonto [umkhɔ̣ndɔ̣] or [umkhɔ̣nḍrɔ̣]	'spear'
	isonto [isɔ̣ndɔ̣] or [isɔ̣nḍrɔ̣]	'Church/Sunday'
	abantu [aɓandu] or [aɓanḍru]	'people'
	intombi [indombi] or [inḍrɔ̣mbi]	'girl'
	intamo [indamɔ̣] or [inḍramɔ̣]	'neck'

intando [indandɔ] or [indrandɔ] 'will'

The rule governing the dropping of the nasal /N/ (or denasalisation) before stems beginning on a voiceless consonants, such as the voiceless ejective alveolar explosive **t[t']**, does not apply to all Class 9 noun stems beginning on **[t']** in Southern Ndebele.

In the paragraphs that follow the focus falls on the '**ndrondrofication**' of these compounds in Southern Ndebele.

3.7.2.1.1 Ndrondrozafication of the primary Ur-Bantu nasal compounds B./nt/ and /nd/ in Southern Ndebele

The **ndrondroza** form of the primary nasal compounds /nt/ and /nd/ in Southern Ndebele is [nd̥r] (< nt) and [ndr] (< nd/), respectively. As stated earlier, these nasal compounds only occur in word stems. Compare the following examples in this regard;

Southern Ndebele

(164) B./nt/	umkhonto [umkhɔnd̥rɔ]	'assegai'
	umuntu [umund̥ru]	'person'
	isikhunta [isikhund̥ra]	'mould'
B. /nd/	-thanda [thandra]	'love'
	-sinda [sindra]	'be saved'
	-landela [landɛla]	'follow'

3.7.2.1.2 Ndrondrozafication of secondary Ur-Bantu nasal compounds /nt/ and /nd/ in Southern Ndebele

Secondary nasal compounds, i.e., compounds formed by Ur-Bantu /ni/, do not only occur in Class 9 noun prefixes in Southern Ndebele but are also found in Classes 8 and 10

nouns in this language. Here, the focus falls on the secondary nasal compounds /nt/ and /nd/ that occur in Class 9 nouns, as outlined below.

(i) Secondary nasal compounds in Class 9

According to earlier scholars such as Van Warmelo (1930:26) and Potgieter (1945:28), both the primary and secondary voiceless Ur-Bantu nasal compound /nt/ occur as a voiced nasal compound [nd] in Southern Ndebele while its voiced Ur-Bantu counterpart [nd] occurs as [nd] in this language. According to these scholars, the Southern Ndebele voiceless nasal compound [nt] has shifted from its original Ur-Bantu form /nt/ to its voiced counterpart [nd]. Consider the following examples of secondary nasal compounds as cited by Van Warmelo (op. cit.:26) in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

(165) **B./nt/ > [nd]** e.g. [indaba] (i) 'mountain' (cf. isiZulu [int'aba])
 [indambɔ] 'thong' (cf. isiZulu: [int'ambɔ])
 [indɔ] 'thing' (cf. isiZulu: [int'ɔ])

B./nd/ = [nd] e.g. [indaba] (ii) 'matter/issue'
 [induna] 'headman'
 [indɔd a] 'man'

Although **intaba** [indaba] (i) 'mountain' and **indaba** [indaba] (ii) 'matter, issue' differ orthographically, but they are pronounced by many speakers in exactly the same way except for the difference in tone on the second syllable (i.e., **indába** 'mountain' and '**indaba** 'affair, issue').

In a recent investigation by Wilkes (1997) and one by Skhosana (1998), the above observation has been found to be only partially accurate in that both the primary (cf. examples in (165) above) and secondary Ur-Bantu nasal compounds /nt/ and /nd/ occur

not only as [nd] in this language but also as compounds with an intruding phoneme /r/, i.e., as [nḍ r] and [ndr], respectively. In the case of B./nt/, its Southern Ndebele equivalent has undergone a further change in that the voiced plosive phoneme /d/ of this compound has become a devoiced [ḍ]. It was also found that it is mostly in the speech of speakers belonging to the Nzunza section of the Southern Ndebele language group that these vibrant nasal compounds normally occur. Consider the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

(166)	B./nt/	>	[nḍ r] or [nd]		
	into	>	[nḍ rɔ̣]	(or [indɔ̣])	'thing'
	intaba	>	[nḍ raβa]	(or [indaβa])	'mountain'
	intombi	>	[nḍ rombi]	(or [indombi])	'girl'
	B./nd/	=	[ndr] or [nd]		
	indoda	>	[indrɔ̣ḍ a]	(or [indɔ̣ḍ a])	'man'
	induna	>	[indruna]	(or [induna])	'headman'
	indaba	>	[indraba]	(or [indaβa])	'affair'

The two **ndrondroza** variants [nḍr] and [ndr] are much more common in the speech of Southern Ndebele speakers than their non-**ndrondroza** counterparts [nt] and [nd]. The latter are preferred by the younger generation of the Nzunza speakers as well as by speakers belonging to the Manala sub-group and they are reflected in the practical orthography of Southern Ndebele. In other words, the Southern Ndebele equivalents of the Ur-Bantu nasal compounds /nt/ and /nd/, as outlined above, are written in their **non-ndrondroza** form, i.e., as /nt/ and /nd/, respectively. Compare the following examples in (167a) and (167b) below in this regard.



Southern Ndebele

(167a)	intaba	(<i>instead of</i> indraba or indaba)	'mountain'
	umkhonto	(<i>instead of</i> umkhondro or umkhondo)	'spear'
	intando	(<i>instead of</i> indrandro or indando)	'liking'
(167b)	indaba	(<i>instead of</i> indraba)	'affair/issue'
	indoda	(<i>instead of</i> indroda)	'man'
	umlandu	(<i>instead of</i> umlandru)	'case'

(ii) Secondary nasal compounds in Classes 8 and 10

(a) Class 8

In most African languages, particularly the Nguni languages, the noun class prefix of Class 8 does not include a nasal. This is, however, not the situation in Southern Ndebele where the prefix of this class does include a nasal. Compare the following Southern Ndebele examples with their counterparts in isiZulu.

	Southern Ndebele	isiZulu
	Class 8	Class 8
(168)	iinkhova	izikhova 'owls'
	iinkhathi	izikhathi 'times'
	iinthandwa	izithandwa 'lovers'
	iinthombe	izithombe 'pictures'
	iimphofu	iziphofu 'blind people'
	iimphetho	iziphetho 'conclusions'

(b) Class 10

As in most of the Nguni languages, with the exception of Northern Ndebele, the nouns of Class 10 in Southern Ndebele include a nasal in their prefix. Compare the following Southern Ndebele examples with their counterparts in isiZulu.

Southern Ndebele

isiZulu

Class 10

Class 10

(169)	iinkomo	‘beasts’	izinkomo
	iingoma	‘songs’	izingoma
	iimpilo	‘lives’	izimpilo
	iindawo	‘places.’	izindawo

From Southern Ndebele examples in (168) and (169) above, it would appear as if the class prefix of Class 8 is morphologically identical to that of Class 10 as both these prefixes have the same (basic) form, i.e., **iin-**. In Chapter Four, an analysis of the morphological differences between Class 8 and Class 10 nouns in Southern Ndebele is given where it is shown that these two class prefixes are, in fact, not the same morphologically. A peculiar feature of the secondary nasal compounds in Class 8 and Class 10 in Southern Ndebele is that the secondary nasal compounds in Class 10 may be **ndrondrozafied** while those in Class 8 are not. Compare the examples in (170a) and (170b) in this regard.

Class 8

Class 10

B./nt/ = [nt']	=	[nd] or [nḍ r]
(170a) [iint'εŋwana] 'wire traps for wild doves'		[iindombi] or [iinḍrombi] 'girls'
[iint'at'apɪswa] 'guests'		[iindaɓa] or [iindraɓa] 'mountains'
[iint'εt'ε] 'muddy places'		[iindandɔ] or [iindṛandrɔ] 'likings'
[iint'ut'u] 'full bodies of chicken'		[iinduthu] or [indṛuthu] 'smokes'
B./nd/ = [nḍ]	=	[nḍ] : or [ndr]
(170b) [iindunu] 'big buttocks'		[iindawɔ] or [iindṛawɔ] 'places'



[iindakwa] 'drunkards'	[iinduna] or [iindruna] 'chiefs'
[iind εηgε] 'stupids'	[iindima] or [iindrima] 'spaces'
[iindudu] 'types of porridge'	[iinduli] or [iindruli] 'types of grass of making grass mat.'

[Note: As stated earlier, the **ndrondroza** nasal compounds are not reflected in the official Southern Ndebele orthography.]

3.7.2.1.3 Ndrondrozafication of nasal compounds in loanwords in Southern Ndebele

The **ndrondrozafication** of nasal compounds is not limited to traditional Southern Ndebele words only. This investigation has found that this phenomenon also occurs in most loanwords, notably in words adopted from Afrikaans and English, respectively. However, the **ndrondrozafication** in loanwords differs from that in traditional Southern Ndebele words in that it is restricted to *primary nasal compounds* only, that is, secondary nasal compounds occurring in loanwords that belong to Class 8 and Class 10 are normally not **ndrondrozafied** in Southern Ndebele. Compare the following examples in (171a), (171b) and (172) below in this regard.

B./nt/ = Class 8 [nt']

(171a)	iintandi [iint'andri] 'stands'	(< English 'stands')
	iintulo [iint'ulo] 'chairs'	(< Afrikaans 'stoel')
	iintofu [iint'ofu] 'stoves'	(< Afrikaans 'stoof')
	iintina [iint'ina] 'bricks'	(< Afrikaans 'steen')

(171b) Class 10 [nt']

iintanghi [iint'aŋi] 'pair of pliers'	(< Afrikaans 'tang')
iintiye [iint'ijε] 'kinds of teas'	(< Afrikaans 'tee')
iintende [iint'endrε] 'tents'	(< Afrikaans 'tent')
iintandadi [iint'andrad i] 'standards'	(< English 'standards')
iintamati [iint'amat'i] 'tomatoes'	(< Afrikaans 'tamatie')

B./nd/ = Class 10 [nd̥]

- (172) iindayi [iind̥aji] 'dyes' (< English)
 iinderefude [iind̥ɛrefud̥ɛ] 'tripods' (< Afrikaans 'drievoet')
 iindadamu [iind̥adamu] 'dates' (< Afrikaans 'datum')

[Note: Southern Ndebele does not seem to have any Class 8 nouns borrowed from Afrikaans or English that contain the secondary nasal compound /nd/ as no such nouns were found in this investigation.]

Unlike their secondary counterparts, **ndrondrozafied** primary nasal compounds occur in many Southern Ndebele words that have been borrowed from English and Afrikaans, including those that fall under Class 8. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Words Borrowed from English

- (173a) isitandi [isit'andri] or [isit'andi] 'stand'
 itende [it'ɛndrɛ] or [it'ɛndɛ] 'tent'
 ipende [ip'ɛndrɛ] or [ip'ɛndɛ] 'paint'
 ikhalenda [ikhalɛndra] or [ikhalɛnda] 'calendar'

Words Borrowed from Afrikaans

- (173b) iponde [ip'ɔndrɛ] or [ip'ɔndɛ] (< Afrikaans: *pond*) 'pound'
 ibhande [ib'andɛ] or [ib'andɛ] (< Afrikaans: *band*) 'belt'

While many loanwords in Southern Ndebele contain **ndrondrozafied** primary nasal compound there is also a substantial number of these words in this language that for some inexplicable reason do not permit their primary nasal compounds to be **ndrondrozafied**. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

(174) usende[usɛndɛ]	‘cent’	(not [usɛndrɛ])	
iranda [irand _ɔ a]	‘rand’	(not [irand _ɔ ra])	
-rondo [rɔnd _ɔ ɔ]	‘round’	(not [rɔnd _ɔ rɔ])	(<Afr: <i>rond</i>)
-rhasondo [xasɔndɔ]	‘healthy’	(not [xasɔndrɔ])	(<Afr: <i>gesond</i>)

The intrusion of the vibrant phoneme /r/ into the Ur-Bantu nasal compound /nt/ in Southern Ndebele is impermissible unless the voiceless explosive /t/ changes to the devoiced alveolar explosive /d/[d̥] through the influenced of the Ur-Bantu nasal /ni/ as can be illustrated in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: The influence of the Ur-Bantu nasal /ni/ in the Southern Ndebele nasal compound /nt/

1 st stage	2 nd stage	3 rd stage
+ aspiration: B. /ni/ + th	- aspiration: [ntʰ]	intrusion of /r/: [ndr̥]
e.g. ni-tho	into	[indr̥ɔ] ‘thing’
ni-thenga	intengo	[indr̥ɛŋgɔ] ‘price’
ni-thanda	intando	[indr̥andr̥ɔ] ‘liking’
ni-thomba	intombi	[indr̥ombi] ‘girl’

The nasal compound /nt/ in Class 9 nouns either drops its nasal /N/ or renders it as /nd/ to permit *ndrondrozafication* in Southern Ndebele. Phonologically, the nasal /N/ first exerts its influence before the aspirated alveolar explosive /th/ and, thereafter, drops (i.e., /n/ + /th/ > (n)t > t[tʰ] or influences the aspirated alveolar explosive /th/ to become a devoiced alveolar explosive /d/ (i.e., n + th > nt > [nd̥]) in order to trigger the so-called *ndrondrozafication*. (cf examples in Table 3.5 above).

3.7.2.2 The Ndrondrozafication of nasal compounds in Northern Ndebele

The so-called **ndrondroza** phenomenon that Southern Ndebele exhibits also occurs in Northern Ndebele, albeit in a somewhat different form. In the following paragraphs, the **ndrondrozafication** of the various nasal compounds in Northern Ndebele is investigated and discussed.

3.7.2.2.1 Ndrondrozafication of the primary and secondary nasal compounds [nt] and [nd] in Northern Ndebele

According to Ziervogel (1959:29-30), the primary Ur-Bantu voiceless nasal compound **B./nt/** in Northern Ndebele occurs as either a retroflexive nasal compound **nr[nɾ]**, or as a fully voiced retroflexive **ndr[ndɾ]**, or as a post alveolar nasal compound **nd[nd]**. Its voiced Ur-Bantu counterpart **B./nd/** occurs as a devoiced retroflexive nasal compound **[nd̥ ɾ]** or as a devoiced post alveolar nasal compound **[nd̥]**. Compare the following examples in (175a) and (175b) in this regard.

Northern Ndebele

(175a) B./nt/	[nɾ]	or	[ndɾ]	or	[nd]	
	[umun ɾu]	or	[umundɾu]	or	[mundu]	‘person’
	[nɾaβa]	or	[ndɾaβa]	or	[ndaβa]	‘mountain’
 (175b) B./nd/	[nd̥ ɾ]	or	[nd̥]			
	[nd̥ ɾaβa]	or	[nd̥ aβa]			‘affair’
	[lind̥ ɾa]	or	[lind̥ a]			‘wait’
	[muland̥ ɾu]	or	[muland̥ u]			‘case’

Ziervogel's observation of the primary and secondary Ur-Bantu nasal compounds in Northern Ndebele can be summarised as follows –

Northern Ndebele

	Primary		Secondary
(176)	B./nt/ = [nɿ] / [ndɿ] / [nd]	=	[nɿ]/ndɿ/[nd]
	B. /nd/ = [nḍ] / [nḍɿ]	=	[nḍ] / [nḍɿ]

This shows that **B./nt/** and **B. /nd/**, according to Ziervogel, have the same reflection in Northern Ndebele irrespective of whether they occur as primary or secondary nasal compounds.

However, recent studies of the phonological structure of Northern Ndebele undertaken by Skhosana (1998) and Wilkes (2001:16) have shown that Ziervogel's earlier observation regarding the **ndrondrozafication** of the nasal compounds in Northern Ndebele no longer seems to apply in Northern Ndebele of today. Both these investigators have found that it is only the (secondary) Ur-Bantu nasal compound **/nt/** that is currently still **ndrondrozafied** in Northern Ndebele. Consider the following Northern Ndebele examples in this regard.

Northern Ndebele

(177)	[nr]		
	[nr'εthε]	'locust'	(cf. isiZulu [int'εthε])
	[nraβa]	'mountain'	(cf. isiZulu [int'aba])
	[nrɔ]	'something'	(cf. isiZulu [int'ɔ])

According to the examples in (176) above, particularly in secondary nasal compounds, the only actively used variant form of the nasal compound **/nt/** in Northern Ndebele

speech communities is [nr] rather than [ndr] or [nd] as identified by Ziervogel (1959:29).

However, inconsistency does exist amongst speakers of Northern Ndebele in the case where the nasal compound /nt/ occurs as a primary nasal compound. Speakers pronounce some words containing the nasal compound /nt/ with **ndrondrozafication** whilst other words are pronounced without. Compare the following examples in this regard.

(178) sondarha [sɔ̃ndaxa] (and not [sɔ̃nraxa]) 'Sunday' (cf. isiZulu:ison**to**)
mukhondo [mukhɔ̃ndɔ] (and not [mukhɔ̃nrɔ]) 'spear' (cf. isiZulu:umkh**onto**)

The **ndrondrozafication** of the Ur-Bantu nasal compound /nd/ has for unknown reasons been abandoned as it no longer occurs in Northern Ndebele. This nasal compound /nd/ is currently and consistently being pronounced in a non-**ndrondrozafied** form, i.e., as [nḍ].

Consider the following examples in this regard.

Northern Ndebele

(179) **B./nd/**

[nḍuna]	'headman'	(cf. isiZulu: [induna])
[nḍɔ̃ḍa]	'man'	(cf. isiZulu: [indɔ̃ḍa])
[nḍawɔ̃]	'place'	(cf. isiZulu: [indawɔ̃])
[manḍɛbɛɛ]	'Ndebele people'	(cf. isiZulu: [amandɛbɛɛ])
[linḍa]	'wait'	(cf. isiZulu: [linda])

3.7.2.2 Ndrondrozafication in loanwords in Northern Ndebele

According to Northern Ndebele informants, the **ndrondrozafication** of the secondary and primary nasal compounds in words borrowed from Afrikaans and English does not

occur in Northern Ndebele. These nasal compounds remain **un-ndrodzafied** as can be seen in the following Northern Ndebele examples in (180a) and (180b) below.

B./nt/ = [nt']

(180a)	ntamatisi [nt'amat'isi]	(not [nramat'isi])	'tomato'
	ntente [nt'ɛnt'ɛ]	(not [nrɛnrɛ])	'tent'
	ntiye [nt'ijɛ]	(not [nrijɛ])	'tea'

B./nd/ = [nd]

(180b)	mpende [mp'ɛndɛ]	(and not [mp'ɛnrɛ])	'paint'
	mpondo [mp'ɔndo]	(and not [mp'ɔnrɔ])	'pound'
	lipande [lip'andɛ]	(and not [lip'anrɛ])	'band'

Where precisely these peculiar vibrant nasal compounds in Southern and Northern Ndebele have originated from, remains a mystery. What is clear is that, however, these compounds could not have originated from any of the neighbouring Sotho languages (namely Sepedi or Setswana) as none of these languages has nasal compounds that are even remotely reminiscent of the **ndrondroza** nasal compounds of these two Ndebele languages.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter the phonological differences between Southern and Northern Ndebele have been analysed and discussed. Ziervogel's (1959) views regarding the Northern Ndebele sound system against the latest version has been given attention. It is evident that phonologically the two Ndebele languages differ substantially from each other. Southern Ndebele, for instance, has a certain number of sounds that do not occur in its northern counterpart (e.g. clicks sounds), whilst Northern Ndebele also certain sounds that do not exist in its southern counterpart (e.g., inter-dental sounds).



Phonologically the discussion has revealed that although both languages recognize the so-called denasalisation and **(uku)ndrondroza** phonological features, which is a non-existent feature in the other Nguni languages, they occur differently. This chapter has further shown that the two Ndebele languages do not fall under the same Nguni language sub-groups. Southern Ndebele, for instance, reveals that it contains Zunda-Nguni elements, whilst Northern Ndebele demonstrates that it has Tekela-Nguni elements. In the next chapter the morphophonological differences between the two Ndebele languages are discussed.

CHAPTER 4

MORPHOPHONOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN NDEBELE

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, this research will focus on the morphophonological differences that distinguish Southern and Northern Ndebele from each other. Crystal (1997:250) defines morphophonology as

‘A branch of linguistic referring to the analysis and classification of the phonological factors which affect the appearance of morphemes, or, correspondingly, the grammatical factors which affect the appearance of phonemes...’

To state it differently, morphophonology, which is sometimes referred to as morphonology or morphophonemics, is that part of the grammar of a language that deals solely with rules governing sound changes that occur when certain morphemes combine with one another. It deals with the phonological changes that sometimes come about when two morphemes combine with each other. Finch (2000:59) says it in a simpler manner that morphophonology is the study of phonology and the audiological (sound) structure of morphemes.

The morphophonological differences that exist between Southern and Northern Ndebele are further discussed under the following headings –

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

- (vi) denasalization in the nasal compounds of Southern and Northern Ndebele.

4.2 Differences in consonant assimilation

According to Meinhof (1932:13), when sounds immediately follow one another they exert an influence on one another in two different ways, these may be described as assimilation and dissimilation. Finch (2000:43) prefers the term “co-articulation” for this phonological process and propounds that in normal running speech it is usual to economise on the effort involved in articulation by relaxing the motor control of the speech organs, which results in segments running into each other.

These sound influences can either result in assimilation, which is the phonological process whereby one sound is modified in order to make it more similar to the other with regard to articulation, or in dissimilation. Dissimilation, as opposed to assimilation, is defined by Katamba (1992:94) as the phonological process which ensures that the differences between sounds are enhanced so that sounds become more auditorily distinct. Katamba (op. cit.:84) further comments that

‘When discussing assimilation, it is useful to look at processes in terms of directionality, i.e. we can say whether a sound becomes more like either the sound that precedes it or the sound that follows it.’

Assimilation, or co-articulation, is a common phonological feature in the Nguni languages and may be either progressive or regressive. According to Ziervogel (1986:65-66), progressive assimilation is when the second sound is made similar to the first whilst in retrogressive assimilation the first sound is made similar to the second. This implies that in progressive assimilation, the second sound changes because of the influence of the preceding sound (e.g. **B.[ni] + B.[l] > B.[nd]**, meaning that the lateral sound **l** has changed to **d**, because of a nasal **n**), whilst in retrogressive assimilation the first sound changes because of the influence of the second sound (e.g. **B[ni] + [kh] > nk[ŋk’]**, the alveolar nasal **n** has changed to a velar nasal **[ŋ]**.)



child.’

Before semi-vowels:

- (4b) **Ndiwubonile muti kabhabha.** ‘I saw my father’s home.’
Nkxomo le **ndiyithengile.** ‘I bought this beast.’

Before object concords:

- (4c) Bulwele **ndibufumene eMgombhane.** ‘I got the sickness from Mgombhane.’
Tolo **ndimuvile asumayela.** ‘I heard him speaking yesterday.’

In all other instances, the subject and object concord of the 1st person takes on the form of a nasal /n/ that is assimilated to the following consonant. Compare the following examples in this regard.

- (5) [n + f] > **mf**: e.g. **Mfanele nkhambe.** ‘I’m supposed to go.’
Banru **bamfuna bokxe.** ‘All people want me.’

[n + v] > **mv**: e.g. **Mvile ndaba leyo.** ‘I have heard that matter.’
Lokxe **limvile kuri nthini.** ‘You have all heard what I said.’

[n + b] > **mm**: e.g. **Mmone banru bekhethu.** ‘I have seen our people.’
Bammonile kuri nkhone. ‘They have seen that I’m present.’

[Note: The rule of **mu-b** > **mm** discussed in par. 4.2.3 below is applicable above.]

[n + th] > **nth**: e.g. **Nthanda bafati.** ‘I like women.’
Banru **banthanda kxulu.** ‘People like me very much.’

[n + kh] > **nhk**. e.g. **Nkhubele.** ‘I’m injured.’
Tolo **bankhubate nhloko le.** ‘Yesterday they struck my head.’

4.2.3 Assimilation of the bilabial fricative **b[β]** in Northern Ndebele

Whenever the bilabial fricative consonant **b[β]** in Northern Ndebele is preceded by the syllable **mu-**, the consonant **/b/** assimilates to the preceding nasal **/m/** thus causing the sequence **mu - b** to become **mm**. This rule does not occur in Southern Ndebele. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Northern Ndebele

- (6) **mmala** 'colour' (< m(u) + bala)
mmutise 'ask him' (< m(u) + butise)
mmophe 'arrest him' (< m(u) + bophe)
mmulale 'kill him' (< m(u) + bulale)
mmambhe 'catch him' (< m(u) + bambhe)

This phonetic rule, which is unknown in all other Nguni languages in all probability originated from the neighbouring Northern Sotho language where a similar rule is found. According to Lombard, et al. (1993:37) and Doke (1954:127), this rule applies when the prefix **mo-** of Class 1 and 3, respectively, is followed by a stem commencing on the bilabial fricative **b[β]** causing the sequence **mo + b** to become **mm**. Compare the following Northern Sotho examples in this regard.

Northern Sotho

- (7) mo + **bala** > **mmala** 'colour'
mo + **bušô** > **mmušô** 'government'
mo + **bêrêko** > **mmêrêko** 'work'
mo + **butla** > **mmutla** 'hare'
mo + **bele** > **mmele** 'body'

Like in the Northern Sotho, the rule has spread wider in Northern Ndebele in so far as it also occurs when the object concord **-mu** of Class 1 and 1a occurs before the bilabial consonant **b[β]**. Compare the following examples in this regard.

- (8) m(u) + butise > mmutise 'ask him'
 m(u) + bophe > mmophe 'arrest him'
 m(u) + bulale > mmulale 'kill him'
 m(u) + bambhe > mmambhe 'catch him'

4.2.4 Assimilation of the alveolar consonant /l/

Besides the assimilation of the bilabial consonant **b[β]**, the alveolar consonant **l** in the perfect suffix **-ile** also has the tendency to assimilate with a preceding nasal **n** or **m** when these nasals appear in disyllabic stems in Northern Ndebele. According to Ziervogel (1959:34), this feature occurs mainly in the Muledlhane dialect of Northern Ndebele. In this instance, 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**). Compare the following examples in this regard.

- (9) **n-l** > **nn**: unonne (< non(a)ile) 'he is fat'
 -bonne (< -bon(a)ile) 'have seen'
m-l > **mm**: -jamme (< -jam(a)ile) 'standing'
 -thumme (< -thum(a)ile) 'have sent to'

4.3 Differences between Southern and Northern Ndebele in the syllabification of nasals

Syllabification is a phonological feature that occurs in all Nguni languages. It only concerns nasals and in most instances it results from vowel omission. In the following paragraphs, syllabification is discussed as it occurs in Southern and Northern Ndebele.

4.3.1.3 Syllabification of the nasal in the objective concord of Classes 1 and 1a

- (10c) Cl.1 siyamuzwa ‘we hear him’ but siyam**m**thanda [sijam**m**thanda]
‘we love him’
bayamutjho ‘they talk about him’ but bayam**m**bona [bajam**m**ɔna]
‘they see him’
Cl.1(a) wamupha ‘you gave him’ but wam**m**bulala [wam**m**bulala]
‘you killed him’
samusa lapha ‘we took him there’ but sam**m**buza [sam**m**buza]
‘we asked him’

4.3.2 Syllabification of nasals in Northern Ndebele

There is a remarkable distinction between Southern and Northern Ndebele regarding syllabification of nasals. In Southern Ndebele, syllabification of nasals occurs only as a result of vowel elision. In Northern Ndebele, on the other hand, this phonological process is much more prolific in that it is also found in grammatical environments where syllabification would never occur 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. In the following paragraph, an outline is given of the various instances where the syllabification of nasals is found in Northern Ndebele.

4.3.2.1 Syllabification of the nasal /n/ in the prefix of certain Class 1(a) nouns

According to Ziervogel (1959:36), when nouns in Class 1a have an initial phonemic sequence of /N + V/ in their stems the nasal is doubled. In which case, the first nasal becomes a syllabic nasal **n**¹ and simultaneously acts as the class prefix of these nouns. Compare the following examples in this regard.

¹ For the purpose of this discussion the syllabic nasal in Northern Ndebele is orthographically indicated by **n** or **m**.

Northern Ndebele

(11) Cl. 1(a)	nina	>	<u>nn</u> nina)	‘his/her mother’
	nyoko	>	<u>nn</u> nyoko)	‘your mother’
	nina wakaMalusi	>	<u>nn</u> noMalusi)	‘mother to Malusi’
	nolidzwedzwe	>	<u>nn</u> nolidzwedzwe)	‘a kind of a hawk’

[Note: In the plural form of these nouns the syllabic nasal **n** is replaced by the prefix of Class 2a, i.e., **bo-**.] Compare the following examples in this regard.

(12) Cl. 2a	<u>nn</u> nina	>	bon nina	‘his mothers’
	<u>nn</u> nyoko	>	bon nyoko	‘your mothers’
	<u>nn</u> noMalusi	>	bon noMalusi	‘Malusi’s mothers’
	<u>nn</u> nolidzwedzwe	>	bon nolidzwedzwe	‘kinds of hawk’.

4.3.2.2 Syllabification of the nasal /n/ in the prefix of certain Class 9 nouns

The same rule pertaining to the syllabification of the nasal in the prefixes of some Class 1 nouns applies to the nasal in the prefix of certain Class 9 nouns, that is, when a Class 9 noun has an initial phonemic sequence /N + V/ in its stem the nasal is doubled in which case the first nasal becomes syllabic and also acts as the class prefix of these nouns. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Class 9

(13)	nosi/nyosi	>	<u>nn</u> nosi	‘bee’
	nyathi	>	<u>nn</u> nyathi	‘buffalo’
	nyoka	>	<u>nn</u> nyoka	‘snake’
	nyoni	>	<u>nn</u> nyoni	‘bird’

[Note: It is not Class 9 nouns such as those in (13) only that have a syllabic prefix in Northern Ndebele. All Class 9 nouns in this language with monosyllabic stems also have a syllabic **n** as their class prefix.] Compare the following examples in this regard.



- (14) nja ‘dog’
 ngwe ‘tiger’
 nkxo ‘a small curved clay calabash (for African beer)’

According to Ziervogel (1959:37), the syllabic nasal n in certain class 9 nouns such as those given in (13) above may be the result of a discarded vowel **i-** which occurred in an older form of Northern Ndebele.

4.3.2.3 Syllabification of the nasal /m/ in the basic noun class prefixes of Classes

1 and 3

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** elucidated in 4.2.3 above) and the nasal /m/ of **mu-** to become syllabic. Compare the following examples in this regard.

(15a) **Class 1 noun class prefix**

- mu-bati > **mb**ati > mmati ‘carpenter’
mu-boni > **mb**oni > mmoni ‘seer’
mu-bali > **mb**ali > mmali ‘counter (as in money)’

(15b) **Class 3 noun class prefix**

- mu-bono > **mb**ono > mmono ‘idea’
mu-bala > **mb**ala > mmala ‘colour’
mu-boya > **mb**oya > mmoya ‘wind’

According to examples cited by Ziervogel (1959:56), the nasal **-m** in the class prefix of Class 3 also becomes syllabic when it occurs before the aspirated bilabial explosive **-ph**. Compare the following two examples in this regard.

- (16) Cl 3. mu-phini > **mphini** [mphini] 'axe handle'
mu-phako > **mphako** [mphako] 'food for the journey'

One would have thought that the same rule would apply before other bilabial consonants as well. This is, however, not the case as can be seen in examples such as **mubhede** and **mubhalo** where the prefix **mu-** appears before the devoiced bilabial explosive phoneme /bh/ but retains its vowel /u/.

4.3.2.4 Syllabification of the nasal /m/ in the objectival concord of Classes 1 and 1(a)

As is the case in Southern Ndebele, the nasal **m** in the object concord **-mu-** of Classes 1 and 1(a) is syllabified in Northern Ndebele when the vowel **-u-** drops off before polysyllabic stems. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Northern Ndebele

- (17) Cl.1 Ndiy**am**thanda (< ndi-ya-**m**(u)-thanda) 'I love him.'
Siy**am**landa (< si-ya-**m**(u)-landa) 'We are fetching him.'
B**am**sita (< ba -**m**(u)-si-ta) kxulu 'They help him too much.'
- Cl 1(a) B**am**nika (< ba-**m**(u)-ni-ka) bukxosi 'They give him chieftainship.'
B**am**mita (<ba-**m**(u)-bita) nkxosi 'They call him a chief.'
Titha tiy**am**mulala (<ti-yo-**m**(u)-bulala) 'Enemies are going to kill him.'

[Note: In the last two examples of Cl.1a the rule **mu-b** > **mm** discussed in par. 4.2.3 above applies.]

4.3.2.5 Syllabification of the nasals /n/ and /m/ in the subject and objectival concord of the first person singular ndi-

The subject and object concords of the first person singular in Northern Ndebele both have three variants, namely, an alveolar nasal /n/, a bilabial nasal /m/, and a velar nasal

n[ŋ], that occur before consonants. (The basic variant **ndi-** only appears before vowels, semi-vowels, subject and object concords (Ziervogel, 1959:133-134). (Also see par. 4.2.2.1.2 above.) According to Ziervogel (1959:134), the nasal variants are all syllabic and usually assimilate with the consonant phoneme that follows them.

Where exactly these three syllabic nasal variants of the concords of the 1st person singular originated from, is not clear. However, it is very unlikely that they could have been derived from the concord **ndi-** as there is no known phonological rule in Northern Ndebele in terms of which such a derivation can be explained. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Subjectival concord of the 1st person singular

- (18a) **ntile** [nt̩ilɛ] (< ndi-tile) ‘I have come.’
annayo[an̩najɔ] (<andi-nayo) ‘I don’t have it.’
mphendula[m̩phendula] (<ndi-phendula) ‘Answer me.’

Objectival concord of the 1st person singular

- (18b) **Banthanda** (<[banthanda]) kxulu bomalume. ‘My uncles love me very much.’
Ninthume (<[ninthumɛ]) edorobheni. ‘You have send me to town.’
Munru lo uyamma (<[ujammɔna]). ‘This person sees me.’

4.4 Differences in palatalization between Southern and Northern Ndebele

Palatalization is the phonological process whereby consonants with few or no palatal phonetic features are changed to, or replaced by, palatal consonants. In explaining what palatalization entails in Zulu, Van Eeden (1956:48) says

‘Dit is nie bestaanbaar met die fonologie van Zulu nie dat sekere konsonante, veral bilabiale konsonante, onmiddellik gevolg word deur die semivokaal **w**, wat ook die eienskap van bilabialiteit het; m.a.w. kombinasies soos **phw**, **bw**, ens. pas nie in die Zoeloe-klankstelsel nie.

So ‘n moontlikheid word in sommige gevalle vermy deur die w eenvoudig weg te laat val, bv. in die possessiefkonkord **ba-** (i.p.v. bwa-) van klas 7. Meer kenmerkend is egter dat so ‘n bilabiale konsonant deur ‘n ander, en wel die ooreenstemmende (pre)palatale konsonant, vervang word. So ‘n verandering word dan palatalisasie genoem en dit gebeur as gevolg van die behoefte om te dissimileer, dit is om klanke wat dieselfde of ooreenstemmende eienskappe besit, oneenders te maak en vind plaas in die vorming van verbale passiewe... lokatiewe adverbia ... en diminutiewe vorms van nomina.’

Although palatalization occurs in both Southern and Northern Ndebele, there are important differences between these two Ndebele languages in which this phonological process occurs (as far as the grammatical environments are concerned). Whereas in Southern Ndebele palatalization occurs in the formation of passives, diminutives and locatives, in Northern Ndebele, notably in the Muledlhane dialect, it is only found in the formation of passives and diminutives and not in the formation of locatives (Ziervogel, 1959:62 and Wilkes (personal communication)).

4.4.1 Differences in palatalization between Southern and Northern Ndebele in the formation of passive verbs and diminutives

Palatalization in the formation of passive verbs and diminutive nouns follows the same pattern in Southern and Northern Ndebele except for the palatalization of bilabial fricative phoneme [β] in Northern Ndebele and its implosive bilabial equivalent [b] in Southern Ndebele. In Northern Ndebele, this sound [β] becomes a pre-palatal semi-vowel y[j] while its bilabial implosive counterpart b[b] in Southern Ndebele becomes the palatal ejective affricate tj[tʃ’]. Compare the following examples in this regard.

	Southern Ndebele		Northern Ndebele	
	([b] > [tʃ’])		([β] > [j])	
(19)	-goba > -gotjwa		-goba > -goywa	‘be bent’



-saba >	-satjwa	-saba >	-saywa	'be feared'
ikabi >	ikatjana	nkxabi >	nkxayana	'young ox'
ingubo >	ingutjana	ngubo >	nguyana	'small blanket'
intaba >	intatjana	ntaba >	ntayana	'small mountain/hill'

In other instances, palatalization occurs in the same way in these two languages. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

Northern Ndebele

(20) mb>nj : -khamba > -khanjwa	-khambha > -khanjwa 'be travelled'
ph>tjh : -khupha > -khutjha	-khupha > -khutjha 'be taken out'
m>ny : umlomo > umlonyana	mulomo > mulonyana 'small mouth'
bh>j : isigubhu > isigujana	sigubhu > sigujana 'small drum'
th>tjh : umratha > umratjhana	muratha > muratjhana 'small bowl of porridge'

4.4.2 Differences in palatalization between Southern and Northern Ndebele in the formation of locatives

According to Ziervogel (1959:62), there are two ways of forming locative adverbs that contain bilabials etc in Northern Ndebele: one in which bilabial phonemes are palatalized and which occurs exclusively in the Mugombhane dialect, and one in which the bilabial phonemes are not palatalized, which is typical of the Lidwaba dialect of Northern Ndebele. The reason why locative adverbs are not palatalized in Lidwaba is because in this dialect locatives are formed by means of a locative suffix **-ni**, that is added to the final vowel of a noun. In most instances, this suffixation causes no irregular phonemic sequences making palatalization therefore unnecessary. Compare the following examples of the Lidwaba dialect in this regard.



Southern Ndebele

Lidwaba

(21) esigujini (<isigubhu- ini)	esigubhuni (<isigubhu- ni)	‘at the drum’
emlonyeni (umlomo –ini)	emlmoni (<umlomo- ni)	‘at the mouth’
ephathjhini (<iphaphu- ini)	ephaphuni (<phaphu- ni)	‘at the lungs’
emlanjeni (<umlambo- ini)	emlambhoni (<mlambho- ini)	‘at the river’
engutjeni (< ingubo –ini)	enguboni (< ngubo- ini)	‘at the blanket’

There is virtually no difference between Southern Ndebele and the Mugombhane dialect of Northern Ndebele with regard to palatalization in the formation of locative adverbs. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

Mugombane

(22) m>ny: umlomo > emlonyeni	mulomo > mulonyeni	‘at the mouth’
bh>j : isigubhu > esigujini	sigubhu > sigujini	‘at the drum’
ph>tjh iphaphu > ephathjhini	liphaphu > phathjhini	‘at the lungs’
mb>nj umlambo > emlanjeni	mulambho > mulanjeni	‘at the river’

According to Ziervogel (1959:36), Northern Ndebele also has a unique palatalization feature whereby the velar explosives /g/ and /g/ are palatalized to a palato-velar implosive **gy[ɟj]** and **g[ɟ]** when they occur before the front vowels [i], [i] and [ɛ], respectively. Compare the following examples he gives in this regard.

(23) -begyile [βeɟjîɛ]	‘has put down’
gye [ɟjɛ]	‘if’
gyithi [ɟjithi]	‘it is us’

[Note: According to the Northern Ndebele Orthography and Spelling Rules (2001), the palato-velar implosive /gy/ is replaced by the devoiced velar explosive **g[ḡ]** and the vowel [ĩ] is no longer used by contemporary Northern Ndebele speakers (cf. par. 3.4.1).

4.5 Differences in vowel coalescence between Southern and Northern Ndebele

Vowel coalescence refers to the formation of a new vowel when the neutral vowel **a** is juxtaposed with the vowels /i/, /u/ and /a/ respectively. This coalescence results in the following phonological rules –

- (24) a + i > e
 a + u > o
 a + a > a

Vowel coalescence is a phonological rule that is mainly confined to the so-called Zunda Nguni languages such as isiZulu, isiXhosa and Southern Ndebele. This rule operates whenever a formative that ends on the vowel /a/ is juxtaposed with nouns. In such instances the /a/ of the formative combines with the pre-prefix of the following noun giving rise to the rules mentioned for the examples given in (24) above. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

- (25) na + **u**gogo > **no**gogo ‘with/and grandmother’
 na + **i**ndoda > **ne**ndoda ‘with/and a man’
 na + **a**manzi > **na**manzi ‘with/and water’

In the so-called Thekela languages such as siSwati and Northern Ndebele, these vowel coalescence rules have been replaced by the so-called “substitution of e” rule or “vowel replacement” rule as Ziervogel (1986:221) prefers to call it. In terms of this rule, the vowel /a/ of all formatives that end on this vowel is replaced by a vowel e when such formatives are juxtaposed with the following noun. In Northern Ndebele and also in

siSwati, this rule operates in all noun classes where such formatives are combined with a following noun except when this noun is a noun of Class 1a without a pre-prefix. Compare the following examples of Northern Ndebele and siSwati in this regard.

Northern Ndebele	siSwati
(26a) na + munru > nemunru	na + umuntfu > nemuntfu ‘with/and a person.’
ya + mufati > yemufati	ya +umfati > yemfati ‘of a woman.’
sa + nduna > senduna	sa + indvuna > sendvuna ‘of a headman.’
ga + ntro > gentro	nga + tintfo > ngetintfo ‘by something.’

BUT

(26b) Cl.1a: ntjhelede yagugu	imali yagogo	‘my grandmother’s money.’
msebenti wankxulu	msebenti wamkhulu	‘my grandfather’s work.’
mavi wamalume	mavi wamalume	‘my uncle’s words.’
muti wabhabha	muti wababe	‘my father’s home.’

The fact that the “substitution of e” rule applies to nouns in all noun classes except for a few nouns in Class 1a, shows that this rule must be triggered by the presence of an underlying pre-prefix in these nouns. The fact that this rule is not active in case of a number of nouns in Class 1a, indicates that these nouns do not in all probability have an underlying pre-prefix.

4.6 Differences in vowel elision between Southern and Northern Ndebele

Linguists usually make a distinction between two types of vowel elision strategies in African languages, namely, voluntary and obligatory vowel elision. Voluntary vowel elision normally occurs in every day (non-emphatic) speech acts. Because voluntary vowel elision has, on the one hand, no grammatical implications and may differ from person to person as well as from situation to situation, it is not discussed here any further. Obligatory vowel elision is, on the other hand, a grammatical feature that is determined

by language specific grammatical rules. It is a phonological feature typical of all Nguni languages. Van Eeden (1956:46) describes vowel elision in isiZulu as follows –

‘Vokaalelisie, d.w.s. die weglaat van ‘n vokaal, vind plas wanneer twee woorde (of woordgroepe) verenig of verbind en daarvan also ‘n nuwe woordgroep gevorm word; en die oorsaak daarvan lê in die feit dat nagenoeg alle Zoeloe woorde (en ook formatiewe) op ‘n vokaal uitgaan, en dat baie woorde, veral nomina, adjektiewe en relatiewe, ook met ‘n vokaal aanvang. Ons vind dan dat dit in sommige gevalle die aanvangsvokaal van die tweede word is wat wegval, terwyl dit in ander die slotvokaal van die eerste word is.’

Compare the following isiZulu examples in terms of Van Eeden’s emphasis.

- (27) Lesi sitsha sinembobo. (instead of ‘lesi isitsha’) ‘This dish has a hole.’
 Ngiyalazi lelo qiniso. (instead of ‘lelo iqiniso’) ‘I know that truth.’
 Nina zinsizwa niwobani? (instead of ‘nina izinsizwa’) ‘You young men, who are you?’
 Mfowethu woza la. (instead of ‘Umfowethu’) ‘My brother, come here.’

In the following paragraphs, some of the more salient differences in obligatory vowel elision that occurs between Southern and Northern Ndebele are discussed and elucidated.

4.6.1 Obligatory vowel elision in Southern Ndebele

In Southern Ndebele, obligatory vowel elision occurs in all instances of vowel juxtaposition where coalescence, consonantization and glide insertion do not take place. Compare the following Southern Ndebele examples in this regard.

- (28) sosa (<s(i) + osa) inyama. ‘We roast meat.’
 nomkhulu (<n(a) + omkhulu) unelungelo. ‘Even the old one has a right.’
 ngendlini (<ng(a) + endlini) kumakhaza. ‘It is cold in the house.’

belitjhisa ilanga (l(i) +o+ke>) loke. 'It has been hot the whole day.'
lilanga (l(i) + a + mi>) lami lamabeletho namhlanje. 'it is my birthday today.'

4.6.2 Obligatory vowel elision in Northern Ndebele

Obligatory vowel elision in Northern Ndebele occurs basically in only two environments, that is, between two /l/ phonemes and in instances of vowel juxtaposition.

4.6.2.1 Obligatory vowel elision between two /l/ phonemes

When the vowels **i**, **e** or **u** appear between two /l/ phonemes, the vowel is elided giving rise to the double /l/ sequence. The first /l/, in this case, becomes syllabic. Compare the following examples in this regard.

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| (29) llanga (<lilanga) | 'sun' |
| mullo (<mulilo) | 'fire' |
| phuthulla (<phuthulula) | 'wrap out' |
| yembulla (yembulula) | 'dig up' |

4.6.2.2 Obligatory vowel elision in instances of vowel juxtaposition

Obligatory vowel elision as a result of vowel juxtaposition basically occurs in three grammatical environments in Northern Ndebele, that is, before adjectival and relative concords commencing with a vowel and when the instrumental formative **ga-** precedes locatives commencing with /-e/. In such instances, the final vowel /a/ of the formative or concord falls away. Compare the following examples in (30a) and (30b) in this regard.

Before adjectives

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| (30a) (n(a) + omukxulu >) nomukxulu | 'and the big one' |
| ndaba (y(a) + embhi >) yembhi | 'bad news' |
| nkhambha (n(a) + ende >) nende ndoda | 'I go with a tall man' |

Before relatives

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| (30b) nthenge (n(a) + ebovu >) nebovu nkxomo. | 'I even bought a red beast.' |
|---|------------------------------|



(n(a) + olula >) nolula msebenti abawenti. ‘They don’t even undertake easy tasks/lighter work.’

babuya (k(u) + omunandi >) komunandi munyanya. ‘They come from a nice function.’

4.6.2.3 The instrumental /ga-/ before locatives

(31) tikxomo (tig(a) + esibayeni >) tigesibayeni. ‘The cattle are in the kraal.’

bhabha (ug(a) + endluni >) ugendluni. ‘My father is in the house.’

bahlala (g(a) + ePolokwane >) gePolokwane. ‘They stay around Polokwane.’

According to Ziervogel (1959:36), obligatory vowel elision in the instances mentioned in (30a) and (30b) above were a regular feature in Northern Ndebele in the past. However, in the speech of modern 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. Compare the following examples in (32) below in this regard.

Current usage	Past usage
(32) naomukxulu/nawomukxulu (<na + omukxulu >) ‘and the big one.’	nomukxulu
kuomunandi/kuwomunandi (<ku + omunandi >) ‘to a nice one.’	komunandi
naomunye/nawomunye (<na + omunye >) ‘and another one.’	nomunye
iekxulu/iyekxulu (<i + ekxulu >) ‘It is a big one.’	yekxulu
iehle/iyehle (<i + ehle >)	yehle

‘It is a beautiful one.’

According to Ziervogel (1959:99), the glides /w/ and /y/ in examples such as the above are not true semi-vowels as they are scarcely audible sounds.

4.6.2.4 Vowel elision in the Class 3 prefix /mu-/

According to Ziervogel (1959:36), it would seem that the Class 3 prefix **mu-** normally discards its vowel **-u** when appearing before stems commencing with the bilabial explosive **ph**. Compare the following Northern Ndebele examples in this regard.

- | | | | |
|------|-----------------|-----------|------------------------|
| (33) | muphini | > mphini | ‘axe handle’ |
| | muphako | > mphako | ‘food for the journey’ |
| | muphimbo | > mphimbo | ‘throat’ |

Before other consonant phonemes, the **-u** in **mu-** is retained, as for instance in the following examples.

- | | | | |
|------|------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| (34) | mubhalo | (not *mbhalo) | ‘writing/literature’ |
| | mulandu | (not *mlandu) | ‘case’ |
| | mulomo | (not *mlomo) | ‘mouth’ |
| | mufundisi | (not *mfundisi) | ‘priest/preacher’ |

No explanation could be found as to why the vowel /u/ of the Class 3 prefix **-mu-** is deleted in instances such as those in (33) above but not in instances such as those in (34). The influence of the neighbouring Northern Sotho language also had to be ruled out as a possible source for this phenomenon. According to Lombard (1993:37), in Northern Sotho the class prefix **mo-** of Class 3 occurs before all nominal stems in this class except before roots of which the initial consonant can be reverted to phoneme /b/, /f/, and before the back vowels /ô/ and /u/ where the vowel /o/ of the class prefix **mo-** is deleted. Compare the following Northern Sotho examples in this regard.



(35a) (a) **Roots of which the initial consonant can be reverted to /b/**

mmutla (< mo + butla)	‘hare’
mmele (< mo + bele)	‘body’
mmereko (< mo + bereko)	‘work’

(35b) (b) **Roots of which the initial consonant can be reverted to /f/**

mpholo (< mo + folo)	‘poison’	
mphaka (< mo + faka)	‘knife’	
moya (Mo + oya)	‘air/spirit’	(Lombard. 1993:37)

4.7 Differences between Southern and Northern Ndebele in vowel juxtaposition

One of the most salient phonological differences between Southern and Northern Ndebele concerns the juxtaposition of vowels. Whereas in Southern Ndebele such phonological sequences are not permissible it is not so in Northern Ndebele. In Southern Ndebele various strategies are used to prevent such sequences, for instance vowel coalescence (cf. par. 4.5), vowel elision (cf. par. 4.6) and glide insertion (cf. par.4.10). In Northern Ndebele, in contrast, vowel juxtaposition is a common phonological feature and occurs in most grammatical environments except those mentioned in par. 4.9 and 4.10. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Northern Ndebele

(36) Ndimmone akhambha naiyise	‘I saw him going with his father.’
Guiyise logulako	‘It is his father who is ill.’
Gubani loalima masimu na ?	‘Who ploughs the fields?’
Kuitolo babulele tinkxomo tami	‘Yesterday they killed my cattle.’

4.8 Vowel verb stems in Southern and Northern Ndebele

Vowel verb stems, that is, verb stems that commence on a vowel, are a common feature in all the Nguni languages except in Northern Ndebele where only a few vowel verb stems occur. The vowel verb stems that commence on a vowel in the other Nguni

languages occur in Northern Ndebele with an initial semi-vowel /y-/ or /w-/. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele		Northern Ndebele
(37) akha	‘build’	yakha
azi	‘know’	yati
enza	‘do’	yenta
eqela	‘jump over’	yenkxela
onga	‘preserve’	wonga
osa	‘roast’	wosa

(Also cf. Chapter 8, par. 8.4.3)

4.9 Consonantization

Consonantization is a phonological process where a vowel loses its vowel quality and assumes the qualities of a consonant. In this process, the vowel /i/ becomes a semi-vowel /y/ and the vowel /u/ a semi-vowel /w/, respectively. In Southern Ndebele, consonantization occurs in all instances of vowel juxtaposition where vowel coalescence (cf. par. 4.5) or vowel elision (cf. par. 4.6.1) or glide insertion (cf. par 4.10) does not occur. In Northern Ndebele, consonantization is much more restricted than it is in Southern Ndebele because in many instances the phonological structure of this language is radically different from that of Southern Ndebele. In the following paragraphs, the focus falls on the similarities and differences between Southern and Northern Ndebele as far as consonantization is concerned. .

4.9.1 Instances where consonantization occurs in both Southern and Northern Ndebele

4.9.1.1 In the construction of the possessive concords of Class 6 in Southern and Northern Ndebele

The vowels /u-/ and /i-/ that comprise the subject concords of Classes 1, 1a, 3, 9 change to a semi-vowel /w-/ and /y-/, respectively, when they combine with the vowel /a/ in the formation of possessive concords of these classes. This is a natural rule as the

pronunciation of the sequence /u/ + /a/ and /i/ + /a/ naturally gives rise to the sequence /wa-/ and /ya-/, respectively. Compare the following Southern and Northern Ndebele examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele Northern Ndebele

- | | | | |
|------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (38) | Class. 1: u + a > wa : | Umfazi wami | Mufati wami ‘my wife’ |
| | Class. 1a: u + a > wa : | Ugogo wakhe | Gugu wakhe ‘his grandmother’ |
| | Class. 3: u + a > wa : | Umuzi wakhe | Muti wakhe ‘his home’ |
| | Class. 9: i + a > ya : | Indlu yabo | Ndlu yabo ‘their house’ |

A peculiar feature of the possessive concord of Class 6 in both these languages is that the formation of these concords do not follow the same phonological rule as the other Nguni languages whereby 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, i.e. **a + a > a** as for instance in the following isiZulu examples.

IsiZulu

- | | | |
|------|--|---------------------------------|
| (39) | Amanzi (a + a > a) akhe aphelile | ‘His water is finished.’ |
| | Amazwi (a + a > a) akho ayahlaba | ‘Your words are touching.’ |
| | Abo (a + a > a) amagama avela emaphepheni | ‘Their names appear in papers.’ |

In Southern and Northern Ndebele, however, the combination of the subject concord /a/ of Class 6 with the possessive formative /a/ for no overt reason results in the consonantization of the concord /a/ to /w/ in Southern Ndebele and to /y/ in Northern Ndebele. Compare the following examples of the possessive concord of Class 6 in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

(40a) Amagama wakababa abonisa ukuphoqeka ‘My father’s words show
disappointment.’

Wakhe amanzi angekhe uwasebenzise ‘His water you will never use.’

Amazondo wethu angekhe aphele ‘Our hatred will never end.’

Northern Ndebele

(40b) Mavi yami avakele kubatlhankana ‘My words have been clear to the boys.’

Malanga yethu wokuta ekhaya la ‘These are our days to come home.’

Bari malanga yabhabha aphelile ‘They say my father’s days are finished.’

According to Wilkes (2001:320), the form of the possessive concord of Class 6 in Southern and Northern Ndebele suggests the underlying presence of the vowels /**u**/ and /**i**/ respectively in their construction (cf. Chapter 6, par. 6.7.3)

4.9.1.2 In the construction of diminutive nouns

In both Southern and Northern Ndebele, consonantization occurs when diminutives are formed from nouns ending on the vowels /**o**/ and /**u**/, respectively. Both the vowel /**o**/ and /**u**/ change to a semi vowel /**w**/ when coming into juxtaposition with vowel /**a**/ of the diminutive suffix **-ana**. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

(41) ihlok**w**ana (< ihlo**o** + ana)
nt**w**ana (< into +ana)
umnt**w**ana (< umuntu + ana)
ind**w**ana (< ind**u** + ana)

Northern Ndebele

nhlok**w**ana (< nhlo**o** + ana) ‘small head’
nr**w**ana (< nr**o** + ana) ‘small thing’
munr**w**ana (< munr**u** + ana) ‘baby’
ndl**w**ana (< nd**u** + ana) ‘small house’

4.9.1.3 In the construction of absolute pronouns

In the formation of absolute pronouns of the Classes 3, 4 and 9, the subject concord **u**, changes to a semivowel /w/- and **i** to **y**- before the pronominal **-o-**. Compare the following examples in which these pronouns are used emphatically.

Southern Ndebele	Northern Ndebele
(42) Class.3: u +o+na > wona : Ngibona wona umuzi	Mmona wona (muti). 'I see the <u>kraal</u> .'
Class. 4: i + o + na > yona : Ngibona yona imizi	Mmona yona miti. 'I see <u>the kraals</u> .'
Class.9: i + o + na > yona : Ikosi yona ilele	Nkxosi yona ithobele. ' <u>The chief</u> is dead.'

4.10 Differences between Southern and Northern Ndebele in glide insertion

Glide insertion means that a sound that is reminiscent of the semi-vowel /y/ or /w/ is inserted between two non-similar vowels. According to Van Eeden (1956:161), this sound is not a complete semi-vowel and he therefore refers to it as a 'oorgangsklank' (bridging sound). Ziervogel (1959:99) concurs with Van Eeden when he regards these semi-vowels not as true semi-vowels but as scarcely audible glides between two vowels.

4.10.1 Glide insertion in Southern Ndebele

Glide insertion occurs, in Southern Ndebele, in all instances of vowel juxtaposition where vowel elision and consonantization do not occur. Compare the following examples in (43a)-(43c) in this regard.

Southern Ndebele	
(43a) ba-ibonile > bayibonile. e.g. Abantu bayibonile lengozi.	'They have seen it.' 'People have seen this accident.'
(43b) a-ukhambi > awukhambii	'You are not going.'



- e.g. Wena awukhambi namhlanje. 'You are not going today.'
- (43c) a-asebenzi > awasebenzi. 'They do not work.'
- e.g. Lamadoda awasebenzi emakhaya. 'These men do not work at home.'

The creation of a glide between dissimilar vowels as in examples such as (43a)-(43b) above seems to be a natural phenomenon as in these instances the glides seem to occur spontaneously in speech. The reason for the occurrence of the glide /w/ between similar vowels as in (43c) above is, however, uncertain as no phonological reason seems to be present that could trigger such a glide.

It is important to point out that, amongst Southern Ndebele speakers, instead of the insertion of a glide /w/ between similar vowels such as those given in example (43c) above (i.e., between Class 6 subject concords) they prefer to replace the glide with **-k-**. Compare the following examples in (43d) in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

- (43d) Cl.6: **a-asebenzi** > **akasebenzi** (instead of **awasebenzi**) '(they) are not working'
- e.g. Lamadoda **akasebenzi** (instead of **awasebenzi**). 'These men do not work.'

- a-abili** > **akabili** (instead of **awabili**) '(it) does not boil'
- e.g. Amanzi **akabili** (instead of **awabili**). 'The water is not boiling.'

4.10.2 Glide insertion in Northern Ndebele

Glide insertion occurs on a very limited scale in Northern Ndebele mainly because of the fact that the juxtaposition of vowels is a regular phonological feature in this language. However, there are a few instances in Northern Ndebele where glide insertion is found, such as, in the formation of copulatives from adjectives and relatives where a semi-vowel is optionally inserted between the subject concord and the initial vowel of the following

adjective or relative concord. Compare the following Northern Ndebele examples in this regard.

Northern Ndebele

- (44) u(w)omukxulu > uwomukxulu/uomukxulu 'He is a big one.'
 i(y)ekxulu > iyekxulu/iekxulu 'It is a big one.'
 u(w)omunandi > uwomunandi/uomunandi 'It is a nice one.'
- i(y)etimunandi > iyetimunandi/ietimunandi 'They are the nice ones.'
 gu(w)uphi > guwuphi/guuphi 'Which one is it.'

4.11 Labialization

Labialization is a general phonological term that refers to the articulation of a sound that is not labial in a lip-rounding manner because of the influence of a back vowel **u** or **o** or their equivalent semi-vowel **w**. This phonological process is an unknown phenomenon in all Zunda Nguni languages such as Zulu, Xhosa and Southern Ndebele but not in Thekela Nguni languages such as siSwati. In siSwati, this phonological change results in **ts** > **tfh** and **dz** > **dv**, the nasal compounds **nts** > **ntf**, and **ndz** > **ndv**, respectively, before the back vowel **u** or **o** and their equivalent semi-vowel **w**. According to Ziervogel (1959:38), in Northern Ndebele labialization is encountered in voiceless sounds **s** and the aspirated **th** resulting in **sw** and **tfh**, respectively, when appearing before vowels **o**, **u** and **û** in this language. Compare the following siSwati and Northern Ndebele examples in this regard.

SiSwati		Northern Ndebele (< Northern Ndebele)	
(45) tfola[tɸɔla]	'get/find'	nswɔ[nswɔ]	(<nso) 'kidney'
tfuka[tɸuka]	'be scared'	swuga[swuga]	(<suga) 'leave'
indvodza[indβɔdza]	'man'	tfhuma[tɸhuma]	(<thuma) 'send'
dvute[dβute]	'near by'	tfhutha [tɸhutha]	(<thutha) 'move'
tfwala [tɸhwala]	'carry'	tfhwala [tɸhwala]	(<thwala) 'carry'

However, according to the current orthographical rules, labialization is no longer a feature of Northern Ndebele. In other words, words such as **nswo**, **-swuga**, **-tfhuma**, **-tfhutha** and **-tfhwala** are today pronounced as **nso**, **-suka**, **-thuma**, **-thutha** and **-thwala**, and so on.

4.12 Denasalization in the nasal compounds of Southern and Northern Ndebele

Denasalization in Southern and Northern Ndebele basically implies the omission of the nasal consonant in nasal compounds. The nasal compounds that are mostly affected by denasalization in these languages are those that Meinhof (1932) refers to as primary and secondary nasal compounds, respectively. Primary nasal compounds are compounds that form part of word stems (such as **-thenga** ‘buy’ **-khamba** ‘walk’ etc.) whilst secondary nasal compounds are compounds that are formed by means of the Ur-Bantu Class 9 class prefix **B./ni/**. The latter nasal compounds almost exclusively form part of the prefixes of Classes 9 and 10 nouns. (It should be noted that according to Meinhof (1906:15) the prefix **izin-** of Class 10 nouns in the Nguni languages consists of a double class prefixes (i.e., **izi-** + **in-**, of which **izi-** is the class prefix of Class 8 and **in-** the class prefix of Class 9).

According to Meinhof (1932:33), denasalization occurs in many Bantu languages and is usually found in instances where the following sound is voiceless or for any reason becomes devoiced, in which case the nasal too loses its voicing and eventually falls away.

Although denasalization occurs in both Southern and Northern Ndebele, it does not occur in the same grammatical environments in these languages. In the following paragraphs the different grammatical environments in which denasalization occur in these languages are examined and discussed. They are

- (i) the class prefixes of Classes 9 and 10 nouns
- (ii) adjectival concord of Classes 9 and 10
- (iii) inclusive quantitative pronouns, and

(iv) the formatives with the nasal compound –ng.

4.12.1 Denasalization in the prefixes of Classes 9 and 10 nouns.

Denasalization in the prefixes of Classes 9 and 10 nouns causes the nasal (in the secondary nasal compounds) in these prefixes to fall away. What is remarkable about the denasalization in these prefixes, is the fact that it affects these two languages in almost opposite ways. In Southern Ndebele, it is only the Class 9 noun prefix that is denasalised, while in Northern Ndebele this phonological process only occurs in the class prefix of Class 10 nouns. Class 9 nouns in Southern Ndebele 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, in contrast, all Class 9 nouns retain the nasal in their class prefix. Compare the following examples in this regard.

(a) **Class 9 nouns**

Southern Ndebele

(Nasal dropped)

(46) ikomo
ihlabathi
isimbi
ipi
ife

Northern Ndebele

(Nasal retained)

nkxomo ‘beast’
nhlabathi ‘land/ground’
nsimbhi ‘iron’
ndwa ‘war’
mfe ‘sweet cane’

In Southern Ndebele, the nasal resurfaces in all Class 10 noun prefixes, whilst in Northern Ndebele only Class 10 nouns with monosyllabic stems and stems beginning on a voiced or semi-voiced consonant retain their nasal. Compare the following examples in (47a) and (47b) in this regard.

(b) **Class 10**



Southern Ndebele	Northern Ndebele	
(Nasal retained)	(Nasal dropped)	
(47a) iink omo	tikxomo	‘beats’
iinh labathi	tihlabathi	‘types of soil’
iink kukhu	tikxukxu	‘fowls’
iim fihlo	tifihlo	‘secrets’
iim pendulo	tiphendulo	‘answers’
iink ghuru	tikhudu	‘tortoises’
	(Nasal retained)	
(47b) iin gwenya	tingwenya	‘crocodiles’
iin daba	tindaba	‘affairs’
izin ja	tinja	‘dogs’
izim vu	timvu	‘sheep’

In observing the rule governing the omission of the nasal in Southern Ndebele’s Class 9 noun prefixes, Wilkes (1997:77) points out that

‘When one compares Class 9 nouns in (Southern) isiNdebele with their counterparts in Northern Sotho and Setswana one immediately observes that the same rule that governs the appearance of the nasal in the prefix of Class 9 nouns in Sotho also applies to Class 9 nouns in (Southern) isiNdebele. In other words, all Class 9 nouns in (Southern) isiNdebele with multisyllabic stems beginning on a voiceless consonant have, like their counterparts in Northern Sotho and Setswana, a denasalised class prefix, while those with monosyllabic stems retain the nasal in their class prefix just as their counterparts in the Sotho languages.’

Compare the following Sepedi and Southern Ndebele examples in this regard.

Sepedi Southern Ndebele

(Nasal omitted before voiceless sounds)

(48a)	kgomo	ikomo	‘beast’
	kgogo	ikukhu	‘fowl’
	tšhipi	isimbi	‘iron’

(Nasal retained before monosyllabic stems)

(48b)	ntlô	indlu	‘house’
	mpša	inja	‘dog’
	nku	imvu	‘sheep’

Whilst this observation holds true with regard to Southern Ndebele it is, nevertheless, somewhat baffling why it is this language and not Northern Ndebele that has denasalization rules that are similar to the ones that occur in Northern Sotho, especially as the Northern Ndebele people find themselves much closer to the Northern Sotho speaking communities and, in some instances, even within the boundaries of these communities. It is an undeniable fact that both Ndebele languages have been greatly influenced by Northern Sotho and to a lesser extent by Setswana.

4.12.2 Denasalization in other environments

Denasalization in these two Ndebele languages is not confined to the noun class prefixes of Classes 9 and 10 only. It also occurs in similar phonological environments in other word categories. Wilkes (1997:77) rightly argues that

‘It is generally acknowledged that changes have a tendency to spread from one linguistic environment to another.’

According to Wilkes (op. cit.:77), this is probably what has happened with the denasalization rule in the two Ndebele languages. It presumably started in a high profile

environment, such as the noun class prefixes of Classes 9 and 10 and subsequently spread by analogy to another (phonologically identical) environment, notably to the adjectival concords of Classes 9 and 10, and to the inclusive quantitative pronouns as well as to certain formatives (in Northern Ndebele). The denasalization between these two Ndebele languages is analysed and discussed as it occurs in the

- (i) adjectival concords of Classes 9 and 10
- (ii) inclusive quantitative pronouns, and
- (iii) formatives with the nasal compound **ng[ŋg]** in Northern Ndebele.

4.12.2.1 Denasalization in the adjectival concords of Classes 9 and 10 in Southern and Northern Ndebele

Denasalization not only occurs in the class prefixes of Classes 9 and 10 nouns in Southern and Northern Ndebele, but also in the adjectival concords of Classes 9 and 10 of these languages. There are, however, important differences between these two languages as far as denasalization in their Classes 9 and 10 adjective concords is concerned. These differences are addressed in the following paragraphs.

4.12.2.1.1 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. The first rule is that denasalization in the adjectival concords of Classes 9 and 10 is optional before adjective stems that begin on a voiced or semi-voiced consonant as, for instance, in the case of the adjective stems **-dala**, **-de** and **-bi**. Compare the following examples in this regard.

- (49) Cl.9: Sibone indoda edala (or endala) izolo. ‘Yesterday we saw an old man.’
Leyo yindaba ede (or ende). ‘That is a long story.’
Bekukubi (or bekukumbi) emtjhadweni. ‘It was bad at the wedding.’

Cl.10: Iinkomo ezidala (or ezindala) zitjhiphile. ‘Old beats are cheap.’

Iingoma zakhe zide(or zinde) khulu. 'His songs are too long.'
Iindaba ezibi (or ezimbi) ngezokufaka kwakhe. 'His death is bad news.'

The second rule is that before adjectival stems that begin on voiceless consonants denasalization in the adjectival concord is obligatory, like for instance before the adjectival stems **-hlanu**, **-hle**, **khulu**, and **-tjha**. Compare the following examples in this regard.

Southern Ndebele

- (50) Cl. 9: Ikoloyi **etja** iyabiza 'A new car is very expensive.'
Indawo **ehle** ngeyaKwaZulu-Natal 'A beautiful place is that of KwaZulu-Natal.'
UMahlangu yindoda **ekulu** la 'Mahlangu is a big man here.'
- Cl.10: Bacoca iindaba **ezikulu** lababantu 'These people are discussing serious matters.'
UBrenda wavuma iingoma **ezihlanu** kwaphela 'Brenda sang only five songs.'
Iinkoloyi **ezitja** zidura komhlolo 'New cars are too expensive.'

This investigation has found that elderly people speaking the Nzunza dialect often use the nasal form of the adjectival stems, whilst its denasalised counterpart is preferred by the younger generation of speakers of this dialect. The latter form is, however, also commonly used by people speaking the Manala dialect of Southern Ndebele.

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

Northern Ndebele

Unlike the case of Southern Ndebele, denasalization in Northern Ndebele is, with one exception, not optional but obligatory. Compare the following examples in this regard.



- (51) Nkhuluma ndaba **ekxulu** (never ***en**kxulu) ‘I’m talking about a big issue.’
Mfuna tiphendulo **tetitjha** (never ***teti**ntjha) ‘I want new answers.’
Sibone tifene **tetibovu** (never ***teti**mbovu) ‘We saw red baboons.’

It is only in the adjectival concord of the stem **-(n)hle** ‘beautiful’ where the nasal may or may not be discarded (Ziervogel, 1959:70). Compare the following examples in this regard.

- (52) Cl.9: Ndlu **ehle/ehhle** ‘Beautiful house.’
Mmone nja engane **ehle/ehhle**. ‘I saw a small beautiful dog.’
- Cl.10: Tinja **tetihle/tetinhle** atilumi ‘Beautiful dogs do not bite.’
Mmone nghweji **tetihle/tetinhle** ‘I saw a beautiful bride.’

Furthermore, Northern Ndebele differs from its southern counterpart as far as its adjectival stems are concerned in that most of its adjectival stems have an initial nasal thus causing the nasal in its Class 9 and Class 10 adjectival concords to become redundant. Adjectival stems in Northern Ndebele which, according to Ziervogel (op. cit.:70), have a permanent initial nasal are amongst others: **-ndala** ‘old’, **-nde** ‘long’, **-ntima** ‘black’ and **-mbhi** ‘bad’. Compare the following examples in this regard;

Northern Ndebele

- | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| (53) Class 9: | ndlu ende | (<e(n)-nde) | ‘long houses’ |
| | mvu endala | (<e(n)-ndala) | ‘old sheep’ |
| | ndaba embhi | (<e(n)-mbhi) | ‘bad news’ |
| | nkxuxu entima | (<e(n)-ntima) | ‘a black fowl’ |
| Class 10: | tindlu tetinde | (<teti(n)-nde) | ‘long houses’ |
| | timvu tetindala | (<teti(n)-ndala) | ‘old sheep’ |
| | tindaba tetimbhi | (<teti(n)-mbhi) | ‘bad news’ |

timmbhuti tetintima (<teti(n)-ntima) 'black goats'

The fact that the adjectives in Classes 9 and 10 do not occur with double nasals (such as –**nnde**, –**nddala**, **mmbhi**) as shown in examples (52) above, indicates that denasalization must have taken place in Classes 9 and 10. Thus, one of the nasals, probably the nasal of the adjective prefix, has been discarded.

4.12.2.1.3 Denasalization in the inclusive quantitative pronouns

All Nguni languages, except Southern and Northern Ndebele, exhibit a nasal compound in the suffix of their inclusive quantitative pronoun **-nke** as, for instance, in the following Zulu examples.

IsiZulu

- (54) Cl. 1 : **wonke** (< u + o + **nke**) 'all'
 2 : **bonke** (< ba + o + **nke**) 'all of them'
 5 : **lonke** (< l(i) + o + **nke**) 'all'

In both Southern and Northern Ndebele the inclusive quantitative stem **-nke** is always denasalised as can be seen in the following examples.

Southern Ndebele	Northern Ndebele
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- | | | | |
|------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (55) Cl. 2 | Abantu bakhambe boke | Banru bakhambe bokxe | 'All people have left.' |
| Cl. 4 | Imizi itjhe yoke | Miti itjhe yokxe | 'All homesteads have burnt down.' |
| Cl. 8 | Zoke izifo ziyafana | Tokxe tifo tiyafanana | 'All diseases are the same.' |
| Cl.10 | Iimbuzi zife zoke | Timbuti tife tokxe | 'All the goats have died.' |

4.12.2.1.4 Denasalization in formatives with the nasal compound –ng[ŋg] in

Northern Ndebele

In addition to the environments discussed above, denasalization has also spread to almost all formatives in Northern Ndebele that in other Nguni languages contain the nasal compound –ng[ŋg]. These formatives include:

(a) **The potential formative -nga-**, as in the following examples –

(56a) Sigakhuluma kxiniso ‘We can speak the truth.’

Agakhamba mutlhangana lo ‘This boy may go.’

(b) **The instrumental formative -nga-**, as in the following examples;

(56b) Uphila gekusaba ‘He leaves in fear.’

Banthele gemanti ‘They have poured water over me.’

(c) **The copulative prefix –ngu-/-ngi-** as in the following examples;

(56c) Githi abazako ‘It is we who are coming.’

Nkxosi guSibindi. ‘The chief is Sibindi.’

(d) **The comparative prefix njenga-** as in the following examples.

(56d) Nkhuluma njegaye ‘I speak like him.’

Libona njegami ‘You see as I do.’

(e) **The (non-indicative) negative formative -nga-** as in the following examples

(56e) Bathi sigakhambi naye . ‘They say we should not go with him.’

Mfuna ugaboni mfihlo yami ‘I do not want you to see my secret’.

In Southern Ndebele, however, the nasal is retained throughout in these formatives. Compare the following examples in (57a-57c) in this regard.



The various morphophonological differences between Southern and Northern isiNdebele have been discussed in this chapter. The investigation and discussions have revealed that Southern and Northern Ndebele differ in syllabification, consonant assimilation, palatalisation, vowel elision, labialization and denasalisation in the nasal compounds. The thrust of the next chapter is the morphological comparison between Southern and Northern Ndebele.