

German-speakers in South Africa

Elizabeth de Kadt

1 DEMOGRAPHY AND SOCIAL HISTORY

German settlers featured prominently in white South Africa from the start of the settlement at the Cape: it is estimated that at the end of the eighteenth century more than half of the white population of the Cape was of German descent. However, until well into the nineteenth century German-speaking colonists were speedily assimilated: it was almost exclusively men who came out (*from German speaking countries in Europe*)^{*} to the Cape, and they soon intermarried with Afrikaans-Dutch speakers and were also linguistically assimilated (Steyn 1980: 113). It was only from the mid-nineteenth century onwards that this willingness to integrate with the other (*white*) settlers began to disappear. During the second half of the nineteenth century there was a continual influx of German speakers as missionaries and settlers into (*what was then known as*) Natal, the eastern Cape and the south-western Transvaal, and these groups, especially in the rural areas, formed small German-speaking communities centred around a church and a school. From a linguistic point of view these immigrants were unusual in that, in spite of their status as a tiny minority within the white minority in South Africa, they succeeded in maintaining their language over a number of generations. Although the last fifty years has seen many of the original communities finally become assimilated (*within the white minority population-group*), a number still remain, in particular in (*the area today known as*) KwaZulu-Natal. In this chapter I will therefore attempt to describe aspects of the present-day distribution and usage of German, especially in KwaZulu-Natal, and to consider prospects for the future maintenance of the language.

Census figures give an indication of the number of German speakers in South Africa: in 1970, 49.000 respondents throughout South Africa indicated that they spoke German at home, whereas in 1980 census listed 23.000 citizens of West Germany, 2.000 of East Germany, close to 3.000 of Austria, a total of 28.000 who would have been included in the 41.00 German speakers listed above; and 4.500 Swiss citizens, who may or may not speak German. These figures indicate not many more than 10.000 who have been in the country long enough to have relinquished their German citizenship. In 1980 close to 75 per cent of the German speakers lived in the major urban areas of the country, with half being situated in the urban Transvaal, and substantial numbers (7.500) in the urban Cape. KwaZulu-Natal has relatively small numbers of German speakers: the 1980 figures put the German speakers in the Durban-Pinetown-Inanda area at somewhat under 2.000.

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To these, however, must be added possibly twice as many rural German speakers in KwaZulu-Natal; the census does not provide details as to these.

The above already gives some indication of the two main groups of German speakers in KwaZulu-Natal, the urban and the rural. In the rural areas small communities are scattered throughout KwaZulu-Natal, but especially in northern KwaZulu-Natal and the midlands. The smallest of these (e.g. Harburg, Hermannsburg (275)¹ in the midlands, Braunschweig (219) and Luneburg (316) in the northern KwaZulu-Natal) consist of little more than a church, school, post office and shop, which serve the surrounding farming communities. Among the white population these tend to have a majority of German speakers. However, the larger the settlement (*is*), the lower the proportion of German speakers (*becomes*) - until, in Dundee (427) and Vryheid (420), for example, it is less than 5 per cent of whites. This, however, has so far been sufficient to sustain a church and a school. Typically, these German speakers are descendants of the settlers and missionaries who came to South Africa during the second half of the nineteenth century.

In the urban areas, on the other hand, German speakers are more scattered, although here too they tend to be more concentrated in certain (often wealthier) suburbs (in Durban and surroundings, for example, in the suburbs of Westville, Kloof, New Germany and Gillitts). Again, these may be descendants of the older settler families, but they also include a considerable number of more recent immigrants (pre- and post-Second World War). To generalise again, the majority of urban German speakers in South Africa tend to be professionals in technical and managerial fields. In the major urban centres there are generally German-medium churches and schools available, but considerable numbers choose English- or Afrikaans-medium facilities.

KwaZulu-Natal German speakers, with the exception of very recent immigrants, are typically multilingual: they speak German, English and (or) Afrikaans and, in rural areas, Zulu. On the whole German tends to be used in very restricted domains: family, church and, to a certain extent, school. Even in the relatively homogeneous rural communities family life is open to the influence of the media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television), but here social life is mainly based on German. In urban areas, in spite of the existence of German clubs, social life is more open to English and Afrikaans (wider circles of friends, cinemas, etc.); however, here there exist some possibilities for the use of German in a professional capacity, in industry, import-export business, shipyards, travel agencies, etc. One informant spoke of relatively large numbers of German speakers in middle management in Durban, but no hard data is available on this.

The present trend both in urban and rural communities is increasingly towards language shift; there is an awareness among German speakers that the next two generations may well see an irrevocable decrease in numbers. The clearest indication lies in the rapidly increasing number of so-called *Mischehen*, 'mixed marriages', meaning marriages between German or Afrikaans (*white*) speakers, which nowadays, as opposed to twenty years ago, tend to result in the children speaking English or Afrikaans as L1 (= *first language*). This has had important consequences for schools and churches, which have previously played a crucial role in maintaining German.

2 SCHOOL AND CHURCH EDUCATION

¹ Figures in brackets denote the number of parish members in these communities.

The schools that had been founded by the early settlers were, in the course of time, integrated into the Natal Education Department (NED) schooling system as so-called German primary schools. This means that they have departmental permission to teach the first four years through the medium of German; in Grades 5 - 7 English or Afrikaans is used as a medium, and German is taught as a subject. The number of such schools has eroded to a certain extent over the last thirty years: at present there are KZNED primary schools in Luneburg, Uelzen, Wartburg, Izotsha, Harburg and Mooleigh; state-aided schools in Vryheid and New Hanover; and private primary schools in Durban and Hermannsburg. Two 'German' high schools exist, Wartburg-Kirchdorf, a government school (which, however, only offers German as a higher-grade subject), and, most importantly, the private high school at Hermannsburg, which includes a hostel. The much lower numbers of urban German speakers in KwaZulu-Natal mean that Durban cannot support a combined primary and high school (the Durban primary school for example has only approximately eighty pupils), as opposed to the 'German' schools in Johannesburg with one thousand one hundred pupil, Pretoria with approximately seven hundred and Cape Town with over four hundred. Hence the children from 'German' primary schools in KwaZulu-Natal continue their schooling either at Hermannsburg or at the local (*white*) high schools, where they form a tiny minority and are only catered for by the subject 'German as a foreign language'. For native speakers of German, this is probably worse than useless. The Hermannsburg school, on the other hand, uses English as medium after the first four years and leads to the KZNED matric; but it also offers the subject 'German as a mother tongue' through the Independent Examinations Board (formerly the Joint matriculation Board). This should be compared to the 'German' schools in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Cape Town, which use German as a medium to a much greater extent. They offer a local matric and hence switch to English as a medium in part in Standard 6 and completely in Standard 8, but it is then possible to continue with a thirteenth school year taught completely in German, leading to the German *Abitur*.

Most of the rural 'German' primary schools are now threatened with closure due to low numbers, they have been able to justify their continued existence only by opening to (*white*) non-German speakers. For example, in Uelzen (near Dundee), half the pupils (forty out of eighty) are now English speaking; even in the very homogeneous area (*in terms of German usage amongst whites*) around Luneburg, ten out of seventy children are Afrikaans speaking. It is only the state-aided Michaelisschule in Vryheid that has so far been able to remain closed to non-German speakers; in 1989 there were sixty-five pupils.

The private schools, on the other hand, while also faced with similar problems, show a somewhat different pattern: they too have introduced a stream of 'German as a foreign language', but this is at least in part to accommodate black pupils. This is a new development over the past few years, and is to a certain extent the result of pressure applied by the official funding sources in Germany. In Cape Town, for example, 120 out of just over 400 children are now non-German speakers; in Johannesburg, the figure is approximately 100 out of 1.100. The Hermannsburg primary school remains solely German, but forty non-German pupils have now been admitted into the high school, where their curriculum includes 'German as a foreign language'.

Let us now consider the changes taking place in the churches. Most of the German-speaking churches originated in connection with the Lutheran mission in KwaZulu-Natal. Today there are a number of different branches of Lutheranism in KwaZulu-Natal, some of which cater largely or solely for non-white communities

and no longer use (*or have never used*) German. German-speaking parishes still exist in the following centres: Izotsha, Durban (Renshaw Road with a second church in Hillcrest, Westville and New Germany), Pietermaritzburg, Wartburg, Harbuarg, New Hanover, Hermannsburg, Moorleigh, Winterton, Elandskraal, Dundee, Vryheid and Braunschweig. These are all small parishes: for example in Durban all three parishes together have only 650 members. Increasing intermarriage with mainly English or Afrikaans (*white*) speakers has led most of these parishes to cater for non-German speakers too. Hence the last ten years or so has seen the introduction of church services in English, at first once a month, now generally more frequently; Uelzen (near Dundee) has both a German and an English service each Sunday. It is only a few parishes in northern KwaZulu-Natal, e.g. Luneburg and Braunschweig, that even today offer solely German services, as 'mixed marriages' are still the exception in these communities. In the larger urban areas, on the other hand, services in English also enable parishes to minister to those non-white members for whom new Lutheran parishes have not been established; some of these parishes lay great stress on non-racialism. Of the Durban parishes, New Germany has an English service each week, the Hillcrest church every second week, Renshaw Rod every fourth week and then together with its English-language sister parish of the Union Lutheran Church. It is clear that policies of non-racialism will have linguistic effects. For example, the lingua franca at the small Lutheran residence that accommodates students training as Lutheran priests in the department of theology at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg has changed during the past few years from German to English. This is due to the fact that black Lutherans are now also being admitted.

The tendencies discussed above also hold for the other provinces, with the difference that German in the rural areas has been eroded to a much greater extent. The German influence in the Free State was limited from the start; today small groups totalling perhaps 250 in all are to be found in the area from Kimberley and Kroonstad to Bethlehem, including Bloemfontein, which has a German-Afrikaans parish and a German club. In Gauteng only three 'German' primary schools remain: Kroondal, Wittenberg, Gerdau, with Kroondal (fifty-five to sixty pupil, plus twenty in the pre-primary phase) being the largest school; in the Eastern Cape schools have been closed and parishes still exist only in the urban centres, such as Port Elizabeth and East London. German church services have either been discontinued, as in Stutterheim in 1980, or are now held in conjunction with services in English or Afrikaans.

3 LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE

From the start the German-speaking settlers made no attempts to integrate with other settler communities: on the contrary, each 'German' community, by creating its own school and church, expressed very clearly the determination to distance itself from other settlers and to remain 'German'. Even today there is a clear sense of pride in their 'Germanness' and 'otherness', although informants hasten to stress that they are, of course, South Africans. What does this 'Germanness' then stand for? In the main for values that go back to the time of the original settlements in the second half of the nineteenth century and which were further supported by differences between the typical English and German settlers of the time. The English settlers in Natal of that period tended to be much more 'gentleman farmers', whereas the German settlers were, on the whole, of North German peasant and handworker stock. They saw themselves as

conscientious, diligent, honest, frugal and rooted in the soil, they took pride in their achievements and they strove to inculcate in their children the same system of values. This ideology found expression in the typical outward forms of such a German community: the absolute dominance of the church, the importance of home and family, the role of music (home music-making, folk-songs, trumpet groups etc.), a German style of cooking and food preparation, a series of seasonal get-togethers link to the church and the school, the expectation that a 'German mother' will be at home with her children and not out working. The present rural communities are still organised much on this basis.

Language retention in these communities, therefore, was and is not seen as an end in itself. At issue is rather the survival of the community, with all that it represents. This has recently been documented through a study of the community of Wartburg, near Pietermaritzburg (de Kadt 2000), which attempted to overcome the anecdotal tendency of much previous research by basing the analysis on theories of ethnicity. Language is shown to be one of four main factors that have contributed to the survival of the ethnic group, the others being religion, cultural mores and the system of values, as detailed above. The determination to retain the German language emerges from the awareness that language, the Lutheran faith, culture and values are all inextricably linked. Should any one of these be undermined, the ethnic group as a whole will be threatened.

The final explanation for the retention of German, therefore, lies in the reasons behind the determination of the group to survive as a group. In this regard two recent publications offer further insights. Pakendorf's discussion of the ethos behind the German mission tradition to South Africa has highlighted the central role of the petty bourgeoisie worldview which has been perpetuated in the ethos of these communities, and furthermore of an ethnicity based on German Romanticism (Pakendorf 1997). Forsythe has investigated mainland perceptions of the term 'German' in the late twentieth century and has shown how racial, genetic and linguistic elements are intertwined in the central concept of *Deutschstämmigkeit*, 'being of German stock' (Forsythe 1989). It is self-perceptions such as these that would seem to underlie the determination to maintain the German language.

One of the most far-reaching mechanisms of language retention was the establishment of 'own' schools and churches, which was always one of the priorities of a new German-speaking settler community. For these some financial support may have been forthcoming from missionary societies in Germany, but on the whole the settlers were willing to bear the expenses themselves, in spite of the often enormous struggle to establish themselves in the new country.

It was of considerable significance for language-maintenance efforts that the 'German' schools were allowed to retain something of their own identity when finally taken over by the Natal Education Department in 1925 and funded by state resources. While in part due to the number of well-functioning schools in existence, it is also a reflection of the economic and social power of the German community in KwaZulu-Natal.² Clearly, state resources available to such initiatives are likely to dwindle in the future: the maintenance of German then becomes a

² The perceived significance of these settlers is indicated by a recent publication, a special issue of *Lantern*, a journal under the patronage of the Directorate of cultural Affairs of the Department of National Education. In the context of the German Festival Year 1992, commemorating the German settlers, the issue is devoted to the 'German contribution to the development of South Africa', and includes a message from the state president. Details as to many of the individual settlers and communities can be found in this volume.

matter of the resources its speakers can muster, either from inside the community or from abroad.

The German-speaking communities have from the start been willing to contribute substantially to the maintenance of churches and schools, and the communities appear to be aware that state funding can no longer be relied on. In KwaZulu-Natal, the three primary schools which at present receive little or no state funding survive on the basis of trust funds and extensive fund-raising. (It is unclear to what extent German firms in South Africa contribute.) In Vryheid, private fund-raising recently enabled the building of a boarding establishment solely for German-speaking children at Vryheid's primary and secondary schools: this is intended to cater for the whole of northern KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. In northern KwaZulu-Natal in particular, German speakers seem aware of the financial implications of maintaining schools, and they seem willing to make substantial sacrifices to achieve this aim.

German cultural foreign policy has over the last decade stressed the necessity of promoting the German language abroad, in view of the world-wide decrease of interest in the language. In this context South Africa receives substantial financial aid which is directed primarily at the four main German schools in the country: Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Hermannsburg; indeed, these four schools have a top-rating among the German schools supported world-wide. The aid given takes the form of funding forty-one teachers sent out from Germany, and a subsidy for each pupil, which, in 1990 with 2.465 pupil, amounted to a total of approximately R4 million. Some contributions are also made for essential building projects, textbooks and so on. A co-ordinating subject adviser oversees the whole aid programme. There are also an exchange programme and scholarships for pupils and teachers, which in 1990 amounted to close to R300.000. The four schools concerned would clearly be hard put to continue, were this aid from Germany withdrawn.

4 CHARACTERISTICS OF SOUTH AFRICAN GERMAN

The German-speaking communities have maintained German - but as with any language, the new geographical location, implying the cutting of links with the source language and a new proximity to other languages, has led to South African German (SAG) (*Springbo@kdeutsch*) developing its own characteristics. It is of interest that present-day pronunciation tends to approximate to colloquial High German, although most of the immigrants originally spoke Low German dialects, and it is unlikely that as peasants and labourers they would have had command of Standard High German (HG) as well. Stielau speaks of a `conscious attempt to introduce the High German language of writing as opposed to Low German dialect' (1980: 237), largely through the influence of the church ministers and the schools, and this has had a marked effect on pronunciation. Many of Stielau's informants were no longer aware of the specific area from which their ancestors had emigrated (1980: 10). One Low German feature that has been retained is the frequent pronunciation of the High German feature that has been retained is the frequent pronunciation of the High German (*"scht"*) and (*"schp"*) as (st) and (sp) (as in *stehen*, 'to stand', and *spielen*, 'to play'), which is clearly supported by the pronunciation of these consonant combinations in English and Afrikaans. It is, however, the lexicon that most noticeably characterises SAG, although morphology, especially case structure, and syntax also contribute. Some of the individual characteristics may be unique to South Africa, because of the Afrikaans and (minimal) Zulu influence. The general trends, especially in those communities

that are particularly under threat (!), are typical of any obsolescing language and can be reduplicated from German-speaking communities in the United States and Canada. A considerable amount of data has been collected by Stielau (1980 (and von Delft (1984); Grüner (1979) has undertaken a study of customs and school-teaching with reference to language in the Kroondal community; but there has been little attempt to examine actual patterns of (multilingual usage. SAG has been investigated primarily as deviating from the norm of mainland German.³

The following examples (drawn from Stielau 1980) will indicate typical changes. As to be expected, the influence of English and Afrikaans on the lexicon has been immense. Of the enormous number of nouns that have been adopted into SAG, very many are used in an unassimilated form: 'cool drink', 'jam', 'lift', etc. A considerable number, however, have been integrated: 'fence' as *Fenz*; 'krans' as *Kranz*; 'hooter' as *Huter*; etc. New words have been formed according to English and Afrikaans patterns: *Armstuhl*, 'armchair'; *Dronbaum*, 'thorn tree'; *Fruchtkuchen*, 'fruit cake'; *Grosskinder*, 'grandchildren'; *Kohlmine*, 'coal mine'; *Seekuh*, 'hippopotamus' (from Afrikaans *seekoei*); *Werkwort*, 'verb' (from Afrikaans *werkwoord*).

More subtly, the meanings of a number of already existing German words have changed: for example, *Hochschule* from 'university' to 'high school'. - *Garage* has come to include the English 'garage' which sells petrol and repairs cars (HG *Autowerkstatt*). *Erbe*, HG 'inheritance', has gained the meaning of Afrikaans *erf*, 'plot of land'.

The few borrowed nouns of Zulu origin are, on the whole, words that have also been adopted into South African English, such as *donga*, 'dry, eroded water-cours' *masi* ("amasi"), 'thick soured milk'; *muti* ("umuthi") '(African) medicine'. Borrowed adjectives are, as to be expected, fewer in number: *busy* (as in *Ich bin busy*, 'I am busy'); *mal*, 'crazy'; *pap*, 'exhausted, soft, deflated'; and *sorry*, 'sorry' (very frequent). Borrowed verbs have generally been integrated: *abswitchen*, 'switch off'; *booken*, 'book'; *huten*, 'hoot'; *kloppen*, 'do better than, beat' (e.g. *Karl hat mich (im Test) gekloppt*, 'Karl has beaten me in the test'); *posten*, 'post'; *swotten*, 'swot'. There have been some substantial changes in meaning: *(ver)missen*, HG 'miss a person', now also used in the sense of 'miss a bus'; *ringen*, HG 'wrestle', now 'to ring a doorbell'.

Morphology and syntax show changes in a number of central features of German grammar: the marking for gender of non-personal nouns; the obligatory link between preposition and specific case; the governing of cases by verbs. Indeed, there seems to be a considerable amount of uncertainty as to the need for case in the language, which might well reflect the influence of English and Afrikaans, neither of which is structured by case to the same extent. In the following, some of the more frequent changes are listed. Personal pronouns (third persons) are frequently used in the dative case, in the place of direct objects (examples 1 - 3 below), or with prepositions that standardly govern the accusative (examples 4 and 5 below).

- (1) Ich hoffe, sie wird *ihm* heiraten. (HG *ihn*) 'I hope she will marry him.'
- (2) Die Katze beisst *ihr*. (HG *sie*) 'The cat bites her.'
- (3) Frag *ihr* doch! (HG *sie*) 'Do ask her!'

³ There has also been considerable research undertaken on German in Namibia: while Schlegemann (1928-9), Nöckler (1963) and Gretscher (1984) concentrate on vocabulary, Klein (1981) investigates the various functions of the three Germanic languages in what was then South West Africa.

- (4) ... meinen Dank an *Ihnen* richten (HG *Sie*) 'to express my gratitude to you.'
 (5) Er hat es für *ihr* getan. (HG *sie*) ,He did it for her.'

This contradicts the increasing spread of the accusative in High German, at the cost of the dative and the genitive. Stielau (1980: 218-19; see also Russ 1990: 17, 47) notes the lack of differentiation between dative and accusative of these pronouns both in certain North German dialects and in English and Afrikaans. In the latter two languages the form of the third-person pronoun in the object position - *hom*, 'him' and *haar*, 'her' - is closer to the German dative *ihm* and *ihr* than to the accusative *ihn* and *sie*.

On the other hand, there is frequent use of the accusative instead of the dative with prepositions that govern the dative or dative/accusative (examples 6 - 8 below), and with many verbs that govern the dative (examples 9 - 12 below). This change seems to be particularly common with feminine nouns requiring the article *die*, which may suggest Afrikaans influence.

- (6) bei *die* Kirche (HG *der*) ,at the church'
 (7) mit *viele* Firmen (HG *vielen*) ,with a lot of firms'
 (8) Er war auf *die* Stelle tot. (HG *der*) ,He was dead immediately.'
 (9) Ich werde es *Sie* erklären. (HG *Ihnen*) ,I will explain it to you.'
 (10) Ich gratuliere *dich*! (HG *dir*) 'I congratulate you!'
 (11) Sie hilft *die* Studenten. (HG *den*) ,She helps the students.'
 (12) Ich werde *dich* nicht sagen. (HG *dir*) ,I will not say (it) to you.'

Similarly, these intransitive verbs are used to form a non-standard personal passive, as opposed to the HG impersonal passive:

- (13) *Wir werden* nie gesagt, wann ... (HG *Uns wird* nie gesagt ...) 'We are never told when ...'
 (14) *Sie werden* geholfen ... (HG *Ihnen wird* geholfen) ,They are helped ...'
 (15) *Er wurde* erzählt ... (HG *Ihm wurde* erzählt) ,He was told ...'

Also very frequent is a structure replacing the genitive case which has a close parallel in Afrikaans - but also in some Low German dialects (Russ 1990: 13 for Frisian, 1990: 43 for North Saxon):

- (16) in Kaiser seinem Drama (HG *in Kaisers Drama*) ,in Kaiser's play'; compare Afr., *in Kaiser se drama*.
 (17) Die Mutter ihre zweite schwere Sünde (HG *Die zweite schwere Sünde der Mutter*) ,The mother's second great sin'; compare Afr., *Die moeder se tweede groot skuld*.

It will have become clear that the Low German dialects originally spoken by the settlers continue to exercise a perhaps somewhat unperceived influence, in spite of the shift in articulation to high German. This influence has been facilitated and doubtlessly reinforced by the new linguistic context, dominated as it is by two other closely related Germanic languages. A detailed investigation and comparison with Low German dialects would be of great interest. However, the impression created by SAG is rather one of attrition and uncertainty than of an emerging new linguistic system, and this can surely be ascribed in the main to the often overwhelming influence of English and Afrikaans. In this regard much research

remains to be done, especially into the phonology and morphology of SAG - research that is gaining in urgency, as these communities increasingly appear under threat (!).

5 FUTURE PROSPECTS

What are the prospects for the future of German in KwaZulu-Natal (see also de Kadt 1998a)? In the urban areas, assimilation seems likely fairly soon. Here the community-backing essential to the maintenance of the language is largely lacking. Links with the church tend to be more tenuous, and intermarriage with the wider community is (*comparatively*) frequent. There are substantial numbers of post-Second World War immigrants, who, in the aftermath of Nazism, have been less eager to cling to their German identity, and who similarly have found it difficult to identify with the earlier settlers who have had no direct experience of developments in Germany in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The present generation of young German-speaking adults is therefore challenging the rigid value system and conservative upbringing associated with local German to a far greater extent than before, and seems to be more accepting of the prospect of language shift. Within the rural communities too it seems likely that, in spite of determined resistance, assimilation will take place in the not-too-distant future. The previous success in language maintenance has been largely a function of the economic isolation of these communities. First, isolation forced the settlements to be economically self-sufficient, and placed no limits on economic growth, which meant that they could expand to include the following generations. Second, the only challenge to the German culture was that of Zulu culture, which was not in a dominant position. Third, this further underpinned the dominance of the church: the pastor, as the only educated person in the community, was regarded as the source not only of learning (and correct German) but also of moral principles.

Although the present rural German speakers still take considerable pride in being 'different', economic necessity is forcing changes on these communities. Economic self-sufficiency and further expansion are no longer possible, with the result that the traditional way of life is increasingly being challenged: although many of the sons stay on the land and 'uphold the tradition of their fathers', increasingly the daughters are training for professions, marrying out of the community and moving to the towns. Such contact with the urban areas and their dominant culture(s) inevitably poses a challenge to rural German culture. This, in turn, cannot fail to affect the position of the church, which, although still powerful, is perhaps beginning to adopt something more of a social role than a purely religious one. Such changes are clearly reflected in the Vryheid community, for example, where the (traditionalist) decision to build a German hostel was by no means a unanimous one. Some community members argued that German speakers should not be shutting themselves off from other South Africans in this way, lest the children find it difficult to adjust to their larger community in adult life. One cannot escape the conclusion that even the most determined proponents of German maintenance are swimming against the tide and it is doubtful whether they will be able to hold out in the face of the wide-ranging structural changes now facing our country. In short: the further maintenance of German is directly linked to the degree of closure in the community; and it is the more progressive groupings that are most likely to lose German first.

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