'Zimbolicious' – The Creative Potential of Linguistic Innovation: The Case of Shona-English in Zimbabwe*

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Code-switching and the emergence of new hybrid languages are common in contemporary urban culture in Africa. While the linguistic and sociological aspects of switching between Shona and English in Zimbabwe has been widely analysed, this article proposes that the new linguistic usages entail highly creative and at times subversive potential and energy. The widespread use of new media such as the internet not only strongly enhances the blending of languages and the creation of new idioms but also establishes international ties within a language community. A close reading of the lyrics and the style of musical hits will demonstrate how bilingualism serves the agents of popular culture to create a local artistic flavour within a global setting. Compared with the prolific use of code-switching and slang in the lyrics of songs, the domain of Shona literature shows a greater reluctance to experiment with language. However, the examples of A.C. Moyo's play Pane Nyaya *and of Ignatius Mabasa's novel* Mapenzi *illustrate the linguistic resourcefulness of two prominent literary innovators.*

Introduction

'Zimbolicious' is a term I picked up from one of the numerous Zimbolingo chat forums that serve Zimbabweans at home and in the diaspora to communicate among one another.[1] Having been coined 'to describe the beauty of Zimbabwean women',[2] for me this exquisite new word is a most suitable epithet for what I want to explore in this essay: the creative energy arising from the mix of languages – the 'delicious pie dish', as South African poet Ike Mboneni Muila calls it, in which 'languages [take] the place of cake flour'.[3]

Muila refers to the varieties of urban slang of South Africa *isicamtho* and *tsotsitaal*. Some linguists consider *tsotsitaal*, which emerged from a mixture of Afrikaans, English and

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1 The word 'Zimbo' came into being mainly as an epithet for Zimbabweans living abroad.
2 I found this quotation on a page of 'itsbho.com – the Home of Zimbabwean Entertainment', first accessed on 31 October 2005; however, the term is generally understood as an epithet for a beautiful girl/woman. This page is not accessible anymore, but there are other pages where the term is used, as well as a 'Zimbolicious Forum Index' available at http://zimbolicious.19.forumer.com/, retrieved on 27 January 2008. There even exists a song entitled 'Zimbolicious' by Zimbabwean musician Prince Tendai Mupfurutsa. His music video by this name was nominated for the National Arts Merits Awards (NAMA) of Zimbabwe in 2007; see 'itsbho.com', http://www.itsbho.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=598, retrieved on 27 January 2008.
3 I.M. Muila, 'Isicamtho', first published in *Botsotso*, 1997, available at http://www.cccp-online.org/archive/cccp12/page_28.html, retrieved on 28 November 2006.

African languages, as a language in its own right – a dictionary of *tsotsitaal* has appeared recently.[4] Muila writes:

> I am overpoweringly drawn to *isicamtho* as I believe it is a language of identity.... [It is] an innovatory substantive language of poetry ..., a language on its own which draws from and brings together all South African languages that kept people apart – it has brought me to an open-ended journey of self-determination, self-discovery, exploring the magical power behind words.[5]

In the poem 'buddy scamtho', Muila pays tribute to the creative potential of the mixed languages.

buddy scamtho

...

i am into creative writing as a poet artist performer
my narrative oral mix is in eleven
languages spoken in south africa
by and bye trapped in one poem
the so called tsotsitaal isicamtho lingo alive
and kicking sense of humour in you and me
mixing of languages into a witty lingo
a language of identity
a language of an ordinary person in the street
a language of unity in diversity ...[6]

The Inventiveness of Urban Lingo

Recent research has stressed the fluidity and mobility of contemporary urban culture in Africa. Enhanced through the new media and technology, genres such as poetry, music, film mix (Muila's poetry selection *Gova: Poems, Drawings, Voice Recording* is a good example of such genre mixing) and new forms of street art emerge. Researchers such as Joyce Nyairo have stressed that urban culture *per se* is impure and unstable, and identities are constantly contested and recreated.[7] Transformations of language are an essential ingredient in this process.

In the urban centres of South Africa, mixed languages are the norm. Most people, according to Simfree Makoni, 'only encounter the "unmixed" speech as part of the formal process of education'.[8] Similar tendencies can be observed in the big cities of East, West and Central Africa. *Sheng*, a mixture of Swahili and English, is a language variety that has developed among young people in Nairobi; *Camfranglais*, a blend of French, English and African languages, is spoken by mostly urban Cameroonians, to name two prominent

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4 L. Molamu, *Tsotsitaal: A Dictionary of the Language of Sophiatown* (Pretoria, University of South Africa, 2004).
5 Muila, 'Isicamtho'.
6 In I.M. Muila, *Gova: Poems, Drawings, Voice Recording* (Johannesburg, Botsotso Publishing, 2004), p. 7. While Muila does not distinguish here between *tsotsitaal* and *isicamtho*, one has to note that they represent two different types of slang. Whereas *tsotsitaal* is based on Afrikaans as matrix language (see below), *isicamtho* is based on Zulu (see R. Kiessling and M. Mous, 'Urban Youth Languages in Africa', *Anthropological Linguistics*, 46, 3 (Fall 2004), pp. 303–41).
7 See in particular J. Nyairo, '"Modify": *Jua Kali* as Metaphor for Africa's Urban Ethnicities and Cultures', in J. Ogude and J. Nyairo (eds), *Urban Legends, Colonial Myths: Popular Culture and Literature in East Africa* (Trenton, N. J., Africa World Press, 2007), pp. 125–51, as well as other essays in this collection; also A. Mbembe and S. Nuttall (eds), *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis. Public Culture*, 16, 3 (2004).
8 S. Makoni, 'From Misinvention to Disinvention of Language: Multilingualism and the South African Constitution', in S. Makoni, G. Smitherman, A. Ball and A.K. Spears (eds), *Black Linguistics: Language, Society, and Politics in Africa and the Americas* (London, Routledge, 2003), pp. 131–52.

examples. As linguists have noticed, such languages do not just consist of the mixing of two or more languages in their pure form but always contain a certain amount of urban slang with its own, very specific vocabulary. While such languages are inherently inter-ethnic, they also contain subversive elements and can be considered as 'antilanguages'. According to Michel Malliday, 'antilanguages' are in-group codes that serve to exclude other groups, be it along generational, gender, professional or social lines.[9] At the same time, like most hybrid languages that deviate from linguistic norms of purity, they are highly metaphorical and play flippantly with words and meanings. It is their element of playfulness and verbal wit that is exploited globally by the 'hip hop nation', the young speakers of all sorts of 'anti-languages', who find in them a rich resource for rhyming, rapping, singing, texting, graffiti and the like. As Samy Alim remarks in his analysis of African American street language:

> Recognizing the high degree of linguistic creativity and verbal virtuosity present in the Hip Hop Nation, this research demonstrates how African American youth possess extraordinary linguistic capabilities that make high school English classes seem *hella* boring (producing extreme *ennui*).[10]

Looking at the creative outpouring of the 'hip hop generation' in Africa, Alim's observation certainly also holds true in the context of my discussion of texts from Zimbabwe. As I will argue, it is the 'mixing of languages into a witty lingo', to use Muila's words, that provides the material for new forms of imaginative work.

Code-Switching in Zimbabwe

The development of new hybrid languages in South Africa such as *tsotsitaal* and *isicamtho* has been widely researched.[11] In Zimbabwe, however, we find a different linguistic set-up from that in South Africa. While in South Africa the mixing of a variety of languages has resulted in the emergence of speech forms that function as a *lingua franca* and can no longer be reduced to original unmixed speech (see above), in Zimbabwe the former colonial language, English, and the major local languages, Shona and Ndebele, remain discernable as separate linguistic elements. The mixing of these languages takes place in the form of code-switching, i.e. as in most multi-lingual settings speakers consciously or unconsciously use more than one language in a conversation (linguists call this 'marked' or 'unmarked choice'). One language, normally the local language, serves as the Matrix Language (ML) into which

9 See Chapter 9, 'Antilanguages', in M. Malliday, *Languages as a Social Semiotic* (London, Edward Arnold, 1978), pp. 164–82.

10 S. Alim, '"We Are the Streets": African American Language and the Strategic Construction of a Street Conscious Identity', pp. 44–45, in Makoni et al., *Black Linguistics*, pp. 40–59.

11 For example R. Finlayson, K. Calteaux and C. Myers-Scotton, 'Orderly Mixing and Accommodation in South African Codeswitching', *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 2, 3 (1998), pp. 395–420; P. Horn, '"Globalisierung": Kultur, Kulturmischungen und Kulturwissenschaften in Südafrika', Institut zur Erforschung und Förderung österreichischer und internationaler Literaturprozesse (1999), available at http://www.inst.at/studies/s_0501_d. htm, retrieved on 28 November 2006; N.M. Kamwangamalu, 'We-Codes, They-Codes, and the Codes-in-Between: Identities of English and Codeswitching in Post-Apartheid South Africa', in N.M. Kamwangamalu (ed.), *Aspects of Multilingualism in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Special Issue of Multilingua* (Berlin, Mouton, 1998); R.H. Kaschula, 'Cross-Cultural Communication in a North-Eastern Cape Farming Community', *South African Journal of African Languages* (hereafter referred to as *SAJAL*), 9, 3 (1989), pp. 100–4; R. Mesthrie (ed.), *Language in South Africa* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2002); L. Molamu, 'Wietie: The Emergence and Development of *Tsotsitaal* in South Africa', *Alternation: International Journal for the Study of Southern African Literature and Languages*, 2, 2 (1995), pp. 139–58; Molamu, *Tsotsitaal*; C.T. Msimang, 'Impact of Zulu on *Tsotsitaal*', *SAJAL*, 7, 3 (1987), pp. 82–6; S. Slabbert, 'A Re-Evalutaion of *Tsotsitaal*', *SAJAL*, 12, 1 (1994), pp. 31–41; S. Slabbert and R. Finlayson, '"I'm a Cleva!": The Linguistic Makeup of Identity in a South African Urban Environment', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 114 (2000), pp. 119–35; G. Younge, *Art of the South African Townships* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1988).

the other (foreign) language is embedded (EL).[12] The use of code-switching is usually linked to factors such as age/generation, education, social class, the urban/rural divide and gender.

In Zimbabwe, code-switching between Shona and English or between Ndebele and English is very common among most bilinguals.[13] Apart from other aspects, social status appears to be the most prominent motif. Due to colonial and post-colonial language policy,[14] African languages still have a lower status than English.[15] Hence, among professionals and particularly among the urban youth, it is a habit – whether conscious or unconscious – to impress other people through a high level of sophistication, being 'hip', by switching from Shona to English; code-switching thus becomes part of a 'social dialect'.[16] Additionally, there is an urban slang developing with elements from Shona, Ndebele, English and South African languages,[17] which takes on the form of an 'antilanguage' and serves youngsters to connect among each other and exclude elders.

The process of code-switching between Shona and English and the adaptation of English words into the Shona language started in the early days of colonisation and developed steadily as Zimbabwean society became more and more westernised. Nowadays, most urban and many rural Shona speakers use code-switching – a trend that is intrinsically linked to the boost in education for blacks since 1980, combined with the fact that many black people took on jobs and positions in government, commerce, academia, etc. Consequently, it also became a major focus of study for the group of Zimbabwean linguists who, after Independence, secured positions at the University of Zimbabwe and applied their discipline to points of immediate interest within the new cultural and linguistic set-up of their country. However, their studies focus exclusively on the linguistic, social and educational aspects of the mixing of languages.[18] The aim of this article is to start a discussion about the yet uncovered

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12   There are two different ways in which two languages can switch or mix. In the inter-sententional form the speaker changes from one language to the other between one sentence and the next; in this case the grammatical structures of both languages remain intact. In the intra-sententional form the speaker changes within one sentence, which entails a real blending of ML and EL as described above. While some linguists call both forms code-switching, others define the inter-sententional form as code-switching and the intra-sentential form as code-mixing. For reasons of simplicity I will use both terms synonymously. See P. Muysken, *Bilingual Speech: A Typology of Code-Mixing* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2000).

13   As the standardised Shona has been derived from six different dialects spoken in different areas of Zimbabwe, one can also notice a code-switching between these dialects as a form of intra-language.

14   According to the Education Act of 1987 English has to be used for official functions; the national languages, i.e. Shona and Ndebele, serve to carry the culture. See A. Viriri, 'Language Planning in Zimbabwe: The Conversation and Management of Indigenous Languages as Intangible Heritage', http://www.international.icomos.org/victoriafalls2003/papers/C1-5%20-%20Vririri.pdf, retrieved on 9 May 2008.

15   'We have in Zimbabwe an unbalanced bicultural and bilingual situation in which the H or high status language is the official language of the former colonial power, while the indigenous languages are the L or low status language.' (H. Chimhundu, 'The Status of African Languages in Zimbabwe', in *SAPEM*, Literary Series [Harare, 1993], quoted in Viriri, 'Language Planning in Zimbabwe'.

16   'We sometimes label the language of larger social groups a social dialect, with differences in pronunciation and usage based on social class, ethnic factors, contact with other languages, gender or age'. (D. Baron, '*Sez Who? Language & Society*', http://www.pbs.org/speak/words/sezwho/socialsetting/, retrieved on 9 May 2008); see also A. Hudson, *Sociolinguistics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986).

17   In contrast to Shona slang, which borrows mostly from English, Ndebele slang is strongly influenced by South African languages including *tsotsitaal*. See M. Mthuthu, 'Ghetto lingo rules, OK!... Slang Finds its Way into Everyday Communication', *Weekend Mirror* (2001), available at http://www.africaonline.co.zw/mirror/stage/archive/010817/weekend14314.html, retrieved on 15 March 2006.

18   P. Mashiri, 'Shona-English Code-Mixing in the Speech of Students at the University of Zimbabwe', *South African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 20, 4 (2002), pp. 245–62; A. Mawadza, 'Harare Shona Slang: A Linguistic Study', *Zambezia: The Journal of Humanities of the University of Zimbabwe*, 27, 1 (2000), pp. 93–101; M. Mlambo, 'The Anglicization of Shona', *Journal of the American Society of Geolinguistics*, 27 (2001), pp. 76–86; E. Ngara, 'Language Influence and Culture: Comments on the Impact of English on Shona', *Diogenes*, 161 (1993), pp. 27–34; E. Ngara, *Bilingualism, Language Contact and Language Planning: Proposals for Language Use and Language Teaching in Zimbabwe* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1982). The leading specialist on code-switching, C. Myers-Scotton, based some of her findings on data from Zimbabwe: see C. Myers-Scotton, *Duelling Languages: Grammatical Structure in Codeswitching* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993) and C. Myers-Scotton, *Social Motivations for Codeswitching: Evidence from Africa* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993).

perspectives for literary exploration that the ongoing process of linguistic transformation in Zimbabwean society might imply. What happens when the mindscapes of different languages clash or blend?[19] Is there a conscious or unconscious undermining, a subversion of certain (traditional) concepts, a playful 'blasphemy' of the younger generation 'who are cosmopolitan in consciousness', as Aderemi Raji-Oyelade suggests in his theory of post-proverbials in Yoruba culture?[20] In my discussion I will analyse a variety of genres. Starting with examples of the impact of global social and technological trends on language usage in Zimbabwe, I will then focus on popular music as a major field of linguistic experimentation. The final section of the article will examine new developments through code-switching in the field of literature.

Masalads, Technauriture and Bombi Stombi

Black Zimbabwean youths from mostly well-to-do families, who imitate American hip-hop culture in dress, music taste, language and style of living are a prime example of a social in-group in present day Zimbabwe that uses speech as a marker of social distinction. They are ironically labelled *masalads* (those eating salad, a foreign dish) or the '*ma-nose-brigades*'[21] (those speaking English in a very affected way, 'through the nose'). Wallace Chuma describes the *masalads* for an American readership:

> One of the distinguishing features of a *musalad*[22] in Zimbabwe is the typical African-American English accent (with occasional use of 'it's like,' 'you guys,' 'I wanna do' this or that). There also is the issue of clothing. Male *masalads* dress in oversized pants, sleeveless shirts, big boots and the inevitable headband. Females distinguish themselves in hipsters, skin-tight blouses, high-heeled shoes and their accent – feigned or real.
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> Dating a female *musalad* is one of the most daunting tasks for young Zimbabwean men. These sophisticated young women will demand virtually everything from the prospective lover: cash, clothing, expensive takeout food, payment of cell-phone bills. In fact, the tacit minimum qualification to date a bona fide *musalad* is the so-called 3Cs: car, cell phone and cash.[23]

Obviously, it is not only the children from rich families, often from the political or even ZANU-PF élites, who copy the hip-hop style in dress and speech, but also other young folk who find their models in the globalised consumer culture transmitted through modern technology. On the whole, the electronic media are a major force that enhances the switching and mixing of languages, generating new forms of verbal exchange, including new orthographies such as the abbreviated spellings of text messages. In the case of Shona, interesting terms have been fashioned. These are terms such as *kufaxirana* (communicate per fax), *kutextirana* (exchange of SMS) and *kuemailana* (exchange of e-mails). Here the English words 'fax', 'text' and 'email' are embedded in the grammatical markers of the Matrix Language (ML) Shona: the prefix 'ku-' indicating the infinitive, the suffix '-ana' the reciprocal mode, and the '-ir-' which is in the applied mode implying 'doing it for somebody'.[24] While it has been suggested that 'English be renamed "Globalese" so as to

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19 See N.E. Mberi, 'Metaphors in Shona: A Cognitive Approach', *Zambezia*, 30, 1 (2003), pp. 72–88.
20 A. Raji-Oyelade, 'Postproverbials in Yoruba Culture: A Playful Blasphemy', *Research in African Literatures*, 30, 1 (1999), pp. 74–82.
21 Interestingly we find here a doubling of the plural, as in addition to the Shona plural marker *ma-* the English plural marker 's' is used.
22 *Musalad* is the singular of *masalad*.
23 W. Chuma, 'On the Arts: Zimbabwe Youth Art Mimicking American Culture, Minus the Context', *Post-Gazette*, 4 August 2002, available at http://www.post-gazette.com/ae/20020804onarts0804fnp6.asp, retrieved on 29 November 2006.
24 Also noticeable is the linguistic innovation that goes hand in hand with such 'language gluing': despite the fact that Standard Shona does not have the sound 'l', we have the word 'emailana'.

imply that it no longer belongs to a single speech community',[25] South African linguist Russell Kaschula has proposed the term 'technauriture' to designate the new genres of texts emerging from the literary encounter between oral, written and modern technology.[26]

At the same time, new technology serves to interconnect the speech community. The fact that thousands or even millions of mainly young Zimbabweans nowadays live in exile from their country has enormously boosted the number of chat forums. While the common language with its specific connotations and code-words is a fertile ground to recreate a sense of home, the global interchange gives rise to all sorts of new verbal jokes, coinages and transformations. Under the subject title '*Ndakuvara ne*voluntary slavery *kuno kumarimuka*' (I am hurt by voluntary slavery here in this lonely place), there is the following lament by 'ari_Joni' (Johannesburg):

Fellas this life *yatiri kuraramaka.* You know, first they came to our country and we chased them away. A decade later, we have flocked to their country and begged to be their second class citizens. Damn, how I miss *kumira pa*bus-stop *tichiwanzira zvimoko, nekumira pabhombi stombi kuKuwadzana tichimwa hedu masese,* I miss home. I'm sick of this place!!![27]	Fellows, this life that we live, hey. You know, first they came to our country and we chased them away. A decade later, we have flocked to their country and begged to be their second class citizens. Damn, how I miss waiting at the bus-stop where we talked about the girls, hanging around at the bottle store in Kuwadzwana drinking our *masese* beer. I'm sick of this place!!![28]

The quote starts with a slang word, 'fella', a sort of vocative, in which the speaker addresses all those who share his fate. It is followed by the main subject, the essence of the phrase, 'this life', in English, which is however quickly dropped in favour of the familiarising Shona: '*yatiri kuraramaka*'. The Shona phrasing and sounding is drastically different from the English (the assonances of 'a', the alliteration of 'k' and the untranslatable enclitic '-*ka*') establishes the emotional ties of the speech community. In the next two sentences, English is taken up again because the speaker wants to explain the historical reasons for their lamentable condition to his fellow sufferers ('you know'), he can better explain this fairly complex idea in the foreign language. Yet towards the end of his intervention he returns to the way he began. Again a slang word ('damn') leads into the core statement ('how I miss'); the object of the 'missing' can then only be described in the familiar language, to which it is closely linked. The speaker relives a very ordinary and not necessarily pleasant situation ('waiting at the bus-stop'), which from a distance appears as pleasurable because it happened in a familiar setting, together with people who spoke the same language and had the same reference system. This reference system includes elements of code-switching ('*pa*bus-stop'), gender specific activities such as talking about girls – ('*zvimoko*' being itself an almost untranslatable term for girl/girl-friend, which forms part of the 'social dialect' of the Zimbabwean youth) and hanging around at bottle stores and drinking local beer (in Kuwadzwana, a Harare township). The greatest emotional weight certainly lies on the term 'paBhombi stombi': while 'pa-' is the Shona for 'at' (as in 'pabus-stop'), 'Bhombi stombi' represents a playful corruption of the English word 'bottle store', which has a particularly witty ring through its rhyme and the allusion to 'being bombed' = being stoned = drunk. No one other than the Shona

25 R.H. Kaschula and I. de Vries, 'Indigenous Languages and the Internet: With LitNet as a Case Study', *LitNet* (July 2000), available at http://www.oulitnet.co.za/taaldebat/netlan.asp, retrieved on 29 November 2006.

26 R.H. Kaschula, 'Myth and Reality in the New South Africa: Contemporary Oral Literature', *LitNet*, available at http://www.oulitnet.co.za/seminarroom/myth.asp, retrieved on 29 November 2006.

27 'Discussion Forum at http://shonalyrics.cozw/forum/view, last accessed on 20 October 2005.

28 Where not otherwise indicated, all translations are mine with the assistance of Maxwell Sibanda.

community is likely to understand this term and laugh about it – and those far way from home will empathise with their 'fella' '*ari Joni*', who ends: 'I miss home. I am sick of this place'.

Zimbolicious Music: *Malyrics*

Probably the most vibrant and dynamic element of urban culture is popular music, which, as has been mentioned, is a playground for technological and linguistic experimentation. In Zimbabwe, young people all over the country are addicted to what has become known as 'urban groove', a blend of local musical style with global youth music such as rap, R&B, Ragga[29] or Dance Hall. An 'urban groove revolution' took place at the end of the 1990s, when under the then minister of information, Jonathan Moyo, the government enforced the rule that radio and TV must comprise of a local content of 75 per cent. In the first years of the new millennium, numerous local recording studios opened, in which young musicians used modern digital technology to experiment with sound, language and image. Unlike the previous generation of musicians, who performed in concerts on stage, they sampled their music with computer programmes and produced audio and video recordings. These can then be bought by the mass of urban youth as CDs or DVDs, downloaded onto their MP3 players, or listened to on the radio or in the clubs.

While Moyo's Broadcasting Act of 2001 led to an upsurge in the local music industry, it concurrently secured tight state control over the air space. Anything politically controversial was banned.[30] However, this did not diminish the creativity and wit with which the young samplers and rappers have used language freely to make fun of the world they lived in. This includes exploiting the potential of mixing languages and using street slang or openly sexual expression, something that offends the more conservative listeners or commentators. 'What is even more startling is that at times the lyrics are vulgar especially where street lingo is used', writes music reviewer Jonathan Mbiriyamveka, though admitting that 'urban grooves continue to gain popularity because it is the music the youths have always wanted and had been waiting for, for a long time.' He also explains that 'Apart from being a humorous group [Extra Large], the guys try and give messages about everyday life in the ghetto where they have their root.'[31] Thus, one such song quoted by Mbiriyamveka contains a condensed form of social critique of living conditions in the townships:

*Baba namai 'vakasanganirana' mu*one room	Father and Mother 'had sex with each other' in one room
*Ini ndakazvarirwa mu*one room	
*Ukatarisa zvese zvinoitikira mu*one room	I was born in one room
*Chipatara, mujeri, kuchikoro i*one room	You see everything that takes place in one room
	Hospital, jail, school in one room

The word '*vakasanganirana*', which literally means 'speak with each other' can also mean 'having sex', and is put into quotation marks in Mbiriyamveka's article, presumably by him because this is one of the words he finds offensive. Significant in the context of my analysis is the way the song applies code-switching to convey its message: using the rhetorical figure of

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29 Ragga is a subgenre of Reggae first popular in Jamaica.
30 There was a heated debate about the political content of songs being played on Zimbabwean radio during the parliamentary elections in 2005. See M. Sibanda, 'A Song for Zimbabwe' (unpublished, 2005) and M. Sibanda, 'Music Central Tool in Zimbabwe Election', Freemuse: Freedom of Musical Expression, 29 March 2005, available at http://www.freemuse.org/sw8620.asp, retrieved on 29 November 2006.
31 'Urban Groovers Turn to Explicit, Humorous Lyrics', *The Herald*, 24 March 2005.

an epipher, all lines end with the English phrase one room (glued on the Shona prefix *mu-* = in), which emphasises the crammed living conditions in a small township house.

While the urban groovers, who are almost exclusively men, are quite uninhibited in the way they sing/speak about society, their attitudes as well as their language can appear questionable from a gender-sensitive point of view. According to linguist Herbert Chimhundu, 'Afropop music has taken over from love poetry as one of the strongest conservative influences that psychologically condition the young in particular to conform to traditionally prescribed norms'. Chimhundu explains how in a sexual relationship the Shona language always ascribes the active and often aggressive and violent part to the male and the passive part to the female.[32] Urban grooves, though free in spirit, are not free of sexist attitudes, which is also inherent in most of the urban slang.[33] Apart from *chimoko*,[34] *chidanger* is another term for a beautiful girl. Through the combination of '*chi-*', the prefix for the Shona noun class 7 that is assigned to objects, and 'danger', the expression carries a strong sexist connotation, implying a witty and yet nasty comment by boys about girls – that they are 'dangerous things'. 'Chidanger' is also the title of a song by 'Nasty Trix', which some might find an apt name. Here are the first lines of this song:

Chimoko, *chi*danger	The girl is a dangerous thing
Chimoko chine flavour	The girl has flavour
*Chimoko Chi*danger	The girl is a dangerous thing
Chimoko Zesa yega yega[35]	The girl is as dangerous as electricity [Zesa is the Zimbabwean electrical power supplier]

Although viewed as rather stupid and boring by critic Mbiriyamveka, who finds the lyrics humorous 'but lacking a message', the song 'became almost an anthem' on the radio station Power FM, which permanently blasts out urban grooves.[36] Feminist protest came from the Girl Child Network (GCN) whose spokesperson Betty Makoni finds that 'songs like "Chimoko Chidanger" by Nasty Trix … depict girls as sex objects' and encourage abuse of women and young girls. As a musical counter-attack, GCN has released an album titled 'Wake Up Girls – Child Sexual Abuse: Let's develop a culture of prevention'.[37]

However, just as social relations are always in flux, language is not static. Hence an important question for future research would be this: can language become the agent of reversal, critique and renewal? Will the 'chimokos' and 'chidangers' – as singers, girl-friends, wives, social workers etc. – become aware of their dangerous power and transform from passive objects into active subjects? Will they find new words showing that they can 'sit on the ribs' of the man and not vice versa (*kugara mbabvu* – a male-centred term in Shona for sexual intercourse)?[38]

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32 H. Chimhundu, 'Sexuality and Socialization', in G. Furniss and L. Gunner (eds), *Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 147–61.

33 For expressions containing stereotyped sex and gender roles in *tsotsitaal*, see Molamu, 'Wietie'. For sexism in Hararean slang see P. Mashiri, 'Street Remarks, Address Rights and the Urban Female: Socio-Linguistic Politics of Gender in Harare', *Zambezia*, 27, 3 (2000), pp. 55–70. According to H. Chimhundu, these attitudes are inherent in Bantu languages (Chimhundu, 'Sexuality and Socialization').

34 This is the word used by 'ari-joni' in the quotation above in its plural form (*zvimoko*). It is mostly used for 'girl' in the sense of 'girl-friend'.

35 The song is part of the album 'Kupinda Newe' by Nasty Trix, Baseline Studios, Harare, 2005. The lines of the chorus quoted here are taken from the article 'Urban Groovers Turn to Explicit, Humorous Lyrics', *The Herald*, 24 March 2005.

36 'Urban Groovers Turn to Explicit, Humorous Lyrics', *The Herald*.

37 T. Maduna, 'Zimbabwe: Girls Rise Up and Sing about Abuse', Kubatana.net (2 November 2005), available at http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/artcul/051102kub.asp?sector=ARTCUL&range_start=1, retrieved on 1 December 2006.

38 Chimhundu, 'Sexuality and Socialization', p. 150.

David Chifunyise: The New Look of an Old Wedding Song

Many urban groovers use code-switching as a device to reflect the urban set-up of their generation and to contrast modern (urban) and traditional (rural) attitudes. A prominent example is David Chifunyise, whose debut album of 2000 was such a hit that everyone could be heard humming its title song, 'Tauya naye'. While the musical style is a fusion of traditional Zimbabwean and global dance music, Chifunyise's lyrics reflect the sociolect befitting his generation of University of Zimbabwe graduates.

The three stanzas of the song relate the common story how a male student becomes acquainted with a female student and although she already has a boyfriend courts her insistently over two years until she agrees to marry him. While the main narrative is in Shona, it is interspersed with English expressions that highlight the specific social setting in which the two young people meet. Interestingly, Chifunyise keeps the two languages well apart; that is, he does not use forms of code-switching in which they blend within one word (such as *masalads* and *kufaxirana*, for example).While this technique might emphasise the level of education of the protagonists, who know both languages well enough to keep them apart, it also highlights the foreign words, and instils the text with a flippant and mocking tone.

This is the first stanza with of 'Tauya naye' with my translation:

Ndakamuoona *first time* kuchikoro
Ndakamutevera kunoti '*Hello you know*'
Akandidavira. *Even though* moyo usingade
Mainly *because* anga ane mukomana wake
So *I said Ok yo let me chill out*
Ndingazomakisiwa *right here right now*
Akanditarisa ndokumutarisa ini
Ndipo pandakaziva kuti pane *chemistry* iwe
Tauya naye
Takasangana *one month later* mu*Cafeteria* iwe
Tauya naye
Ndakamutengera *Fanta what do you know?*
Akaitambira
Tauya naye
Takataura nyaya *just general sipping on the minerals*
Tauya naye
Nhasi uno taroorana Tete voshaura iwe

Chorus
Tauya naye namagumbeze (Muroora)
Tauya naye (Muroora)
Tauya naye (Muroora)[39]

I saw her for the first time at school [university]
I followed her and said: 'Hello you know'
She answered. Even though her heart did not want to
Mainly because she had a boyfriend
So I said Ok yo let me chill out
I may be embarrassed right here right now
She looked at me I looked at her
That is when I knew that there was chemistry, you
We have come with her
We met one month later in the Cafeteria you
We have come with her
I bought her a Fanta what do you know?
She took it
We have come with her
We talked about things just general sipping on the minerals
We have come with her
Today we are married Auntie leader in the singing you

Chorus
We have come with her and the blankets (bride)
We have come with her (bride)
We have come with her (bride)

As becomes obvious, most of the English expressions are buzz-words which connect the song and its listeners – linguistically – with global youth culture. Thus phrases such as 'hello you know' and 'Ok yo let me chill out' could be used by young people all over the world just as they drink 'Fanta' and other 'minerals' – even the abbreviated form 'minerals' sounds

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39 D. Chifunyise, 'Tauya naye', available at https://www.zimsounds.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=153&view=lyrics&tid=3&aid=13, retrieved on 1 December 2006.

amusing, excluding those, who do not belong to the specific culture. Yet the words used are not just a way of talking; they also reflect certain postures and ways of behaviour that characterise the urban youth: 'chill out' or 'sipping on the minerals' suggest a leisurely, nonchalant stance towards life. Furthermore certain English words reflect a more complex way of thinking through the use of conjunctions such as 'even though' and 'mainly because'. Foreign words such as 'chemistry' and 'cafeteria' stick out prominently in the otherwise Shona sentences, each followed and emphasised by the Shona expletive '*iwe*' ('you!'). Such expressions represent linguistic codes invoking the community of those who understand their meaning or who meet in certain places, excluding those who don't. Thus 'cafeteria' carries a very different connotation than '*bhombi stombi*', the one being the urban meeting place of the educated youngsters, the other the rural counterpart of everyone else. Hence the interspersing of the Shona text with carefully chosen English words serves to create an in-group feeling that is distant from other social groups in terms of age and education.

However, the song's overwhelming success does not lie in the verbal alone. The textual ambiguity is greatly enhanced by the musical disparity of the song: while in the foreground the lyrics of each stanza in Shona/English are recited in the monotonous tone and fast-paced rhythm of rap, in the background the melodious tune of a very well known traditional Shona wedding song is blended in, which ends each stanza with the chorus: '*Tauya naye namagumeze*' (We have come with her and the blankets), relating to the moment when – according to custom – the bride's family is formally 'delivering' her to her husband's family. The traditional element is introduced right from the beginning through the marimba – one of the most popular instruments in Zimbabwean music culture. After the first eight lines of the rap, the chorus of the wedding song starts to set in with female background voices singing '*Tauya naye*', which is then answered by the male singer in the call and response pattern typical of African-American and Caribbean music by the rapper: '*Nhasi uno taroorana Tete Voshaura iwe*'. He is addressing the *Tete* (aunt) as the lead singer (*Voshaura*). Each stanza ends then with the full chorus of the wedding song, '*Tauya naye namagumeze*'. The addressee is the husband's aunt, who receives the bride on behalf of the family. As a respected elderly woman with a high social status in the traditional family set-up, she must be addressed in a different linguistic register from the way the young people converse among themselves in town. And while 'cafeteria', 'chill out', etc. are metonymic markers of the carefree mixing of youth in the cities, '*magumbeze*' – the blankets – is the metonymic code-word of traditional culture at the rural home: marriage can only be consummated 'under the blankets', once the necessary ceremonies have been observed. Hence the song's energy and appeal thrives on the irony in which the (traditional) chorus mimics the (modern) discourse of the protagonists.

Music against Disaster

The icons of Zimbabwean popular music Oliver Mutukudzi and Thomas Mapfumo have largely resisted the popular fashion of mixing languages. Where they do use it, they do so in a very conscious and concise manner, keeping the two languages well apart and using it as a device to highlight an important message. Mutukudzi for instance embeds English choruses in two otherwise Shona (and Ndebele) songs from his popular album 'Tuku' of 1999; as slogans they swept through the country, stirring awareness of HIV/AIDS and arousing political awareness as the country was veering towards political turmoil: 'What shall we do, *tingadii?*', and 'Wake up, open your eyes … Don't waste your time'. The English being used here as a lingua franca, the simple words 'wake up' can be understood by anyone in the country, whether old or young, whether Shona or Ndebele, black or white, educated or uneducated. So code-

switching is not used to exclude other social groups but, on the contrary, to unite the whole country in an all-embracing feeling of belonging, responsibility and awareness.

Similarly, a very strong effect is produced by the use of three English words in Mapfumo's song 'Disaster' of 2000, which due to its critical nature was banned from transmission through the radio: 'disaster', 'corruption' and 'Aids'.

Vakomana muno mune *disaster*	Guys, here you have disaster
Mumba menyu muno mune *disaster*	In your house here you have disaster
Vakomana muno maita *disaster*	Guys, here you produce disaster
Mumba menyu muno mune *disaster*[40]	In your house here you have disaster

In sharp contrast to the softness of the alliterative strings of Shona words – typical of poetic style in Bantu languages – the word 'disaster' strikes the listener's ear at the end of each line like a violent blast, later being replaced by 'corruption' and then by 'AIDS'. Thus, the musician indicts those in power for major evils in society and appeals to everyone to change the situation.

Unfortunately, by the year 2008, disaster has set in, and the 'house is on fire'. As the parliamentary and presidential elections were approaching, the Zimbabwe government changed its policy towards local musicians. Sensing the great potential music has to free people's minds, the state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation has 'issued a directive to producers to "drastically" reduce the number of urban grooves musicians on air. While promoted by the former minister [Moyo], they are now suddenly "no longer relevant to the government"', reports Sebastian Nyamhangambiri for Freemuse from Harare.[41] Songs by Extra Large, Maskiri, Decibel and Nasty Trix belong to the list of those that have been taken off air. This censorship of music and other arts does not take place without resistance. Well known theatre director 'Cont Mhlanga launched the Voices for Change aimed at promoting protest arts'.[42]

Foolish Follies: Shona-English in Literary Texts

Code-switching in literature represents a very conscious language use. In some post-colonial literary texts it serves the aim of appropriating and rewriting the literary discourse coming from the colonial centre, such as in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, where a few Igbo words are inserted into the English text. In contrast to this gentle form of code-switching or rather Africanising English, other post-colonial writers use it more aggressively, such as Patricia Grace from New Zealand, who inserts long passages in Maori without translation into her novel *Potiki* (1987). In her case, it seems to be a deliberate political act to defamiliarise non-Maori speakers.[43] Zimbabwean writer Chenjerai Hove has appropriated the English language in a different way by transplanting Shona linguistic concepts and imagery into it; while, in his English writing, Dambudzo Marechera has hammered 'the cries' of the colonised into the language of the coloniser. A reader-friendly version of the diglossic situation has been chosen by Zimbabwean novelist Shimmer Chinodya in his two recent novels, *Chairman of Fools* (2005) and *Strife* (2007). By inserting Shona expressions and phrases into the narrative and

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40 Part of his album 'Chimurenga Explosion' (2000). Lyrics at http://www.geocities.com/shonalyrics/lyrics/mukanya.html#Disaster, retrieved on 7 December 2006.

41 S. Nyamhangambiri, 'Urban Grooves Blacklisted by State Radio', *Freemuse: Freedom of Musical Expression*, 24 October 2007, http://www.freemuse.org/sw22434.asp, retrieved on 9 May 2008.

42 M. Sibanda, 'Zimbabwe before the Elections: Airplay is Only for the "Patriots"', *Freemuse: Freedom of Musical Expression*, 10 March 2008, http://www.freemuse.org/sw25850.asp, retrieved on 9 May 2008.

43 See E. Gordon and M. Williams, 'Raids on the Articulate: Code-Switching, Style-Shifting, and Post-Colonial Writing', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 33, 2 (1998), pp. 75–96.

especially into dialogue, he adds some local flavour to the otherwise English texts. However, as both books contain glossaries and English translations in footnotes, the non-Shona reader will not feel excluded.

Shona literature has remained largely immune to the experimental, modernist techniques of post-colonial writing. Having suffered from the double legacy of colonial surveillance and Shona language conservatism, Shona writers needed a long time to part with the moralist stories, conventional narrative structure and adherence to a 'pure' language. When young writer Habakkuk Musengezi asked the prominent custodian of Shona literature Solomon Mutswairo to edit the manuscript of his first novel, *Zvairwadza vasara* [It hurt the survivors], published in 1984,

> [h]e slashed the slang and English words that I had used liberally and replaced them with some cryptic Shona ones. That is how the first five chapters of this novel are presented, stylistically. The remaining ten, that were edited by Charles [Mungoshi], are different in this respect. He uses English and slang himself in his Shona works and does it well.[44]

Certainly this situation has changed in the last 25 years and Shona literature has come forward with some stylistic innovation; although the use of code-switching and slang is still quite scarce, publishers seem to be reluctant to take on such writing. Joyce Jenje-Makwenda's novel *Gupuro* was rejected by Zimbabwean publishers because it is entirely written in Harare slang.[45] Hence it is worthwhile to look at two of the rare exceptions, the play *Pane Nyaya* by A.C. Moyo[46] and *Mapenzi* (Fools) by Ignatius Mabasa.[47]

Aaron Chiundura Moyo, one of most prolific Shona novelists, was one of the first authors to introduce new narrative techniques into the Shona novel, together with Charles Mungoshi. His 2004 play *Pane Nyaya* (There is a story/matter of discussion), which uses code-switching to a very large extent, shows a further attempt to innovate Shona literary language, to create new modes and registers reflecting contemporary society. The cover design of *Pane Nyaya* already leads into the plot, the '*nyaya*' meaning 'a big story or a serious matter/issue'. It shows two teenage school girls being spoilt by two sugar-daddies – in a *masalad* fashion – by use of the three 'C's: car, cash and cellphone. The two men, who deal with foreign currency on the black market, eventually get caught and jailed. The two girls fall pregnant, and one of them is infected with HIV. While the plot is fairly common and predictable, reminiscent of the moralistic tradition in much writing in Shona, the play is groundbreaking in its use of language: throughout, many of the characters switch from Shona to English or use urban slang. Significantly, it is mainly the two men, who are less educated than the girls, who try to enhance their social status by switching from Shona into English as much as they can. Hence, Moyo uses code-switching very deliberately as a marker of social identity, and a status symbol.

The play opens with a scene in the posh office of one of the two men; while he is ordering his driver over the phone to buy food for the girls

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44 Musengezi quoted in F. Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (London, Hans Zell, 1992), pp. 304–5.
45 Interview with the author, September 2006. She subsequently brought it out as self-publication (Harare, Storytime Promotions, 2006).
46 A.C. Moyo, *Pane Nyaya* (Harare, Priority Projects Publishing, 2004).
47 I. Mabasa, *Mapenzi* (Harare, College Press, 1999).

Bozwell *(Achitaura parunhare)* Iwe Tops! *Ah! Are you sick* he-e? *Shut up*, kurumidza kuunza *order* yandakupa vana*madam* ava vave nenzara. He-e, kana mota yako isina mafuta, *use mine but don't overspeed* nokuti haisi *car* yenhando. [. . .] (p. 5)

Bozwell (Speaks into the phone) Hey, Tops! *Ah! Are you sick* or what? *Shut up*, hurry and bring the *order* I have given for these ladies, they are hungry. Yeah, if your car does not have petrol, *use mine but don't overspeed* because this is not an ordinary *car.* [. . .]

These few sentences already amply show how the language is part and parcel of the whole social set-up: One of the men (ironically named Bozwell) tries to impress the two girls by bossing around his driver (over the mobile phone), ordering take-away food, a most despicable habit from a 'traditional' point of view but treasured by *masalads*; he has an expensive car; and he has access to petrol, presumably through the black market because it is otherwise in short supply. Bozwell's permanent switching from Shona to English is a major feature of the social stereotype that he represents.

This extract also shows that Moyo's linguistic point of departure is Shona. All stage directions are in Shona and he highlights the expressions in English – the emphases in italics appear like this in the original. The latter reveals the playwright's intention: he explicitly works with code-switching as an innovative tool of expression and he points this out to his reader. In a stage production of the play, one would of course not 'hear the italics', which would make the contemporary idiom appear all the more natural. A Shona audience would certainly savour the play as a hilarious satire of a social set-up and characters they are well acquainted with. The original linguistic experiment Moyo's play represents will certainly stimulate and encourage teachers and students to exploit the potential of a creative and unconventional use of language.

A major break-through in that regard has been achieved with Ignatius Mabasa's highly praised *Mapenzi* (Fools) of 1999,[48] which has revolutionised the Shona novel to a hitherto unknown degree. While Zimbabwean literature in English on the one hand and in Shona and Ndebele on the other developed separately for a long time,[49] in Mabasa's novel the two strands start 'talking to each other'. Directly referring to the late Marechera as a guiding spirit, the novel can be read as a sort of Marecheran text in (mostly) Shona. Among Zimbabweans, it has gained notoriety similar to Marechera's books. Rumours have it, for example, that '"Mabasa is a distant relative of Dambudzo Marechera"', as Memory Chirere has overheard a 'well dressed gentleman' remarking in Harare's Faculty of Arts Building.[50]

The novel has a fairly simple plot. The protagonist, Hamundigone, an ex-freedom fighter, has been discharged from the teaching service. His dismissal is based on allegations that he is mentally disturbed. He compares himself to Marechera, who was misunderstood due to his intelligence (p. 16).[51] Through Hamundigone the reader obtains a very candid and truthful insight into present-day Zimbabwe. A wide scope of – often taboo – issues is approached; these include, for example, corruption, AIDS, homosexuality, abortion, and prostitution:

Hamundigone is a wanderer, going from place to place; censuring careless speakers, rebuking pretenders and social hypocrites, chiding mean and selfish relatives, criticizing the status-quo, singing the latest tunes . . . He is a man of no fixed abode but you sense that he has a private destination – the Truth![52]

48 The novel won the Zimbabwe Book Publishers Association Award of 1999 and became a secondary school set book at Advanced level in Zimbabwe.
49 See Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers.*
50 M. Chirere, 'Ignatius Mabasa's *Mapenzi* and Innovation in the Shona Novel', in A. Oed and U. Reuster-Jahn (eds), *Beyond the Language Issue: The Production, Mediation and Reception of Creative Writing in African Languages* (Cologne, Rüdiger Köppe, forthcoming).
51 Page numbers in brackets refer to Mabasa, *Mapenzi.*
52 Chirere, 'Ignatius Mabasa's *Mapenzi* and the Innovation of the Shona Novel'.

The novel's daring modernisation of the genre lies on two levels: the narrative devices it uses and the departure from standard Shona through the introduction of code-switching. Borrowing from the picaresque genre, the narration opens with Hamundigone finding himself on a journey from his home town, Bindura, to Harare. He tells his story to a captivated audience of co-travellers in a 'combi' (commuter taxi). Taking it from there, the narrative voice alternates among different characters, flashing backward and forward, creating a multiplicity of viewpoints, blending prose, poetry, dream, and song. This opening and loosening of form and moulding of something completely new is enhanced through the novel's experimental use of language, particularly the Anglicisation of Shona and the Shonalisation of English, which for literary critic Maurice Vambe 'makes the novel a pleasure to read'.[53]

Language in the narrative text and in the dialogues contains permanent code-switching, which is highlighted through italics, as in Moyo's play. Slang words, which are also used, are listed with Shona translations in a glossary at the end of the book. While Mabasa's experimentation with language reflects social change, social differences and status, as do the other texts discussed in this essay, it is at times particularly creative in coining new words or proverbs. Overall, the linguistic insinuations contain an element of social critique and irony.

For instance Hamundigone presents his audience with a riddle: '*Poto yakatsva ichibika sadza pamoto asi kutebhuru kwakaenda ndiro dzaive musherefu*' (A pot got burnt whilst cooking *sadza* but for serving the *sadza*, the plates that were on the shelf were used) (p. 9). Mabasa uses the adaptives *kutebhuru* and *musherefu* (Shona words adapted from English (*kutebhuru* – on the table; *mu-sherefu* – on the shelf). He obviously wants to point at the discrepancy between those who were injured and did the actual fighting ('burnt') in the war of liberation and those staying behind, 'on the shelf' (who were working in offices in foreign countries, were studying abroad or stayed behind in Zimbabwe). These are now the ones on display and in charge (used for serving the food 'on the table'). Thus, Mabasa has coined a new proverb through the Anglicisation of Shona. Code-switching also infers social critique in the exchange of Hamundigone and a *shefu* (chef, an adoption of the Portuguese equivalent of chief), whom Hamundigone wants to greet. While they fought side by side in the war of liberation, the *shefu* is now a big man in politics driving a posh car, while Hamundigone is an unemployed social 'nothing'. The *shefu* demonstrates the social distance between them through switching from Shona to English. Addressing his driver, he says: 'Hey Mr. Driver *itai kuti* security *ibvise munhu uyu pano*' (Hey Driver! Tell security to remove this person from here) (p. 19).

A different form of social difference is established linguistically between Hamundigone and a young gay man, when Hamundigone is lying on a park bench in Africa Unity Square, whom he introduces to his audience as 'musikana … akapfeka ka*earring munzeve imwe chete*' (The boy wearing only one earring). Ironically, however, Hamundigone himself is not aware of this international marker of homosexuality. While he is of an older generation and comes from Bindura, a small rural town, the younger man belongs to an urban globally connected in-group of gays. Accordingly their social habits and attitudes clash, which again is reflected in the way they speak. Hamundigone addresses the gay man in Shona, and he answers in English:

'Une fodyawo here munin'ina?	'Do you have something to smoke?'
Handizivi kuti ndakambobvunzirei.	I did not know why I asked him.
'Sorry, I do not smoke.' (p. 24)	'Sorry, I do not smoke.'

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53 In a personal note to the author, 27 October 2005.

When Hamundigone specifies that he is asking for *bute* (snuff) the gay man responds: '*Ho-o* snuff! That is a disgusting habit! *Kuchine vanhu vachiri kuputa* snuff *mazuva ano?*' ('Oh snuff! That is a disgusting habit! Are there people who are still taking snuff these days?'). Eventually, as Hamundigone asks the young man whether he is waiting for his girl-friend and learns that he is in fact waiting 'mukomona wangu kwete musikana' (not for a girl but my boy-friend), it is Hamundigone's turn to be appalled: 'Hausi mukomana here iwe?' (p. 24) ('Are you not male?'). The young man's final response to this, again in English, emphasises the social rift between him and his interlocutor: 'What's wrong with you people?' (p. 25)

Language purists have complained about the excessive use of English in Shona novels. According to John Gambanga, this practice means 'daily assassinating our beautiful language, allowing it to play second fiddle to others. That is wrong and unpatriotic'.[54] Yet, as has been shown, the mixing of languages and inventing of a new jargon in *Mapenzi* in no way seems arbitrary and artificial. While reflecting the contemporary linguistic set-up in Zimbabwe in an intelligent way, Mabasa uses language change to probe into serious issues of social conflict and malaise. Through its unique linguistic and narrative style *Mapenzi* revolutionises the Shona novel in a 'groundbreaking' manner (Chirere).

Conclusion

Linguistic innovation through the switching or mixing of languages is a widespread phenomenon that forms an intrinsic part of contemporary urban culture in Africa. While linguists have widely discussed the mechanisms of code-switching as well as its social and educational relevance, my essay has added an important new component to these debates through showing how this linguistic device is used in lyrics of songs and literary texts. At the same time I argued that code-switching is only *one* means of innovating language; there are others such as slang and various social dialects, which all can be functioning as a sort of 'antilanguages', a central term in current debates within the field of socio-linguistics. The aim of my article has been to examine what kind of verbal strategies and literary devices are connected with such new languages and in which way they can become a means of social change and artistic development. While the use of code-switching is commonly seen as an agent for upward mobility, the Zimbabwean situation has unveiled other aspects of this phenomenon. Used as a means of bonding within and outside the diaspora, its wide employment in the area of popular music reflects the linguistic behaviour and fashion of the urban youth. This, in turn, entails elements of social critique and artistic playfulness. In the rare cases where it is used in Shona writing, it shows the ingenious transformation of spoken language into new modes of literary creation. It can be expected that the fundamental changes that Zimbabwean society is undergoing at this historic moment will generate enormous creative energies, which will, in turn, be reflected in further dynamic shifts and re-inventions in language and in the verbal arts.

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54 Quoted in Chirere, 'Ignatius Mabasa's *Mapenzi* and the Innovation of the Shona Novel'.