TWIST

Examining the Impact Caused by isiXhosa Dialects when Learning the Language

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Abstract
In this article, I have examined the influence of dialects on the instruction and acquisition of isiXhosa as a home language (HL). The South African educational framework consists of a home language (HL) and an additional language; in certain institutions, isiXhosa may serve as the home language, whereas in others, it may function as the second additional language. Tensions between the home language and the second additional language emerge as the number of learners increases, leading to a reduction in the language's formality. Effective phonics instruction in the Foundation Phase (FP) necessitates considerable experience and a profound comprehension of language morphemes. In this context, various identifiable challenges arise in the effort to establish a formal and easily comprehensible language. The primary aim of this article was to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the influences of society, intermarriage, and human migration. The presence of dialects has significantly affected the standardization and formalization of isiXhosa in the FP. The structure of isiXhosa HL differs across regions due to human migration, technological progress, and societal instability. Secondary data methods have been employed to address the challenge of dialectal variation in the language standardization of isiXhosa. Additionally, this article conceptualizes the existing data within the realm of knowledge that speaks to isiXhosa dialects. The findings have suggested that dialects influence the teaching and learning of isiXhosa HL in the Foundation Phase, either positively or negatively.

Keywords
isiXhosa dialects, Home Language, Foundation Phase, Additional language

INTRODUCTION
The Eastern Cape (EC) is a province in South Africa (SA) and is predominantly an area where isiXhosa is spoken. IsiXhosa, recognized as one of the official indigenous languages, encompasses various dialects that are utilized across different regions and municipalities within the EC. Consequently, this article aims to investigate the historical and modern influences of the eleven distinct isiXhosa dialects on the standardization and societal status of the language, particularly in the Eastern Cape, where these dialects have historical origins. Among the eleven identifiable dialects, this article focuses on isiMpondo. These selected dialects, which have undergone evolution over time, are believed to play a crucial role in the development and growth of the isiXhosa language within their respective localities in the Eastern Cape. Despite their historical and cultural importance, these dialects have not been extensively studied in academic literature and necessitate further investigation to enhance the understanding of isiXhosa.

Nyamende (1994) advocates that these eleven or more isiXhosa dialects should be termed variants, as they exhibit distinct linguistic features within the isiXhosa language. The following terms are ones I have chosen, as they are used daily by learners in FP classrooms and at home. These are just a few words out of many; I didn't include them in this list. I wanted to highlight the existence and influence that variants have in the classroom and beyond.

These amaMpondo dialects are often acknowledged as being found in the Eastern Cape, particularly in connection with isiMpondo, and are in regions such as Lusikisiki, Port St. Johns, and Bizana. In examining the historical and social aspects of these dialects and their impact on the so-called standards of the isiXhosa language, this article aims to illuminate a relatively underexplored area and provide valuable insights for language planning and policy development in the region. In other words, even those identifiable variants can be integrated into the language teaching and learning within the classroom.

Table 1 isiXhosa/isiMpondo/English

isiXhosa	isiMpondo	English
impundu	iisbunu	bums
ukuxukuxa	ukuxubha	wash the mouth
imela	imesi/isitshetshe	knife
ukuthetha	ukuxela	speak
ehlathini	egxeni	forest
ubisi	intusi	milk
ukukhawuleza	ukuxina	walk quickly
ukubetha	ukhwitsha	beat
ithanga	amadusu	pumkin
ibuhlungu	iyathuthumba	pain
khawuleza utsho	tshetsh'utsho mtam	quickly come
ukungxolisa	ukubhobha	to shout
ukudika	ukutshina	naught

IsiXhosa has experienced considerable transformations, likely attributable to a variety of factors. Advances in technology, interactions with other languages, globalization, and the impact of social media have all contributed to the evolution of the linguistic environment. Nevertheless, these elements should not be regarded as the exclusive causes of the changes seen in isiXhosa, as the language is also distinguished by a diverse array of dialects that create obstacles for standardization. This concern is especially pertinent within the frameworks of the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education in South Africa, where establishing isiXhosa as the primary medium of instruction is essential. Consequently, this article aims to illuminate a relatively unexplored domain and provide significant insights into language planning and policy formulation in the area.

Nyamende (1994) offers a profound examination of the localization of prevailing dialects in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The main Nguni language groups include isiXhosa, siSwati, isiNdebele, and isiZulu, each distinguished by its own unique variants. These variants may possess the capacity to facilitate the standardization of the language. There are numerous factors that can hinder the standardization of a language in both its spoken and written forms. Particularly noteworthy are the variants of isiXhosa, as this article has explored, including **isiMpondo, IsiHlubi, isiXesibe, isiMpondomise, isiThembu, isiGcaleka, isiBomvana, isiNgqika, isiMfengu, and isiNdlambe**.

While isiXhosa is recognized as the primary indigenous language in the Eastern Cape Province, formerly known as Ciskei and Transkei, these variants are spread across specific areas within the Eastern Cape, with distinct dialects dominating various regions. The isiNgqika dialect, which developed during the time when missionaries initiated the publication of isiXhosa texts, is closely related to its isiThembu (or isiGcaleka) equivalent. These variants were utilized in educational settings as the standard isiXhosa language for teaching and were also published. The accompanying map illustrates the geographical distribution of these prominent isiXhosa variants.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This article is centered on a set of clear aims and objectives that will be addressed and answered upon completion. The primary aim of the article is to contribute to resolving the issue of inadequate response in the isiXhosa dialect.
This will be achieved through the defined objectives that guide this article:

- Investigate the impact caused by isiXhosa variants during teaching and learning.
- Describe the role of society in language standardization and beyond.

IsiXhosa dialects, according to Nyamende (1994), are spread across the Eastern Cape, as shown in the following orthographic map.

Fig. 1 Distribution of dialects across the Eastern Cape

According to Nomlomo (1993), the Xhosa dialects previously discussed are associated with the various tribes located in Transkei, each being spoken in distinct geographical regions of the country. This assertion is reinforced by the perspective that dialects represent the language of a tribe within the Bantu framework (Doke, 1954), and that they are variations utilized in specific geographical locales (Stubbs, 1976), as well as by Wilkins (1972). Additionally, the map offers a topographical representation of the Eastern Cape province within the larger context of South Africa.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I have discussed the literature produced by other scholars. The dissemination of themes and subthemes has helped identify the gap in this article. The variants, as Nyamende (1994) mentions, are found across the Eastern Cape in South Africa. There are many factors that have led to certain areas in EC having different isiXhosa standards. Thus, the following themes and subthemes discuss this and suggest that if these variants exist, then learners, teachers, and society should be allowed to use them.

LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY

The topic of language and society, particularly the disparities among African indigenous languages, has garnered significant attention in academic research. Investigations have highlighted the challenges faced by these languages, such as isiXhosa dialects in South Africa, in terms of language standardization and their societal status. For example, a study conducted by Makoni (2007) indicated that the prevalence of English and other colonial languages in Africa has led to the marginalization and disregard of indigenous languages, including isiXhosa dialects, which has resulted in a deterioration of cultural heritage and identity.

Moreover, empirical research, including that of Ngcobo (2015), has demonstrated that the rise of technology and social media has contributed to the swift transformation of language, including isiXhosa, with the advent of new dialects and variations. This evolution has further complicated the efforts toward language standardization and the development of orthography, posing challenges for linguists and educators in their quest to establish a cohesive standard for isiXhosa. These observations highlight the intricate interplay between language and society, underscoring the need to address issues of language inequality and standardization within the context of African indigenous languages, particularly isiXhosa dialects.

Additionally, the historical and societal dimensions of isiXhosa dialects significantly influence the linguistic landscape. For instance, the repercussions of colonialism, apartheid, and migration trends have shaped the geographical distribution and localization of isiXhosa dialects across various regions of South Africa, notably in the Eastern Cape (Kaschula, 2010). This has resulted in discrepancies in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar among these dialects, which subsequently affect the standardization of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction in both the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education.

Furthermore, the societal positioning of isiXhosa dialects within local communities can also influence their standardisation and use. For instance, some dialects may be more widely spoken and accepted within certain communities, while others may be considered less prestigious or marginalised (Mphande, 2011). This social dynamic can affect language planning and policy development, as well as the vitality and sustainability of isiXhosa. Regarding the issue of language acquisition in humans, it is worth noting that humans are born with a single language; however, due to global demands, their inclination to adapt, and their innate curiosity, they often learn additional languages. Lightbown & Spanda (2006) authored a compelling article regarding the initial language acquisition in children. Children worldwide first learn the language to which they are exposed in their environment. Their cognitive abilities are advanced enough to observe and imitate what adults articulate in that language, and one can often hear them repeating phrases previously spoken by adults during subsequent encounters.

AFRICAN LANGUAGES CHANGE

Mnukwa (2019) highlights a significant issue concerning the scarcity of genuine African Indigenous Languages (AIL). These indigenous languages are being eradicated from the linguistic landscape, endangering their existence. Kamwangamalu (2003:70) asserts that African languages are nearing extinction, with only a limited number of individuals recognizing the linguistic shifts that threaten them. African parents who enroll their children in English-medium schools in suburban areas from an early age tend to perceive themselves as more privileged, believing that their children's proficiency in English will facilitate greater social and economic mobility, which influences their decision-making. Considering the substantial number of African students transitioning from township schools to suburban institutions, it is understandable that African languages may eventually become stigmatized within certain segments of society (Kamwangamalu, 2003, p. 70).

On a global scale, some continents and nations categorize their African languages as foreign, not due to their non-indigenous status. These classifications are predominantly found in America. African languages are often regarded as foreign languages, likely because they have been marginalized and have received insufficient documentation. Moreover, every individual on the planet possesses a native language; people are inherently born with a language. In the United States, English is the predominant language, alongside other indigenous languages such as Mandarin. It is quite rare for Americans to consider additional languages as foreign, as these languages are often associated with specific ethnic or cultural groups.

According to Kamwangamalu (2003:70), as a developed nation, the United States consistently opts for English as its commercial language. Globally, humans tend to be multilingual, which contributes to the phenomenon of bilingualism. Conversely, many African indigenous languages are overlooked, particularly those spoken by minority groups that lack visibility, such as the Khoisan language in South Africa. Moreover, upon visiting various African nations, one will find that Swahili is predominantly spoken, having been integrated into the educational framework. As you travel across Africa, it becomes evident that Swahili serves as either a native language or an additional language within many communities.

THEORY

The sociolinguistic theory serves as a foundation for the structure and coherence of the article. Its application is enlightening, as it tackles issues and subjects that influence society in everyday life. The topic of dialects is a prevalent social issue that impacts many Xhosa communities in the Eastern Cape. Sociolinguistics is defined as the examination of the interplay between language and society, encompassing language variation and attitudes towards language. Indeed, as I have previously discussed and concurred, there exists a connection between language and society. The AmaMpondo utilize the isiXhosa language, a dialect. The modifications they implement in the language correspond with the theoretical framework that supports this article.

Furthermore, Martin (2014:75) characterizes sociolinguistics as the exploration of language in relation to social determinants, which include variations in regional, class, and occupational dialects, as well as gender and bilingualism. Communities and societies have the capacity to regulate the language concerning its development and proliferation. Proficiency in the language is crucial for comprehending societal norms, standards, and values, thereby mitigating miscommunication and ensuring a precise understanding of the language. Hudson (1980: 4-5) has articulated that "the discipline of sociolinguistics is the study of language in relation to society." A similar perspective is echoed by Martin (2014:75), who asserts that sociolinguistics is "the study of language in relation to social factors, including variations in regional class and occupational dialects, gender, and bilingualism." From these definitions, it can be concluded that sociolinguistics is the investigation of society to acquire as much knowledge as possible.

METHODOLOGY

In this article, I have opted to utilize a qualitative methodology throughout the text's natural development. The narrative literature review serves to evaluate and compile data from the isiMpondo language, concentrating on the selected common terms. I explored the specific isiXhosa dialect terms that are routinely employed by both learners and educators within the classroom environment. Myburgh (2015) highlights the advantage of the qualitative methodological approach, which permits the researcher to investigate the subject matter with freedom while ensuring the confidentiality of the material.

Consequently, it is noted that the material was derived from the terms utilized in dialogues both within and outside the school setting by children. In the Foundation Phase, I employ narrative literature to address these recognizable dialect words of isiXhosa. The advantage of selecting or engaging in qualitative research lies in its alignment with my perspective on research ontology (De Vos et al., 2011, p. 306). As indicated in the literature, the initial approach is based on the premise that reality should be perceived objectively as an external entity 'out there', which requires the researcher to maintain a detached and impartial stance when analyzing such reality.

Furthermore, Babbie and Mouton (2001, 53) assert that a qualitative research methodology involves examining human behavior from an insider's viewpoint. This methodology is thus regarded as a naturalistic approach to social inquiry. In this discussion, I analyzed the influence of identifiable Mpondo dialectal terms used by educators and learners during instructional sessions. Occasionally, learners and educators use informal words for teaching purposes, which become more formal due to their frequent use in everyday interactions. These isiXhosa dialect terms have undergone thematic analysis, as they are commonly utilized by teachers and learners in the classroom.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The article employs secondary data analysis to investigate the issue of isiXhosa variants and their impact on teaching and learning. Additionally, Gobingca & Makura (2016) assert that teaching isiXhosa to children with diverse linguistic backgrounds can pose a challenge for monolingual teachers, affecting the standardization and proper usage of the language. This, in turn, can lead to difficulties in achieving positive outcomes.

Incorporating a learner's home language in primary school has been shown to improve their proficiency and exposure to the language. However, problems arise when educators themselves are not proficient in the language used in the classroom. There are commonly used words by amaMpondo (Xhosa variants), and they are also influencing language teaching in schools. These words are chosen from their daily use by children and adults, and they sometimes cause confusion for teachers when teaching. If that teacher is Xhosa but not from the Eastern Cape.

IsiXhosa variants in teaching and learning

I have identified a few words that conundrum with what is called standardized isiXhosa. And these words are a societal influence and disturb the standardization of the isiXhosa language in the classrooms. First and foremost, I will provide the definition of dialects as defined by Nomlomo (1993), which is as follows: the term 'dialect' is defined as a sub-standard, low-status form of language associated with peasantry, the working class, other groups lacking prestige (Chambers &

Trudgill, 1980, p. 3). According to Fishman (1972:17), a dialect is a regional subunit of a language and is a subordinate designation.

For instance:

- The term "imela" from the list, which is a distinct and widely recognized term in isiMpondo, transforms into "isitshetshe/imesi." These two expressions are currently exerting an influence on isiZulu. This clarification brings the article back to the orthographical framework, suggesting that the most remote areas where these dialects are prevalent are in closer proximity to KwaZulu-Natal. Children residing in those regions may have misarticulated the standardized term 'imela' and instead pronounce it as 'imesi/isitshetshe'. Nevertheless, in this article, I contend that the presence of these dialects necessitates their accommodation and acknowledgment as having equal status to any other language. These dialects are utilized by individuals, and it is the people who embody the language; even the constitution acknowledges and specifies that there are 12 official languages, in addition to other languages.
- Ukuthetha and ukuxela: the ukuxela has become a well-known term to speak, derived from the standardised ukuthetha, from the main isiXhosa language.

Standardization is implemented within classrooms in South Africa to control linguistic discussion by policymakers. Nevertheless, as children interact with peers from various regions of the country, movement influences the standards of language. When a child is born into a linguistic community, there is a natural inclination to engage in conversation with its members (Chambers, 2009, p. 165). This instinct fosters a desire to replicate the sounds and patterns present in their surroundings, a need that is fulfilled when caregivers produce utterances that the child subsequently imitates. Skinner (1957) posits that positive reinforcement is provided for the child's imitative speech when it aligns with that of the caregiver, with positive reinforcements encompassing enjoyable experiences such as rewards or commendations. Conversely, if the child's imitations diverge from those of the caregiver, they receive negative feedback aimed at encouraging the development of acceptable language practices, which are later positively reinforced.

IsiXhosa development and implementation in society

Society is teaching children their home language without any gatekeeping, for instance, the words:(Khawuleza utsha/ tsheth'utsho mntram (come quickly) conveys a sense of submission, typically from a parent to a child. In clear and simple writing, one could simply say 'izapha' (come here), but since that statement is in dialectal insight, it incorporates other sounds for emphasis and instruction. Furthermore, within the isiXhosa cultural framework, parents have instilled the values of submission and respect through the language. Consequently, in educational institutions, such expressions of respect are neither utilised nor accepted, as these schools operate under their own governance and curriculum. Gobodwana (2023) posits that children can create new vocabulary by engaging with their surroundings, thereby initiating the development of lexical morphemes.

Vygotsky (1978) further asserts that children are not only proficient at imitating behaviors observed in their environment but are also capable of acquiring grammatical and linguistic competencies. Some children can learn and articulate multiple languages at a very early age; however, they typically acquire their first language between the ages of 2 and 3 years. This linguistic ability is deeply rooted in their environment and the prevalent language. Conversely, children may possess a greater understanding of various academic subjects than their parents or guardians.

CONCLUSION

This article has explored the fundamental questions concerning the factors that contribute to the emergence of these dialects, the influence of society, leadership, and government in shaping their existence, as well as the historical evolution of language policies as recorded by scholars globally. The inconsistent commitment to language implementation within the South African academic framework continues to affect language development. The linguistic diversity present in the Eastern Cape, characterized by its numerous languages, necessitates the establishment of linguistic uniformity. This article seeks to comprehend the current factors influencing the linguistic evolution of isiXhosa, particularly its writing and speaking dimensions in the Foundation Phase, as experienced by both learners and educators.

Gobodwana (2019) examines the influence of various stakeholders, including society, the environment, and the government, on language and identity, emphasizing the role of language standardization and repertoire as a vital component of this study, supported by relevant insights. By conducting a thorough analysis of these elements and their impact on the linguistic environment, this ongoing research initiative aims to provide significant insights into the complex interactions between isiXhosa language variation and standardization, thereby deepening our understanding of language development and policy in the Eastern Cape and beyond. Society increasingly influences the planning and execution of standardized language within South African education. The existence of dialects presents challenges for educators, as students frequently integrate their home language into their understanding of language. When students bring their home language into the classroom during lessons, they become innovators of the language dynamics.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT

The author declares that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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