

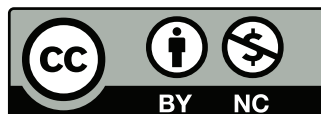
Tertiary students' attitudes towards contemporary poetry in isiZulu as a tool to enhance access to academic content

Muhle Sibisi
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Durban, South Africa
sibisim3@ukzn.ac.za

Heike Tappe
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Durban, South Africa
tappe@ukzn.ac.za

Abstract

This article explores attitudes of isiZulu home-language tertiary students regarding the use of contemporary poetry in isiZulu to disseminate academic content in English. In South African education sector English remains, by default, the official medium of instruction despite constitutional directives stipulating that there be a parity of esteem between all eleven official languages of the country. The hegemony of English results in ambivalent attitudes among speakers of African languages towards the use of their own languages in education. In this article, we promote the value of isiZulu as a resource for academic learning – a means to reclaim indigenous languages and cultures. We assess students' attitudes to explore whether contemporary poetry in isiZulu may serve as a tool to enhance access to academic content. The findings indicate positive yet diverse views on the use of contemporary poetry in isiZulu for the dissemination of academic content. The majority of the participants welcomed the use of isiZulu poetry as a way to introduce new topics, scaffold concepts, and summarize academic content. However, the ambivalence persists as students believe that isiZulu offers limited opportunities to access economic goods. We conclude that South Africa needs to give African languages a space in the academia comparable to that of English; over time parity may be achieved.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Keywords: contemporary poetry, home language, indigenous languages, language-as-a-resource

About the authors

Muhle Sibisi, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Muhle Sibisi is Lecturer in the Department of Linguistics at the University KwaZulu-Natal. Her research fields include sociolinguistics and applied linguistics; her primary research interests are in the areas of multilingualism, language policy, and language in education.

Heike Tappe, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Professor Heike Tappe is Associate Professor in the Department of Linguistics at the University KwaZulu-Natal. Her research fields cover psycholinguistics and cognitive linguistics, and her research interests include the multilingual mind, language acquisition and second language learning, event conceptualisation, discourse and text, as well as spatial language and cognition.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

There is an ongoing debate throughout the African continent about the role of indigenous languages as languages of teaching and learning (see, e.g., Bamgbose 2011; Prah 2006; Skutnabb-Kangas and Bucak 1994). In South Africa, the call for the promotion of indigenous languages (e.g., Alexander 2004; Makalela 2014) has come in direct response to objectives and directive policies set forth in the country's constitution. Chapter 1, Section 6(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa calls for the elevation of the status of the nine indigenous languages and the advancement of their use. During apartheid, the language policy in South Africa recognized only two official languages, Afrikaans and English, which are still widely conceived of as the languages of the Dutch and the English colonialists. After the demise of apartheid, Afrikaans and English retained their status while nine indigenous African languages were promoted to the rank of official languages, namely, Sesotho sa Leboa, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and the language focused on in this article, isiZulu.

In order to elevate African indigenous languages as media of instruction (MoI) in higher education, we need to use them throughout the education system. However, in most South African schools, indigenous languages are MoI only for the first three years of schooling. Thereafter, they are predominantly offered as language subjects at the home language (HL) level. However, many linguists argue that children are not able to develop academic registers in their first languages when the exposure to their languages in a school environment is limited to a small section of the curriculum (see, e.g., Maseko and Vale 2016; Mgqwashu 2013). In order to reap the benefits of using African indigenous languages in academic contexts, schools should therefore rather offer them as MoI beyond the grade-three level. As Koch and Burkett (2005, 1091) argue, well-developed (academic) literacy skills in the HL transfer to the second language, and the HL is a resource that students can utilize in order to understand and learn in a second language (L2).

In this article, we report results from an exploratory pilot study in which we gave two poets an academic text in English. Subsequently, the poets interpreted and presented the content of the original text in the form of a contemporary poem in isiZulu. By "contemporary poetry" we mean contemporary-style poetry that uses modern, urban isiZulu. Our overall objectives behind the study were:

- To assess whether isiZulu-speaking students embrace the use of contemporary poetry in isiZulu to present academic content; and
- To determine whether the use of contemporary poetry might offer a means of positively influencing HL-speaking students' attitudes towards the use of African languages in higher education (here isiZulu).

Accordingly, the research questions that our study addressed were:

- What perceptions do isiZulu HL speakers have about the use of contemporary poetry in isiZulu in the presentation of academic content?
- Can isiZulu function as a resource for isiZulu HL students in the English-oriented South African higher education context?

In this article, we report on the attitudes of isiZulu HL-speaking tertiary students towards the use of contemporary poetry in isiZulu to present academic content in the field of linguistics.

Contemporary poetry in isiZulu was selected for several reasons.

First of all, spoken isiZulu has a strong presence within the population of KwaZulu-Natal; this holds irrespective of whether pupils choose isiZulu as a home language or as their first additional language at the Basic Education level (pre-school level up to school-leaving level/grade 12). The use of isiZulu, as well as other African languages, serves to draw out the African languages from the periphery in which they have found themselves in South Africa as a result of the unjust positioning engendered by the Bantu Education Act of 1953, thus responding to the constitutional directive cited above (Pillay and Zungu 2014, 311). In addition to helping to reposition the language, the use of poetry reflects an African oral tradition in which Africans take pride.

Second, we acknowledge innovative forms of knowledge dissemination in academic contexts. Formats such as YouTube lectures, science blogs, TedTalks, and science slams (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_slam for a description of science slams) provide alternative opportunities that may supplement classical modes of teaching and learning. By disseminating academic content through contemporary poetry presented in isiZulu, modern forms of science communication can be integrated with traditional, performance-based forms of teaching and learning that are steeped in African orality. Hence, the use of contemporary isiZulu poetry also responds to Haire and Matjila's (2008, 160) call for integration of "cultural resources that can and should be capitalized on to facilitate learning and teaching".

Third, as academics working with predominantly isiZulu/English bilingual students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), we have found that many of our students speak 'urban' isiZulu and are not familiar with the 'deep' isiZulu stemming from remote rural areas. However, deep isiZulu is considered to be the standard variety, and, as such, has been institutionalized in literature and lexicography. Mbatha (2016, 154) mentions a student in the UKZN post-graduate certificate programme in education who expressed scepticism about modules offered in the home language (isiZulu). The student harboured doubts about understanding content and terminology in isiZulu due to minimal prior exposure to the standard variety of the language (Mbatha 2016, 154). Chetty (2013) reports a similar finding: five per cent of his isiZulu speaking student participants indicated that they did not feel proficient enough in the standard variety of their HL to follow physics lectures in it (Chetty 2013, 4). Contemporary isiZulu poetry integrates elements of both traditional 'deep' isiZulu and 'urban' isiZulu; hence, we expect a wide variety of students to identify with it and comprehend it.

In sum, the use of contemporary poetry in isiZulu might change students' attitudes regarding the use of isiZulu in academia. Positive attitudes have widely been identified as prerequisites for the successful implementation of language policies, and they might thus contribute to the broader acceptance of isiZulu as a language of teaching, learning, and research, despite the overall hegemony of English. This, in turn, could support the language planning and policy implementation drive at UKZN and elsewhere in the South African tertiary education sector.

We chose a traditional genre, poetry, in a contemporary form, because of the value of the traditional and cultural orientations represented in its oratory nature. Poetry in this context, as Bamgbose (2014, 2) puts it, is "a creative appropriation of and engagement with every aspect of African life, both material and immaterial, as perceived by the poet". Poetry appeals to youth, who have a great affinity with the immensely popular hip-hop culture (Morrell and Duncan-Andrade 2002, 88). Youth seem to identify with the language of contemporary poetry more than they do with conventional texts. Poetry has the potential of reaching out and speaking to the context in which the students find themselves, thereby stimulating their interest (Healy and Smyth 2017, 44).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In contemporary South African society, fluency in English typically guarantees socio-economic success that can hardly be attained by speakers fluent only in an African language. Pillay and Zungu (2014, 312) observe that among its HL speakers, isiZulu “is not seen as a passport to success in the private and public sectors since there was no demand for isiZulu in these sectors in the past”. HL speakers thus wish to attain high fluency levels in English for themselves and their children. It is widely believed that an early transition to English as the MoI will produce this result, and, furthermore, that such a transition guarantees academic success. However, a large body of research reports on the well-attested empirical observation that, despite all the positive support it receives from society at large, English actually acts as a *barrier* rather than a key to academic success for many HL speakers of African languages (Wildsmith-Cromarty and Turner 2018, 416).

According to Bamgbose (2011, 9), the use of indigenous African languages as MoI is one possible avenue for bolstering them, potentially resulting in the acceleration of success rates for the speakers of these languages. In contrast, Mqquwashu (2013, 5) observes that the use of English as the MoI often acts as a major factor *impeding* academic success among speakers of indigenous African languages. This impeding influence became apparent also to Maseko, who summarizes her own experiences as follows:

When I went to Cape Town for my university education, I was shocked by the absence of my language [isiXhosa]. I had to leave it outside the classroom and use only English, which was used together with isiXhosa even at school. One of my subjects was psychology. All the textbooks were in English and contained nothing I could relate to what I regarded as my rich linguistic capital. There was nothing meaningful in this knowledge I was expected to acquire – I could not relate to it in any way. Needless to say, I failed psychology. (Maseko and Vale 2016, 80)

Existing research attests to the challenges that African HL speakers encounter in foreign language oriented academic contexts (e.g. Kamwendo, Hlongwa and Mkhize 2014; Mqquwashu 2013; Mthiyane 2016; Pillay and Zungu 2014). The studies in question frequently suggest that the use of indigenous languages in education can serve as a means to alleviate the challenges posed by the language barrier (see, e.g., Bamgbose 2011). Brock-Utne (2010, 641) examines the way in which a foreign-language medium impedes learning by Africans, noting that “[t]he fact that children learn best when they understand what the teacher is saying is overlooked by *policymakers and governments*” [emphasis added]. Maseko and Vale (2016, 89) also maintain that concepts should be encoded in a language that readers are familiar with and that matches their experiences. Mthiyane (2016, 112), furthermore, draws attention to findings showing that the use of a second language as a MoI contributes to the poor performance of South African learners in a number of national and international assessments such as the Trends in International Science and Mathematics Study.

The challenges African HL learners encounter within English-oriented academic contexts lead to ambivalence about the use of African languages in academia. African HL learners appreciate the use of African languages as a means of efficiently conveying information in their everyday lives, and they revere their HL for preserving their cultural heritage; however, there is a great reluctance to embrace African HLs as MoI.

One of the factors behind this reluctance to accept isiZulu and other African languages

as MoI may be their historical stigmatization during the Bantu Education era (1953–1994). The oppressive apartheid regime systematically exploited indigenous languages as means to exclude the majority of South Africans from higher levels of education. As a consequence, African languages are to this day widely perceived as underdeveloped and lacking in academic rigour. Such negative attitudes are reinforced by the slow pace of terminology development in the indigenous languages. Together, these factors weaken HL speakers' loyalty towards isiZulu and other African languages (Rudwick and Parmegiani 2013): even if they would prefer to use African languages for high order functions, they do not see their own languages as vehicles for social mobility, and they fear a throwback to the Bantu Education era.

All in all, then, there is a persistent need to improve attitudes towards African languages (Nkosi 2014, 246). Successful promotion of African languages in academia is likely to enable their speakers to finally reap the benefits of using their HLs. The development of academic literacy and discipline-specific discourses in African languages will result in improved epistemological access throughout speakers' academic pursuits (Mgwashu 2013).

One pedagogical approach that is gaining momentum, as it might mitigate the hegemony of English while addressing challenges that arise from the language barrier, is the translanguaging pedagogy. Translanguaging pedagogy challenges the idea that languages are distinct entities, defining language instead as a multisensory, multimodal, and multilingual meaning-making resource. It thus allows second-language speakers of English to draw upon their linguistic repertoires while making sense of academic texts (Mbirimi-Hungwe 2019, 18). Furthermore, it affords all the official languages ample space in academia, responding to the constitutional directive and the challenges posed by the use of English only. According to MacSwan (2017, 190), translanguaging is a critical sustaining pedagogy that allows for the development of human capital. As language practices are not viewed as compartmentalized, poetry in isiZulu lends itself well to a multilingual academic context.

Several studies have focused on the use of aesthetic modes of learning as alternatives to conventional methods of teaching and learning (e.g. Crowther 2012; Threlfall 2013; Ward 2015; Yancy 1998). Ward (2015) looked at poetry as a means of encouraging reading engagement. As she observes, "When students can connect to a text, their involvement with the learning process is deeper than when they are asked just to respond based on what they read, thereby limiting the ways in which they can communicate meaning and understanding" (Ward 2015, 5). Poetry thus offers a plausible alternative teaching mode to enhance learning, understanding, and retention of academic content. It has the potential to connect with students as it stimulates their imagination via stylistic means such as metaphors. It ignites their interest, and excites, inflames, and motivates them (Wells and DeLeon 2015, 201). In Yancy's (1998) study, poetry was used in a reading class for entry-level college students, with the result that the students subsequently engaged in the learning process through spirited exchanges and creative writing activities (Yancy 1998, 6). In both Ward's and Yancy's studies, poetry encouraged student involvement and resulted in deep learning. While neither of these studies was carried out in an African context, the fact that Africa has a long-standing oral tradition further encouraged the present investigation.

The use of contemporary poetry in isiZulu for HL speakers presents an opportunity for using a familiar language as a means of demystifying academic concepts, while also enhancing the status of isiZulu as an academically viable language. The use of poetry is not limited to language classes but extends to other disciplines: in science-oriented disciplines, for instance, poetry has been used as a scaffolding strategy. For example, in order to help medical and science students to understand and decode medical and scientific mysteries, Brown used poetry and its potential to unlock critical skills through imagery, metaphor, and analogy (Brown 2015,

1). Healy and Smyth (2017, 44) report on how they used poetry to engage nursing students and to provide them with meaningful opportunities to stimulate their activity and develop their critical analytical thinking.

In this article, we advocate the use of contemporary poetry in isiZulu as an alternate strategy of meaning-making in the decoding of academic concepts. We propose that in combination with translanguaging, poetry in isiZulu affords an African language its rightful space within academia without dismissing the use of English. Previous studies in South Africa on the attitudes of students towards their home languages have described the way these languages can function as enablers in academia (e.g. Maseko and Vale 2013; Mbirimi-Hungwe 2019; Wildsmith-Cromarty and Turner 2018). It has, furthermore, been shown that poetry, as an aesthetic mode, can enhance students' engagement with academic content and assignments (e.g. Brown 2015; Wells and DeLeon 2015). Thus far, however, no studies have been conducted on attitudes towards indigenous, contemporary poetry in academia in the South African context. The current article seeks to fill this research gap.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this article, we view language as a resource. This view is one of three orientations to language planning proposed by Ruiz. The other two are the "language as a problem" orientation and the "language as a right" orientation (see Ruíz 1984). According to Harrison (2007, 73), the "language as a resource" orientation values the competencies of bilingual speakers and acknowledges that one language may support and complement the other. In a study on mathematics education in a Spanish/Catalan context – Spanish as HL and Catalan as a second language – Planas and Setati (2009, 40) observe that learners bring multiple competencies to the mathematics classroom, enabling them to compensate for difficulties with one language by using their other language. In contrast, restrictions on the use of the HL could prevent learners from gaining epistemological access to academic content. As Maseko and Vale explain:

When you learn about an issue in another language and express what you know about it in that language, it is still very limiting. Because this means you have to use the idiom and metaphor of that language to express things that are valuable to you. (Maseko and Vale 2016, 92)

Batibo (2009, cited in Kamwendo, Hlongwa and Mkhize 2014, 80–81) also notes limitations resulting from L2 usage, arguing that learners strive to fit the new concepts in their conceptual, intellectual, and experiential framework in order to comprehend and internalize the information. In consequence, the learners lack the supportive tools for proper comprehension, for deepening their grasp of ideas, and for articulating them.

Koch and Burkett (2005, 1092) argue that many higher education students in South Africa could develop to their full potential and become high achievers if their home languages were used as "resources for cognitive development [and] epistemological access" to academic discourse. Along similar lines, Simkins and Patterson (2005, cited in Alexander 2012, 5) were able to establish a causal relationship between educational success and the language medium: competence in the MoI substantially heightens the learners' chances of success. Consequently, optimal performance in academic contexts remains unrealistic for the

majority of native speakers of African languages: for many of them, proficiency in English is currently an unattainable goal since many schooling systems – like the South African one – subject learners to *submersive* bilingualism rather than additive bilingualism. As Benson (2004) argues, the problems with that approach are multiple:

Instruction through a language that learners do not speak has been called “submersion” (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000) because it is analogous to holding learners under water without teaching them how to swim. Compounded by chronic difficulties such as low levels of teacher education, poorly designed, inappropriate curricula and lack of adequate school facilities, submersion makes both learning and teaching extremely difficult, particularly when the language of instruction is also foreign to the teacher. (Benson 2004, 2)

In our view, exploring the use of linguistic competency in the home languages throughout the educational system could potentially bridge the gap between the HL and the second language and instil much needed confidence in learners.

Research conducted in mathematics education (e.g., Planas and Setati 2009; Setati, Molefe and Langa 2008) provides clear evidence that students' HL indeed functions as a resource. Planas and Setati (2009, 55) noted a high degree of involvement and interaction within small groups where students used their HL/Spanish, but only sporadic and teacher-induced involvement in whole-group interactions where students used their second language (Catalan). The authors explain this finding as follows:

They [bilingual immigrants] use Catalan when getting familiar with new vocabulary, when situating the use of this vocabulary in the context of the given task, and when beginning to organize approaches to solving the task. However, they use Spanish, their dominant language and the language that they share with their small-group peers, when arguing and counter-arguing at various degrees of specificity and developing more complex comprehension processes that are not centered on the repetition of some of the teacher's words and sentences. (Planas and Setati 2009, 52)

As this quote indicates, these students' use of their HL provides them with an opportunity to decode and synthesize information presented in the L2. In the South African context, Setati, Molefe and Langa (2008, 16–17) advocate for deliberate, strategic, and proactive use of students' HL as a resource, arguing that the HL contributes to increased involvement in and better comprehension of lessons when used openly rather than in a distractive manner – when the use of the HL helps to focus attention and not distract it from the task at hand. Against this background, we assume that the use of isiZulu poetry might afford students improved access to academic content. We will engage with this assumption more systematically in the next phase of our research project, during which we will test retention and comprehension of academic content under controlled, comparative conditions.

Acknowledging the students' HL and allocating a significant space for it in education amounts to valuing the essence of the students, their culture, and their history (Childs 2016, 34). Creative use of poetry in the students' HL further entrenches this appreciation. Incorporating students' ways of knowing into the classroom adds a humanising effect to education, as it harnesses the treasures of their language and culture for learning (Childs 2016, 23). In this article, we propose that the use of contemporary poetry in isiZulu might positively influ-

ence the attitudes of HL speakers towards the use of their language for academic purposes, so that in the end they might hold their HL language in as high a regard as they do English.

4 METHODOLOGY

The study is located within the interpretivist paradigm, since the phenomenon under scrutiny is context-embedded (McKenna 2003, 57). The general aim of our research was to understand the attitudes of isiZulu HL-speaking tertiary-level students in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, towards the use of contemporary poetry in isiZulu as a means of disseminating academic content. Quantitative and qualitative methods were applied during both data collection and data analysis. The quantitative method involved the use of closed questions in a questionnaire, responses to which were analysed quantitatively using basic calculations of average scores. The qualitative method involved the use of open-ended questions in the questionnaire as well as a semi-structured focus group interview with the poets engaged for the study. The participants' responses to both open questions in the questionnaire and to interview questions were analysed qualitatively by extracting themes in order to respond to the research questions posed.

The research was carried out as a pilot study which we plan to extend into a larger project in the future. Prior to the data collection, ethical clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the UKZN research office (ethical clearance number: HSS/0128/016).

The participants in this study consist of two poets and sixteen listeners. All participants resided in the district of Umbumbulu, south of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. IsiZulu is a common language spoken in the area and all participants were proficient in it.

The poets, one male, one female, are locally known for their poetic talent. Both of the poets are HL speakers of isiZulu. We gave the two poets an academic text that they then jointly interpreted. Within one week of receiving the text, the poets had collaborately produced a poem in contemporary isiZulu. The text describes "the hegemony of English in a multilingual South African educational context", and it was adapted from a research article (see Appendix A). We chose a cross-disciplinary text with a topic likely to appeal to a wide audience, because the study participants came from a variety of academic disciplines. A local church that was well known and easily accessible to all participants (who regularly attended services there) served as the research site.

The sixteen listeners are tertiary-level students whom we recruited through purposeful sampling. This sampling targeted participants in six tertiary institutions across the province of KwaZulu-Natal who could identify with the challenges posed by the absence of their home language in their learning space.

On the presentation day, the sixteen listeners filled in a language profile questionnaire through which we ascertained their language background. All participants were isiZulu/English bilinguals. Most of them (81%, or 13 students) underwent primary education at local schools where, following the Language in Education Policy of 1997 (Ministry of Education 1997), English is, by default, the MoI. IsiZulu, as the dominant language in the region, is taught as HL, and English as the first additional language. The remaining three participants attended primary education at multiracial schools where English is taught as HL and isiZulu as the first additional language. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym of their own choosing or a random number in the absence of a pseudonym in order to ensure anonymity for the purposes of this research.

The participants were given fifteen minutes to read – in English – the original text on

which the poem was based. We instructed the listeners to rate the extent of their comprehension of the text afterwards. After all the participants had read the text, they handed it back to us. Following an interval of another fifteen minutes, the two poets co-presented the poem in isiZulu. The participants listened to a single recitation of the poem. Immediately after the recitation, the listeners filled in a second questionnaire in which they evaluated their perceptions of the usefulness of the poem in isiZulu for the presentation of academic content.

One day after the poetry presentation, the first author of this article interviewed the poets about their perception of the effectiveness of isiZulu contemporary poetry in the presentation of academic content.

5 ANALYSIS

In this section, we present findings emanating from the two questionnaires – closed questions (multiple choice) and open-ended questions (sixteen listeners) – and the interviews (two poets). First, we examine the participants' perceptions of and attitudes towards the role of isiZulu in academic contexts. Second, we assess participants' perceptions of the potential usefulness of contemporary poetry in isiZulu for the presentation of academic content. Finally, we identify features of contemporary poetry that are likely to appeal to students.

5.1 THE ROLE OF ISIZULU IN ACADEMIC CONTEXTS

In South Africa, there is a growing perception that indigenous languages are potentially useful for disseminating academic content in higher education (e.g. Kamwendo and Mbatha 2016; Maseko and Vale 2016). In our study, all eighteen isiZulu HL participants embraced the use of isiZulu in academic contexts. However, their perception was that isiZulu should *support* and *complement*, rather than substitute for, English as MoI. As one of the two poets in the study, Luh, put it:

I think there will be no problem if the learning will be in both isiZulu and English because a lot of things are done in English. In addition, isiZulu does not have a wide terminology for other things. So, it can be better if the initial learning is in English and then if students do not understand, a follow-up lesson be done in isiZulu.¹

In this quote, it is clear that Luh sees value in combining English and isiZulu. English, for him, is well established as a language of instruction and communication, both in education and in other sectors of life: "a lot of things are done in English". Consequently, English has recognized terminologies that are lacking in isiZulu for many domains: "isiZulu does not have a wide terminology". This is one reason why most South Africans view the prospect of eliminating English as MoI with great scepticism. As indicated earlier, the present study does not argue for the *elimination* of English as MoI. Rather, we argue that the additional use of learners' HL might facilitate epistemological access to academic content.

In the above quotation, Luh acknowledges the value of isiZulu in a supportive role and imagines a situation where isiZulu is used meaningfully alongside English. His phrase, "if stu-

¹ The transcriptions reproduce the participants' words verbatim.

dents do not understand”, expresses a common experience: that of a lack of comprehension of academic content in the L2. Interestingly, Luh does not propose replacing the L2 with the HL but, rather, suggests that teachers should continue to introduce new topics in English – as is the status quo – and that isiZulu should supplement in cases where comprehension in English cannot be achieved.

In contrast, the other poet, Ndurash, saw the L2 language barrier as a greater contributing factor to poor academic performance. Ndurash emphasized that not all students comprehend new information if it is initially presented to them in the L2: “We find that not all of us easily grasp content during the introduction of new topics.” As he explained it further:

English is a good language. However, the use of the other language can assist in terms of my academic performance since not all second language speakers of English are proficient in English. We find that not all of us easily grasp content during the introduction of new topics. If we learn in our home languages, we can be comfortable about the content we are presented with and therefore understand the content faster, thus creating a kind of stability.

Ndurash seems to suggest that learning should take place in the HL – “if we learn in our home languages” – to ensure comprehension of the content and the creation of “stability” for the students.

Diamond (one of the listeners) expressed similar thoughts while also alluding to the fact that many speakers of isiZulu come from a “disadvantaged background”. The use of isiZulu as an academic language could thus help alleviate social ills, such as social inequity. As Diamond elaborated on this point:

I would love to see the isiZulu language being implemented to higher education just as English language. I believe it will help other students from disadvantaged background to be familiar with the studies and also help them adapt easy in the university environment with their peers.

Here, Diamond proposes that if isiZulu had the same status as English, isiZulu speakers would experience an added elevation of their own status and find it easier to “adapt in the university environment”.

Our own argument is that contemporary poetry in isiZulu, alongside bilingual tutorials and discipline-specific terminologies in isiZulu, can mitigate the effects of the L2 language barrier. Taken together, the introduction of the three elements should enhance the students’ comprehension and hence their confidence, thus lifting the morale of each individual. With improved comprehension and morale, academic performance is likely to improve over time.

While our participants showed overwhelming support for the use of isiZulu in academia, a small fraction of them believed that the elevated status of English ought to remain unchanged. This appears to confirm the hegemonic status of English in South Africa. The listener Umhlanga Rocks, for example, regarded English as instrumental for the attainment of social goods, as evidenced by his use of expressions such as “dreams” and “learning English is a weapon” in the interview. His response reflects how tightly one’s HL remains linked to one’s race in post-apartheid South Africa:

IsiZulu is our home language but we have dreams of going overseas. IsiZulu will get us nowhere. Mixing isiZulu and English is trending but it is the main reason why learners

struggle with languages. Learning English is the weapon that will make us feel confident and proud of ourselves towards other races, e.g., whites.

Umhlanga Rocks's response reflects his experience, namely, that his HL does not have the same prestige as English and that he therefore can impress English speakers only by speaking their language. However, it is doubtful whether the education system currently in place in South Africa enables L2 speakers of English to generally attain proficiency levels enabling them to use that language as a vehicle for the realization of their dreams, as a "weapon" to attain academic and economic success. Indeed, current proficiency levels in English are questionable for the majority of English L2 speakers in South Africa. As Brand (2004, 37) has noted, referring to the findings of the Pan South African Language Board report from the year 2000, only about 22 per cent of black South Africans are functionally proficient in English. In the light of such results, the question arises as to how realistic it might be for the majority of South Africans to ever be able to use English to realize their dreams. In a more recent study, participants in Mthiyane (2016, 118) acknowledged their lack of proficiency in English as a limiting factor when trying to express their academic knowledge – something they thought they could do better in their HL. We therefore argue that it might be practical to use the HL as a vehicle to achieve not only good academic performance, but also proficiency in one's L2. In European countries this is common practice and does not entail sacrificing one's HL in the interest of achieving English language proficiency.

Figure 1 shows self-ratings that the 16 listeners provided in response to selected questions from the questionnaire in appendix b. The Y axis plots the number of participants per answer; the X axis plots four questions from section 3 of the questionnaire (see highlighted questions (bold) in appendix B). These questions are: "Language I **struggle with when I study**" (*Ulimi enginobunzima ukufunda ngalo*); "Language I **understand better**" (*Ulimi engilizwa kangcono*); "Language I have **most vocabulary** on" (*Ulimi engazi amagama amaningi kulo*); "Language I **read with ease**" (*Ulimi engifunda kalula ngalo okubhaliwe*).

The participants were asked to choose from a Likert scale one of the following responses, "only HL", "mostly HL", "neutral", "mostly English", and "only English". None of the participants chose "only HL" or "only English", which reflects the fact that all participants are bilingual. We did not plot the participants' responses for "neutral" in figure 1 but we discuss these discursively below.

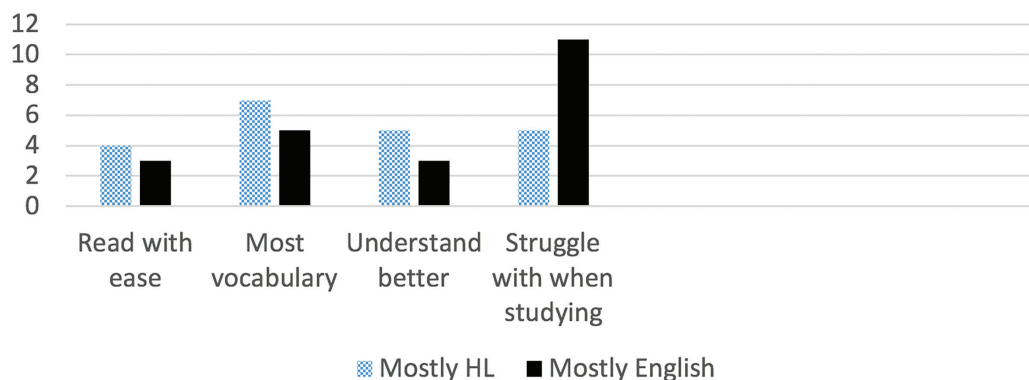


Figure 1: Participants' perceptions of their language capabilities in isiZulu as compared to English.

The responses depicted in figure 1 are indicative of the participants' experiences with their two languages, English and isiZulu: Four participants estimated that they read in isiZulu with greater ease than in English, while three participants reported themselves as reading English with greater ease and nine students were undecided. Seven participants estimated themselves to have a larger vocabulary in isiZulu than in English, while five found their English vocabulary to be larger and four were undecided. Five participants conveyed a better general comprehension for content that is expressed in isiZulu than for content that is expressed in English, while only three felt their general comprehension to be better for content that is expressed in English and eight were undecided. Eleven participants reported themselves to struggle more with studying in English, while five stated that they struggled more with studying in isiZulu; interestingly, no participant was undecided on this issue.

The comparatively high numbers for "neutral" responses on the first three questions illustrate that the participants found it quite difficult to compare their competencies in their HL and the MoI. This result reflects the participants' bilingualism; to a lesser extent it also illustrates the hegemony of English as a MoI because for our participants English is the dominant MoI and this imbalance between the two languages might have influenced the high occurrence of "neutral" responses.

However, *despite* a very limited exposure to their HL as a MoI, there are, overall, more students who report that they experience advantages regarding ease of reading, vocabulary size and comprehension in their HL than students who report having such advantages in English. These responses confirm our assumption that for L2 speakers of English, access to academic content may be facilitated through the use of their first language. Furthermore, more than twice as many participants reported that they struggle with studying in English (11 out of 16) compared to participants who reported similar problems in their HL (5 out of 16). While the limited size of our cohort does not permit generalizing these findings beyond the scope of the present context, we think that our findings are interesting enough to warrant further, more detailed investigations into how African languages may be promoted as academic languages through the use of contemporary African poetry.

5.2 THE USE OF POETRY FOR THE PRESENTATION OF ACADEMIC CONTENT

Our working hypothesis for this study was that poetry can provide an alternative mode of presenting academic content, one that can productively complement conventional modes of learning and teaching. Luh, one of the two poets engaged for this study, had the following to say about such use of poetry:

Yes, it can be used, especially when introducing a new chapter; so it can be used to summarize the contents of the chapter. However, it may not be practical to use it at all times in the teaching and learning process but definitely in introducing new sections, chapters and topics covered in the exams so that students will understand the content better.

The poet here recognizes a supportive role for poetry to play in the presentation of academic content (in the introduction of new contents, for summaries, in exam preparations). Luh's assessment is based on the observation that poetry is able to present and condense the essence of a subject matter. If students grasp the essence of a subject matter, they have good chances of

performing better thanks to a clearer core understanding of the academic content presented to them.

Some researchers (e.g. Ward 2015) promote a combination of different modes in presenting academic content for deeper understanding. According to Ward (2015, 6), “using innovative ways to communicate the text offers the students a multiplicity of modes to communicate meaning and understanding because it builds on the students’ existing strengths as a basis for such engagement and as an important prelude to reading success”. In the present context, poetry seems to be especially well suited to achieve this goal, because of contemporary isiZulu poetry’s close relation to contemporary African versions of rap and hip-hop music. These genres of music are immensely popular in KwaZulu-Natal, where all of our participants live. Participant No. 3414 reacted as follows to the prospect of having poetry elements introduced in classroom teaching:

Well, I love poetry, so I think introducing it would be a great idea, as it will help get the message across better.

In the phrase “it will help get the message across better”, the participant alludes to the epistemological access enabled by the use of isiZulu poetry. In a similar vein, participant No. 135 commented:

IsiZulu is clearer compared to English because we know isiZulu from birth. If learning content is presented in English, some people do not understand clearly but if isiZulu poetry is recited, even those who may not have understood during the first explanation end up with a clear understanding.

It is worth noting that this participant, like all other participants, acknowledges the hegemonic status of English as a MoI. While he thus affirms the status English as the primary medium of instruction, he nevertheless adds that the supplementary use of isiZulu might enhance comprehension: “those who may not have understood during the first explanation”. In particular, the participant promotes combining the HL with poetry: “if isiZulu poetry is recited, [students] end up with a clear understanding”.

Figure 2 shows the extent to which participants, overall, thought that the poetry presentation enhanced their understanding of the academic content presented to them.

Usefulness and acceptance of poetry presentation

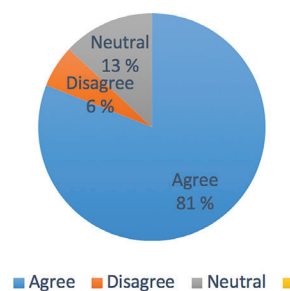


Figure 2: Participants’ response to the statement, “The poetry session assisted me to understand the concept better” (*izinkondlo zingisizile ngakuqonda kangcono okufundwayo*).

Of the sixteen listeners, thirteen (81%) felt positively about the use of poetry in the presentation of academic content, while one participant (6%) felt negatively, and two (13%) participants were neutral or ambivalent about the poetry presentation.

Despite the limited number of participants involved in the study, the overwhelming support they expressed for the use of isiZulu contemporary poetry overall indicates that teaching strategies utilizing HL poetry clearly warrant further study and consideration.

5.3 SPECIFIC FEATURES OF CONTEMPORARY POETRY THAT APPEAL TO STUDENTS

Judging from our findings, using poetry as an aid in the teaching and learning of academic content suggests itself as a promising pedagogical model that appeals to younger adults. As one of the study participants, the poet Ndurash, explained:

...as young people we are attracted to things, which involve movement...rhythm that is why I think young people would love it.

Here, the poet identifies two features in particular that he thinks make poetry appealing to young people: movement and rhythm. Contemporary poetry involves movement as the poet uses gestures to illustrate, enhance, and embody the recited material. This feature, according to Ndurash, captivates young adults' attention and may even boost their ability to memorize content presented to them.² Poetry also involves rhythm, which serves as an additional mnemonic aid. The other poet participating in this study, Luh, elaborated on this feature:

...poetry has rhythm, and usually when poets write, they use "punch" which appeals to the listener. Poetry has that characteristic of making any subject, no matter how boring, to appeal to the listener.... So, poetry can be used to make the subject content appeal to the student, as opposed to the conventional teaching style which does not involve any movement or rhythm.

Participants were open to exploring the use of contemporary poetry as an alternative mode of learning and teaching. As one of them, 168 maRadil, concluded:

In addition, you enjoy what you are listening to while learning simultaneously and this allows for better concentration and better understanding.

According to this participant, when paired with the enjoyment and captivation that students may experience when listening to poetry, learning may feel like an added benefit.

² Whether use of isiZulu poetry can contribute to enhanced retention is a topic we plan to pursue more in detail in future research.

6 DISCUSSION

In this section, we revisit the main research questions our study set out to address. With regard to the possible effects of the use of isiZulu contemporary poetry in the presentation of academic content, study participants expressed the view that the use of African indigenous languages as MoI came with challenges. One of these, according to participants, is that standardized academic terminologies are not yet available in all African languages or for all subject areas (see, e.g., Bamgbose 2011, 3; Kamwendo and Mbatha 2016, 109). However, as reported in Khumalo (2017), the development of discipline-specific terminology in isiZulu is underway at UKZN. Innovative initiatives such as the use of bilingual tutorials and isiZulu poetry might further enhance the use of African languages in education.

Those participating in this study saw poetry as a welcome alternative to conventional content presentation and as a complementary mode of presentation. They praised the “entertainment factor” of poetry, which they contrasted with the mundane practices of reading textbooks and/or listening to conventional lectures. Features of poetry such as rhythm and movement were seen as alluring to students and helpful for capturing and holding their attention. Moreover, bodily movements employed in poetry reading were thought of as useful in emphasizing and highlighting particular words. Hence, movement may direct students' attention to central aspects of content. The elevated levels of attention so obtained are likely to increase students' engagement with academic content, in turn enhancing recall.

The participants in the current study saw poetry as useful for introducing new concepts and chapters, for summarizing chapters, and for revising academic content. Indeed, they were of the view that poetry could productively complement traditional methods of knowledge dissemination and assist students struggling with learning through English as L2. In this way, poetry embodies multimodality in knowledge dissemination and paves space for the use of isiZulu and other indigenous languages in academic contexts.

The second main question our study addressed was whether isiZulu could function as a resource for HL students in the English-oriented South African higher education contexts. Based on our findings, our preliminary conclusion is that the use of isiZulu may increase opportunities for academic “access and success” for HL speakers, because it may lead to an amplification of positive attitudes towards isiZulu as an academic language in tertiary education. The participants in this study furthermore expressed the view that the use of isiZulu and isiZulu contemporary poetry would likely aid isiZulu HL learners' comprehension and retention of academic content. We are thus optimistic that initiatives like ours will contribute to alleviating the injustices and human rights violations of the past; they may, indeed, assist in bringing about a long-overdue reform of the South African education system through the introduction of innovative and restorative pedagogies that are rooted in and resonate with African culture.

For speakers of African languages such as isiZulu, the HL may then function as an additional academic language alongside a well-established MoI such as English, thus enhancing its sociolinguistic status and academic functionality over time. HL use may also help to eliminate language barriers that HL speakers struggle with in their academic endeavours. This may aid HL speakers' comprehension and thereby increase their academic performance. On these points, our study supports and extends findings from other research aimed at combating systematic educational problems in South Africa such as low on-schedule graduation rates and high dropout rates.

7 CONCLUSION

The study reported on in this article was motivated by the circumstance that isiZulu, like other African languages, is an under-used resource in academic contexts in South Africa, even in the post-apartheid era. The most important finding from this research is that its participants, isiZulu HL-speaking tertiary students, generally hold positive attitudes towards the prospect of using contemporary isiZulu poetry to disseminate academic content. Furthermore, we found that indigenous language speakers possess academic and literacy skills in their primary language. Hence, we argue that transformative and restorative pedagogies can be employed to unlock vocabulary, reading, listening, and comprehension skills in the HL to supplement academic knowledge dissemination in the L2, and thus to enhance academic success in an emancipatory, additive bilingualism model. The implementation of such a model throughout the South African education system is long overdue, with the result that the current post-colonial system continues to discriminate against and violate the linguistic human rights of the majority of the South African population. Adopting culturally restorative pedagogies, such as the one proposed here, which uses contemporary poetry in isiZulu, may help combat the current situation in which education systems across the country continue to devalue learners' primary languages. Such systems are oppressive, and they hinder the academic development of students with an African HL, undermining their linguistic and cultural identity as well.

Against this background, we plan to create short video clips in which young artists present academic content through contemporary isiZulu poems. These clips will constitute additional content within cost-effective, electronically available terminology databases. They may also be inserted into digital learning platforms. We are optimistic that this initiative can go a long way in promoting isiZulu as MoI in tertiary education.

Currently, our focus is on researching how academic content can best be packaged into such contemporary isiZulu poetry and whether we might be able to parametrize and measure successful transformations from declarative academic text into isiZulu poetry. Furthermore, we plan a study to measure whether the consumption of such learning materials (i.e., the video clips) will lead to a better understanding and increased retention of academic content. However, even if we were to find that the use of contemporary poetry in isiZulu has no effect on the comprehension and retention of academic content, we would still argue for the value of the use of isiZulu poetry is valuable in tertiary education settings as a means to communicate academic content. We propose that such an initiative can combat our learners' alienation from the current, post-colonial educational system, as evidenced by participants' overwhelmingly positive response to the poetry experiments described here. Overall, the results leave us optimistic that contemporary African poetry can serve as an important tool for reclaiming African cultural identities in transformed, de-colonized institutions of teaching and learning across the African continent.

References

- Alexander, Neville. 2004. "The Politics of Language Planning in Post-Apartheid South Africa." *Language Problems & Language Planning* 28, no. 2: 113–130.
- Alexander, Neville. 2012. "The Centrality of the Language Question in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Revisiting a Perennial Issue." *South African Journal of Science* 108, no. 9/10: 1–7.
- Bamgbose, Ayo. 2011. "African Languages Today: The Challenge of and Prospects for Empowerment under Globalization." In *Selected Proceedings of the 40th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, edited by Eyamba G. Bokamba, Ryan K. Shosted and Bezza Tesfaw Ayalew, 1–14. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- Bamgbose, Gabriel .S. 2014. "Modern African Verse and the Politics of Authentication." *Comparative Literature and Culture* 16, no. 1: 1–10.
- Banda, Felix. 2009. "Critical Perspectives on Language Planning and Policy in Africa: Accounting for the Notion of Multilingualism." *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus* 38: 1–11.
- Benson, Carol. (2004). "The Importance of Mother Tongue-Based Schooling for Educational Quality." Background Paper Prepared for the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2005: The Quality Imperative*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Brand, G.W. 2004. "English Only? Creating Linguistic Space for African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Higher Education." *South African Journal for Higher Education* 18, no. 3: 29–39.
- Brock-Utne, Birgit. 2010. "Research and Policy on the Language of Instruction Issue in Africa." *International Journal of Educational Development* 30, no. 6: 636–645.
- Brown, Sherry-Anne. 2015. "Creative Expression of Science through Poetry and Other Media Can Enrich Medical and Science Education." *Frontiers in Neurology* 6, no. 3: 1–5.
- Chetty, Naven. 2013. "Student Responses to Being Taught Physics in isiZulu." *South African Journal of Science* 109, no. 9/10: 1–6.
- Childs, Margie. 2016. "Reflecting on Translanguaging in Multilingual Classrooms: Harnessing the Power of Poetry and Photography." *Educational Research for Social Change* 5, no. 1: 22–37.
- Crowther, Gregory. 2012. "Using Science Songs to Enhance Learning: An Interdisciplinary Approach." *Life Sciences Education* 11, no. 1: 26–30.
- Haire, Karen. and Matjila, D.S. 2008. "Teaching for Cultural Relevance and Restoration in the Multi-lingual South African Setting: The Pedagogical Potential of Bi-lingual Setswana-English Stories." *Alternation* 15, no. 2: 158–180.

- Harrison, Gai. 2007. "Language as a Problem, a Right or a Resource? A Study of How Bilingual Practitioners See Language Policy Being Enacted in Social Work." *Journal of Social Work* 7, no. 1: 71–92.
- Healy, Denise and Smyth, S. 2017. "Poetry as an Engagement Strategy: A Novice Teacher Experience of Its Use within Lectures." *Nurse Education in Practice* 24: 43–48.
- Kamwendo, Gregory, Hlongwa, N. and Mkhize, N. 2014. "On Medium of Instruction and African Scholarship: The Case of isiZulu at the University of KwaZulu-Natal." *Current Issues in Language Planning* 15, no. 1: 75–89.
- Kamwendo, Gregory. and Mbatha, T. 2016. "Introduction: Language Issues in the Teaching and Learning Domain at Some Southern African Universities." *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 25, no. 2: 107–110.
- Khumalo, Langa. 2017. "Intellectualization through Terminology Development." *Lexikos* 27, no. 1: 252–264.
- Koch, Elize and Burkett, B. 2005. "Making the Role of African Languages in Higher Education a Reality." *South African Journal of Higher Education* 19, no. 6: 1089–1107.
- MacSwan, Jeff. 2017. "A multilingual perspective on translanguaging." *American Educational Research Journal* 54, no. 1: 167–201.
- Makalela, Leketi. 2014. "Teaching Indigenous African Languages to Speakers of Other African Languages: The Effects of Translanguaging for Multilingual Development." In *Multilingual Universities in South Africa: Reflecting Society in Higher Education*, Bilingual Education & Bilingualism 97, edited by Liesel Hibbert and Christa van der Walt, 88–104. Bristol, Buffalo, and Toronto: Multilingual Matters.
- Maseko, Pamela and Vale, P. 2016. "The Struggles over African Languages." *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education* 15, no. 1: 79–93.
- Mbatha, Thabile A. 2016. "Ideologies Shaping Language Choices: Views of African Students on isiZulu Modules in Higher Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal." *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 25, no. 2: 146–166.
- Mbirimi-Hungwe, Vimbai. 2019. "Stepping beyond Linguistic Boundaries in Multilingual Science Education: Lecturer's Perceptions of the Use of Translanguaging." *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 37, no. 1: 15–26.
- McKenna, Sioux. 2003. "Paradigms of Curriculum Design: Implications for South African Educators." *Journal for Language Teaching* 37, no. 2: 215–223.
- Mgqwashu, Emmanuel M. 2013. "On Developing Academic Literacy in the Mother Tongue for Epistemological Access: The Role of isiZulu as the LoLT in a South African University." *Current Issues in Language Planning* 15, no. 1: 90–103.

- Morrell, Ernest and Duncan-Andrade, J.M.R. 2002. "Promoting Academic Literacy with Urban Youth through Engaging Hip-hop Culture." *English Journal* 91, no. 6: 88–92.
- Mthiyane, Nonhlanhla. 2016. "Pre-Service Teachers' Beliefs and Experiences Surrounding the Use of Language in Science Classrooms: A South African Case Study." *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 25, no. 2: 111–129.
- Nkosi, Zinhle P. 2014. "Postgraduate Students' Experiences and Attitudes towards isiZulu as a Medium of Instruction at the University of KwaZulu-Natal." *Current Issues in Language Planning* 15, no. 3: 245–264.
- Pillay, Rama and Zungu, P.J. 2014. "The Marketing of isiZulu within the Realm of Multilingualism." *Indilinga: African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems* 13, no 2: 311–324.
- Planas, Núria and Setati, M. 2009. "Bilingual Students Using Their Languages in the Learning of Mathematics." *Mathematics Education Research Journal* 21, no. 3: 36–59.
- Prah, Kwesi K. 2006. *Challenges to the Promotion of Indigenous Languages in South Africa*. Review Commissioned by the Foundation for Human Rights in South Africa. Cape Town: The Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society.
- Rudwick, Stephanie and Parmegiani, A. 2013. "Divided Loyalties: Zulu vis-à-vis English at the University of KwaZulu-Natal." *Language Matters* 44, no. 3: 89–107.
- Ruíz, Richard. 1984. "Orientations in Language Planning." *NABE Journal* 8, no. 2: 15–34.
- Setati, Mamokgethi, Molefe, T. and Langa, M. 2008. "Using Language as a Transparent Resource in the Teaching and Learning of Mathematics in a Grade 11 Multilingual Classroom." *Pythagoras* 67: 14–25.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove and Bucak, S. 1994. "Killing a Mother Tongue – How the Kurds Are Deprived of Linguistic Human Rights." In *Linguistic Human Rights: Overcoming Linguistic Discrimination*, edited by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Phillipson in collaboration with Mart Rannut, 347–370. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. 2000. *"Linguistic genocide in education – or worldwide diversity and human rights?"*. Routledge.
- Threlfall, Scott J. 2013. "Poetry in Action: An Innovative Means to a Reflective Learner in Higher Education (HE)." *Reflective Practice* 14, no. 3: 360–367.
- Ward, Cherie A. 2015. "Using Poetry as a Communication Multimodality to Encourage Reading Engagement of Selected African-American Learners: A Case Study." PhD diss., Howard University.

Wells, Celeste C. and DeLeon, D. 2015. "Slam and the Citizen Orator: Teaching Civic Oration and Engagement through Spoken Word." *Communication Teacher* 29, no. 4: 201–205.

Wildsmith-Cromarty, Rosemary and Turner, N. 2018. "Bilingual Instruction at Tertiary Level in South Africa: What Are the Challenges?" *Current Issues in Language Planning* 19, no. 4: 416–433.

Yancy, Maxine B. 1998. "The Synergy of Poetry and Reading Instruction as a Motivational Bridge to Literacy at College Level: A Case Study." PhD diss., Walden University.

Appendix A

Naturalising the linguistic landscape of South Africa: Multilingualism as an alternative to English Hegemony

Despite the fact that, after independence, most African countries recognised several languages as official languages, classroom practice and official government functions remain the domain of colonial languages. For instance, in Zambia, seven regional languages and in South Africa 11 regional languages have national or official status, but English has retained its position as the main language of education, government and business.

Higher education institutions in South Africa are dominated by English; a situation which may be seen as a result of the colonial history of the country and its education system. This legacy is intensified by the current dominance of English in higher education worldwide. In this situation the level of proficiency in English can dictate the access to higher education for aspiring students. In this way English acts as a 'gatekeeper'. Also a pass in English in the NSC (National Senior Certificate, i.e. the school-leaving certificate in South Africa) is a common entry requirement to higher education programmes and institutions in the country. Generally English is the most common medium of instruction (MoI) in higher education in South Africa.

Yet not all young South Africans have equal access to English in their schools, leading to a situation in which some students are unable to attend university due to their limited access to English. Other students may be accepted into university, however, they may have a limited proficiency in English when compared to their peers, which can result in lower confidence and less opportunity for classroom participation, both of which may ultimately lead to lower grades and impact on their success rates in their chosen degrees.

Most South African students of applied Linguistics agree that the most difficult obstacle to a more rapid development of the African languages is what Ngugi wa Thiong'o has called "the colonised mind". This catch phrase captures the empirical finding that a the vast majority of black people simply do not believe that their languages can or should be used for higher-order functions even though they cherish their languages and are completely committed to maintaining their languages in the primary spheres of the family, the community and church.

In current South Africa there is a move away from the *de facto* neo-Apartheid policy of English and Afrikaans dominance in both the public and the formal private sector. But sadly this movement is generally not in the direction of a valorisation, equalisation and intellectualisation of the indigenous African languages. As I have stated already, it rather is a single-minded movement in the direction of a unilingual, English-only dispensation.

The policy-making bodies are guided in the first instance by what they consider to be the immediate positive effects of the policies they are pursuing. It is not clear to them, to take a few random examples, that an English-only or even an English-mainly policy

- prevents the majority of the people from gaining access to vital information and, therefore, from full participation in the democratic political process;
- undermines the self-confidence of L2-speakers (second language speakers) and, even more so, of those for whom English is effectively a foreign language;
- by the same token smothers the creativity and the spontaneity of people who are compelled to use a language of which they are not in full command, and
- at economic and workplace levels causes major, avoidable blockages that have significant negative impacts on productivity and efficiency

There is therefore a need for the democratization of multilingual community spaces so as to enable hybridity as well as temporal and spatial identities to be exhibited through multiple languages/dialects. This entails weaning African multilingualism from distortions which reflect the colonial legacy and the pervasive monolingual descriptions that underlie models of language education. As an alternative it is time to recognise and act on the need for multilingual models of education and language policies which are based on natural linguistic repertoires of the speakers concerned.

A summary and adaptation of Banda (2009), by first author.

Appendix B

QUESTIONNAIRE (*UHLOLOVO*): Part 1

HSS/0128/016

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS INTENDED TO FIND OUT THE PARTICIPANT'S LANGUAGE ATTITUDES.

LOLUHLOLOVO LUHLOSE UKUTHOLA ISIMOMQONDO MAYELANA NOKUSEBENZISA ILIMI.

Section 1: Personal information (*Okumayelana nawe*)

The first set of questions is meant to gather background information about the participant who answers this questionnaire. Mark with a cross (X) on your response.

Isigaba sokuqala semibuzo sihlose ukuthola ulwazi mayelana noloyo ophendula imibuzo yalolucwaningo. Khombisa ngophawu (X) kuleyompendulo oyikhethayo.

1. Age (*Ubudala*)

16-19	20-24	Over 25
-------	-------	---------

2. Gender (*Ubulili*)

Male	Female
------	--------

3. Home language (*Ulimi lwasekhaya*)

isiZulu	isiXhosa	English
siSwati	seSotho	xiTsonga
Tshivenda	Afrikaans	Other (<i>Olunye</i>)

4. The type of place where my home is.
Uhlobo lwendawo ikhaya lami elikuyo.

rural	urban	semi-urban
isemaphandleni	kusedolobheni	kungaphandle kancane kwedolobha.

5. The racial composition of students where I started schooling.
Uhlanga lwabafundi esikoleni engiqale kuso ukufunda.

multiracial	African
esixubile	abomdabu

6. The racial composition of students in the school where I matriculated.
Uhlanga lwabafundi esikoleni engigogode kuso umatikuletsheni.

multiracial	African
esixubile	abomdabu

Section 2: Language Profile (*Isimo solimi*)

Put a cross (X) on the option which represents your honest and accurate response to each of the given statements.

Tshengisa ngophawu (X) uvo lwakho oluyiqiniso kulowo nalowo walemisho enikeziwe.

7. I use my home language when talking to my family members and my friends.
Ngisebenzisa ulimi lwasekhaya uma ngikhuluma namalunga omndeni wami kanye nabangani bami.

always <i>njalo</i>	sometimes <i>ngezinye izikhathi</i>	not sure <i>angiqinisekile</i>	not really <i>angisho</i>	not at all <i>sanhlobo</i>
------------------------	--	-----------------------------------	------------------------------	-------------------------------

8. I read books, newspapers and magazines written in my home language.
Ngiyazifunda izincwadi, amaphephandaba kanye namabhuku abhalwe ngolimi lwami.

always <i>njalo</i>	sometimes <i>ngezinye izikhathi</i>	not sure <i>angiqinisekile</i>	not really <i>angisho</i>	not at all <i>sanhlobo</i>
------------------------	--	-----------------------------------	------------------------------	-------------------------------

9. I mix English and my home language when speaking.
Ngiyaxuba isiNgisi kanye nolimi lwasekhaya uma ngikhuluma.

always <i>njalo</i>	sometimes <i>ngezinye izikhathi</i>	not sure <i>angiqinisekile</i>	not really <i>angisho</i>	not at all <i>sanhlobo</i>
------------------------	--	-----------------------------------	------------------------------	-------------------------------

10. To better understand what I read and hear in English, I think about it in my home language.
Ukuze ngiqonde kahle engikufundayo nengikuzwayo okungesiNgisi, ngiyaye ngicabange ngolimi lwami lwasekhaya.

always <i>njalo</i>	sometimes <i>ngezinye izikhathi</i>	not sure <i>angiqinisekile</i>	not really <i>angisho</i>	not at all <i>sanhlobo</i>
------------------------	--	-----------------------------------	------------------------------	-------------------------------

11. I find difficulty in speaking English throughout a conversation.
Ngiba nobunzima ekusebenziseni isiNgisi inkulumo ize iphele.

always <i>njalo</i>	sometimes <i>ngezinye izikhathi</i>	not sure <i>angiqinisekile</i>	not really <i>angisho</i>	not at all <i>sanhlobo</i>
------------------------	--	-----------------------------------	------------------------------	-------------------------------

12. I am proud of using my home language.
Ngiyazigqaja ngokusebenzisa ulimi lwami lwasekhaya.

always <i>njalo</i>	sometimes <i>ngezinye izikhathi</i>	not sure <i>angiqinisekile</i>	not really <i>angisho</i>	not at all <i>sanhlobo</i>
------------------------	--	-----------------------------------	------------------------------	-------------------------------

Section 3: Language attitude (*Isimomqondo ngolimi*)

This section will establish the attitudes you hold about the languages you use.
Lengxenyehlo ukuthola isimmqondo ngezilimi ozisebenzisayo.

Put a (X) in each if the statements given showing your accurate response.
Faka uphawu (X) kulowo nalowo musho onikeziwe ukhombise uvo lwakho oluyilo.

	only Home Language	mostly Home language	Both HL and English	mostly English	only English
Language I prefer to study with <i>Ulimi engithanda ukufunda ngalo</i>					
Language I struggle with when I study <i>Ulimi enginobunzima ukufunda ngalo</i>					
Dominant language I study with <i>Ulimi engilusebenzisa kakhulu uma ngifunda</i>					
Language I understand better <i>Ulimi engilizwa kangcono</i>					
Language I have most vocabulary on <i>Ulimi engazi amagama amaningi kulo</i>					
Language I read with ease <i>Ulimi engifunda kalula ngalo okubhaliwe</i>					
Language suitable for Basic Education in my view <i>Ulimi olulungele amabanga aphansi emfundo ngokubona kwami</i>					
Language suitable for Higher Education in my view <i>Ulimi olulungele amazinga aphakeme emfundo ngokubona kwami</i>					
Language which may help me perform well in my studies <i>Ulimi olungasiza ngenze kahle ezifundweni zami</i>					

Thank you very much for your time. *Ngiyabonga kakhulu ngesikhathi sakho.*

QUESTIONNAIRE (UHLOLOVO): Part 2

HSS/0128/016

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS INTENDED TO FIND OUT THE PARTICIPANT'S ATTITUDE ABOUT THE USE OF ISIZULU AND ISIZULU POETRY IN ACADEMIC CONTEXTS.

LOLUHLOLOVO LUHLOSE UKUTHOLA ISIMOMQONDO MAYELANA NOKUSETSHENZISWA KOLIMI LWESIZULU KANYE NEZINKONDLO ZESIZULU EKWETHULWENI KOMSEBENZI OFUNDWAYO.

Put a cross (X) in each of the statements given showing your accurate response.
Faka uphawu (X) kulowo nalowo musho onikeziwe ukhombise uvo lwakho oluyilo.

	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
IsiZulu assists me to understand content better <i>IsiZulu singisiza ngizwe kangcono</i>					
I understand content without isiZulu intervention <i>Ngiyaqonda engikufundayo ngaphandle kokusizwa isiZulu</i>					
IsiZulu is not suitable to present academic content <i>IsiZulu asikulungele ukufunda nokufundisa izifundo zonke</i>					
IsiZulu can be developed to assist in presenting academic content <i>IsiZulu singathuthuiswa ukuze selekelele ekufundeni izifundo</i>					
IsiZulu should be used to present academic content <i>IsiZulu kumele sithuthukiswe ukuze silungele ukufundisa</i>					

IsiZulu should be used to assist in presenting academic content <i>IsiZulu kumele silekelele ekwethuleni izifundo</i>					
I would love to see isiZulu being used in academic context <i>Ngingakuthokozela ukuba isiZulu sisetshenziswe ekufundiseni jikelele</i>					
IsiZulu has no role to play in academic contexts except for the learning of isiZulu <i>Isizulu asinandima ekufundeni jikelele kuphela ukufundeni sona isiZulu</i>					
Oral presentation of academic content assists to access content faster than written text <i>Ubucikobomlomo buyasiza ukuzwa okufundwayo ngokushesha kunokufunda phansi</i>					
The poetry session assisted me to understand the concept better <i>Izinkondlo zingisizile ngakuqonda kangcono okufundwayo</i>					
I relate to the language used in the poetry session better than the written text <i>Ngiyakuncamela ukusebenza kolimi ezinkondlweni kunolimi olufundwa phansi</i>					

It helps to listen to the poetry presentation than to read the text <i>Kungisizile ukulalela izinkondlo kunokufunda phansi</i>					
I recommend poetic presentations for the introduction of new concepts <i>Ngiyakuphakamisa ukuhaywa kwezinkondlo uma kwethulwa isigaba esisha sokufunda</i>					

Please add your comment or concern on the use of isiZulu as a language of teaching and learning in Higher Education generally and the use of poetry to introduce new concepts.
Ngixusa ubeke uvo lwakho ngokusetshenziswa kolimi lwesiZulu njengolimi lokufunda nokufundisa emazingeni emfundo aphakeme izwelonke kanje nokusetshenziswa kweqhinga lokuhaya izinkondlo uma kwethulwa umsebenzi ofundwayo ngokokuqala.

Ngiyabonga kakhulu ngesikhathi sakho. Thank you very much for your time.