

**AN INVESTIGATION OF LANGUAGE CHOICE ON
TWITTER: THE CASE OF ISIXHOSA-SPEAKING USERS
AND THE *O JEWA KE ENG?* TREND**

A THESIS

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DECLARATION

I, Zindzi Nkunzi, hereby declare that this thesis is my own work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been properly acknowledged. This work has not been submitted previously in its entirety, or in any part, at any other higher education institution for degree purposes. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the Faculty of Humanities, Rhodes University, South Africa.

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Zindzi Nkunzi

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Date

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the world's greatest, a warrior, peace maker, family person, the one person who put others before herself, the person whose presence is felt, a strong woman, my mother, Thandeka Dorothy Nkunzi. You have sacrificed a lot for me and for that I will forever be grateful. You have imparted on me the spirit of Ubuntu, giving back to the community, and always reminded me not to fight evil with evil. You are the best gift God has granted me. Thank you for your unconditional love and support. I thank God for blessing me with a blessing that is you mother dearest. You are a warrior that raised a warrior in me, for that I dedicate my greatest achievement to you Nozala.

Enkosi, ndiyabulela MaMlambo omhle!

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GLORY BE TO GOD!

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you” _ Isaiah 43:2

Through God’s grace I managed to complete this masterpiece, my greatest achievement.

I am grateful to God for the kind of person He created in me. I would not say the journey was easy, but God made it bearable for me. When things were going well, I was faced with having to change supervisors multiple times, the Covid-19 pandemic hit, I encountered a lot of trying times with regards to my family, my health was not at its greatest and with every brick and stone thrown at me, I overcame and conquered. For that, I am proud of myself. My ambition, strength, optimism, and bravery are what got me this far and for that I would like to thank myself. I am grateful to the kind of person I am, a strong, courageous, determined, dedicated, resilient, and hard-working young lady who is destined for more greatness. This goes to show that with determination, dedication, and hard work, comes victory.

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ABSTRACT

The study critically examines and discusses language choice on twitter, a social media platform that has a vast number of people from different language groups. This diverse platform allows people to tweet, communicate, and share information online. There are tweets that trend and attract more engagement across different language groups. *O jewa ke eng?* which translates to ‘what’s bothering you?’ is one of those tweets, and it is communicated in Sesotho. (More discussion about the tweet in the introduction section that follows).

According to Eisenstein, O’ Connor, Smith & Xing (2010) & Eisenstein (2016), “the popularity and ubiquity of social media allows access to a wide variety of spontaneous language enabling researchers to study language variation across space and time at large scale”, (Preotiuc-Pietro & Ungar, 2018: 1534). The introduction to the internet and socially mediated platforms such as Twitter and others has changed how information is produced and consumed. Social media allow people to communicate and engage in languages they are comfortable and familiar with. The study discusses language choice at three levels: language choice between isiXhosa verses English; isiXhosa verses other African languages and isiXhosa verses other varieties. The study is pursued with the overarching aim to investigate the possibility of African languages such as isiXhosa being used as dominant languages on social media. Thus, the study explores language use by isiXhosa speaking users on twitter that engaged with the tweet. Moreover, the study investigated why they choose to use one language over the other or multiple languages.

To give a broader perspective on the study, language choice, language shift and language attitude are discussed and critically evaluated. Theoretically, the concept of code-switching and code-mixing is used when looking at bilingualism and multilingualism. It is imperative to look at multilingualism because the prevalent use of English is no longer a barrier to communication, social media platforms have created a space where African language users are able to engage in their native languages.

Moreover, the study explores the use of standard and non-standard isiXhosa languages. There are varieties of languages such as tsotsitaal, slang and others, and these language varieties are not recognised as standard, used in educational settings and so on. In doing so, language attitude is used as the concept to investigate what propels isiXhosa users to or not to use these language varieties in the online communities. The study is explored with the aim to investigate whether social media either grows and preserves African languages online or these platforms

are detrimental to these languages, as the language utilised on them is casual and vague, in terms of both spoken and written speech.

ISISHWANKATHELO

Olu phando luvavanya kwaye luxoxa nzulu ngokhetho lolwimi ku*Twitter*, ikhasi lonxibelelwano elinenani elikhulu labantu abavela kumaqela eelwimi ezahlukeneyo. Eli khasi labantu abohlukeneyo libavumela ukuba babhale, banxibelelane, kwaye babelane ngolwazi kwi-intanethi. Kukho ii-*tweets* (imibhalwana emifutshane) ezihamba phambili kwaye zitsala uthethathethwano phakathi kumaqela eelwimi ezahlukeneyo. *O jewa ke eng?* ethetha ukuthi, ‘ukhathazwa yintoni?’ yenye yezo *tweets* (yalo mibhalwana mifutshane), kwaye idluliselwe ngesiSuthu. (Ingxoxo engakumbi malunga ne-*tweet* (nombhalwana omfutshane) ifumaneka kwicandelo lentshayelelo elilandelayo).

Ngokutsho kukaEisenstein, O’ Connor, Smith & Xing (2010) kunye noEisenstein (2016), “ukuduma kunye nobuninzi beendaba zoluntu kubangela ezo ndaba ukuba zinwenwele kwiindidi ezininzi zeelwimi nezivumela abaphandi ukuba bafunde ngokwahlukana kolwimi kwindawo kunye nexesha...”, (Preotiuc-Pietro & Ungar, 2008: 1534). Ulwaziso kwi-intanethi kunye namakhasi onxibelelwano oluntu afana ne-*Twitter* kunye namanye, luyitshintshile indlela ulwazi oluveliswa ngayo kunye nendlela olusetyenziswa ngayo. Amakhasi onxibelelwano oluntu avumela abantu ukuba banxibelelane kwaye bazibandakanye ngeelwimi abakhululekileyo ukuzisebenzisa nabaqhelene nazo Olu phando luxoxa ngokukhethwa kolwimi kumanqanaba amathathu: ukukhethwa kolwimi phakathi kwesiXhosa kunye nesiNgesi, isiXhosa kunye nezinye iilwimi ziseNtu, kwakunye nesiXhosa kunye nezinye iindidi zolwimi. Olu phando luqhutywa ngeyona njongo iphambili yokuphanda ukuba ngaba iilwimi zesiNtu ezifana nesiXhosa zingasetyenziswa njengeelwimi eziphambili kamakhasi onxibelelwano na. Kungoko, uphando luphonononga ukusetyenziswa kolwimi ngabo bantetho isisiXhosa ku*Twitter* abanxibelelana ne-*tweet* (nombhalo omfutshane). Olu phando, lukwaphanda ukuba kutheni bekhetha ukusebenzisa ulwimi oluthile kunolunye okanye iilwimi ezininzi.

Ukunika umbono ngokuthe gabalala ngolu phando, ukukhethwa kolwimi, utshintsho lolwimi, kunye nesimo sengqondo solwimi ziyaxoxwa kwaye zihlolwa ngokunzulu. Ngokwethiyori, ingqikelelo yokutshintshatshintsha iilwimi kunye nokuxuba iilwimi (ukusebenzisa iilwimi ezahlukeneyo kumgca okanye umbhalo omnye) ziyasetyenziswa xa kujongwa ukusetyenziswa kweelwimi ezimbini kunye neelwimi ezininzi. Kunyanzelekile ukuba kujongwe ukusetyenziswa kweelwimi ezininzi kuba ukuxhaphaka kokusetyenziswa kwesiNgesi

akusengomqobo kunxibelelwano, amakhasi onxibelelwano (amaqonga osasazo) oluntu avule indawo apho abasebenzisi beelwimi zesiNtu bakwaziyo ukuthetha ngeelwimi zabo zomthonyama.

Ngaphezu koko, olu phando luphonononga ukusetyenziswa kweelwimi zesiXhosa ezisemgangathweni nezingekho mgangathweni. Kukho iintlobo ngeentlobo zeelwimi ezifana neTsotsitaal, ulwimi lwe-*slang* nezinye, kwaye ezi ntlobo zeelwimi aziqatshelwa njengeelwimi ezisemgangathweni, ezisetyenziswa kumajelo emfundo njalo njalo. Ngokwenza oko, isimo sengqondo solwimi sisetyenziswa njengengcamango yokuphanda ukuba yintoni eyenza abasebenzisi besiXhosa basebenzise okanye bangasebenzisi ezi ntlobo zeelwimi kwi-intanethi. Olu phononongo luphononongwa ngeenjongo zokuphanda apho amaqonga onxibelelwano akhula kwaye agcine khona iilwimi zesiNtu kwi-intanethi okanye lamaqonga onxibelelwano abubungozi kwezilwimi, njengoko ulwimi olusetyenziswa kula maqonga luqhelekile kwaye alucacanga, ngokwentetho ethethwayo nebhaliweyo.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAE: African American English

AU: African Union

CASAS: Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society

CMC: Computer Mediated Communication

CM: Code mixing

CS: Code switching

DA: Document Analysis

DM: Direct Message

EAC: East Africa Community

ICT: Information Computer Technology

L1: Native language

L2: Second language

LGBTQIA++: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersexual, asexual

Lingo: Language

LP: Language Policy

MSA: Modern Standard Arabic

NLP: National Language Policy

RT: Retweet

SAE: Standard American English

SMS: Short Message Service

SNS: Social Networking Sites

SONA: The State of the National Address

TBH: To be honest

TBT: Throwback Thursday

UNESCO: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

US: United States

UWC: University of Western Cape

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The world is gradually moving to the digital space and social media platforms such as twitter do an immense job in connecting multiple users from across the globe. The question-and-answer thread *O jewa ke eng?* have become the voice of many voices from across different language groups. The tweet transpired on twitter, and it trended for the longest time. *O jewa ke eng?* was tweeted on the 5th of January 2019 and the tweet has since gained more attention and continues to do so. The tweet has placed a significant impact in peoples' lives, and this has led to the creation of *O jewa ke eng?* foundation. (More discussion about the tweet in the section that follows 1.2). Twitter users can advertise, search, and attain information about things that matter to their lives and of better assistance to them. The world transformed from print media where means for communication were only through word-of-mouth, newspapers, radio, and so on. Solo-Anaeto & Jacobs state that:

“With technology, mass communication has moved beyond traditional media of radio, television, newspaper, magazines, film, and book. The internet and its platforms are revolutionising the communication process. New forms like phone media, social media and new media have come up and are being used in various ways to disseminate information to a large heterogenous group of people in the same or different environment who are socially related or emotionally connected to us...” (Solo-Anaeto & Jacobs, 2015: 37).

In the case of traditional media and new media, the researcher believes that social media allow for a two-way communication, where the receivers are also producers of content and further promotes interactivity, conversation, and engagement between users. While traditional media has editors and journalists verifying the information before putting it out or running with the story, social media allow users to broadcast news or information without facts. Stories trend without being verified and people make their own conclusions based on what they have consumed, whether from a reliable source or not. In the famous words of the American actor, director and producer, Denzel Hayes Washington, “if you do not read the newspaper, you are uninformed. If you do read it, you are misinformed”. This statement resonates a lot with the fact that due to new and digital media, we now consume news easily and free, than to wait for a newspaper, television or radio broadcast package that is edited, and its content has been fact

checked. Even if the public consumes erroneous information, what counts is the fact that citizen journalists (general internet users who broadcast stories as individuals who do not work for news organisations) broadcasted the story first.

Therefore, to supplement on what is said by Denzel Washington, some news outlets have resorted to broadcasting and reporting news that will draw the readers in while the journalists do the full investigation. In this way they are still viewed as relevant and reliable sources of news, however, the broadcast of incorrect and false news could damage their credibility. Additionally, they resort in broadcasting teasers and headlines while they investigate, whereas other news organisations turn into tabloids to stay relevant and known. Social media has made it convenient for people to consume news quickly, as most rely on social media for news. This has created citizen journalists and majority of them broadcast news that are not verified because they want to be the first people to break the story. The fact that majority of the people have access to phones, it makes it convenient for them to broadcast events immediately when they take place. For example, if someone is at a scene, they quickly take a video of what is happening and post on social media to alert the public of what is happening.

As the author of this research study, the researcher resonates a lot with the words of Denzel Washington “if you do not read the newspaper, you are uninformed. If you do read it, you are misinformed”. This is because the flexibility of social media has created opportunities for everyone to be journalists, creators, and producers of news. Such does not restrict the users from consuming false or fake news as news are fragmented online and people read in between the lines and therefore conclude based on what is provided. As much as everyone receives news, it is important to note that there are different types of news, such as soft news, hard news, sensationalised news, and others. Sam, Wilzig & Seletzky (2010) acknowledge the fact that news publications do not just produce and report on ‘news’. “It is almost a tautology to note that news organisations provide ‘news’. However, one cannot relate to the term ‘news’ as of one piece,” (Sam et al., 2010: 37).

According to Limor & Mann (1997) as cited in Sam et al., (2010:38), “hard news usually involves political (domestic and international), economic or social topics. Hard news demands immediate reporting to its importance and short lifespan (continuing stories tend to follow shortly)”. These types of news include examples of ‘The State of the Nation Address (SONA)’, ‘government elections’, ‘South African ex-president (Zuma incarceration)’ in terms of political news; ‘Super sport Premier League’, ‘Olympics’ in terms of sport; ‘Budget speech’, ‘South

African looting of stores' in terms of economic and business news; Marikana Massacre, Miss South Africa, Miss Universe, Covid-19 Pandemic, National or South African shutdown/lockdown, and so forth. Moreover, "soft news, they argue, has little or no intrinsic social or personal importance, so that it can be reported on at any time (if at all)," (Sam et al., 2010:38). On the other hand, Garst & Bernstein (1982) as cited in Ngange & Elempia (2019:2) "see sensationalism as a practice of writing to entice, attract, stimulate, arouse, exaggerate and generally provoke an emotional response in readers". While Ngange & Elempia (2019:2) note that "sensationalism spreads across all the other conventional media and is even more visible in the new media today, which people use most often for activism".

All authors referred to above, note the importance to be cognisant of the fact that sensationalism is practiced across all media forms. Sensationalism is practiced in all media forms, inclusive of traditional and digital media, such as television, print, radio, websites, social media, and others. The researcher believes that, in terms of soft and sensationalised news which mostly cover celebrity stories, one might agree with the famous quote "where there is smoke, there is fire". At times, when the story broke it was not entirely true because certain important information and parts that conclude the story were not included. There are always two sides to any story but in stories that involve celebrities, if the publication could not get the specific person involved to comment, they run with the story. These are news that are not of the public interest and newsworthy because they do not bring about value, are not of relevance, they do not play a significant, beneficial, and impactful role to society. According to Ngange & Elempia (2019:1):

"Adams, cited in Wang and Cohen notes that, sensationalism and human-interest stories refer to news coverage of "crime, violence, natural disasters, accidents, and fires, along with amusing, heart-warming, shocking, or curios vignettes about people in the area." Jenkins says sensationalism in the press is done by including and excluding certain facts, highlighting some parts and hiding others in a news story, suggesting a reading of events by the use of captioning of a particular photograph or a leading headline."

Through the researcher's observation, the introduction to new media and digital media has created easy and accessible ways for communication across the world, where different people can reach each other even though they are far apart. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and others are being utilised the most. In contrast, these social media platforms promote fragmented and fake news, in cases where users broadcast stories that are

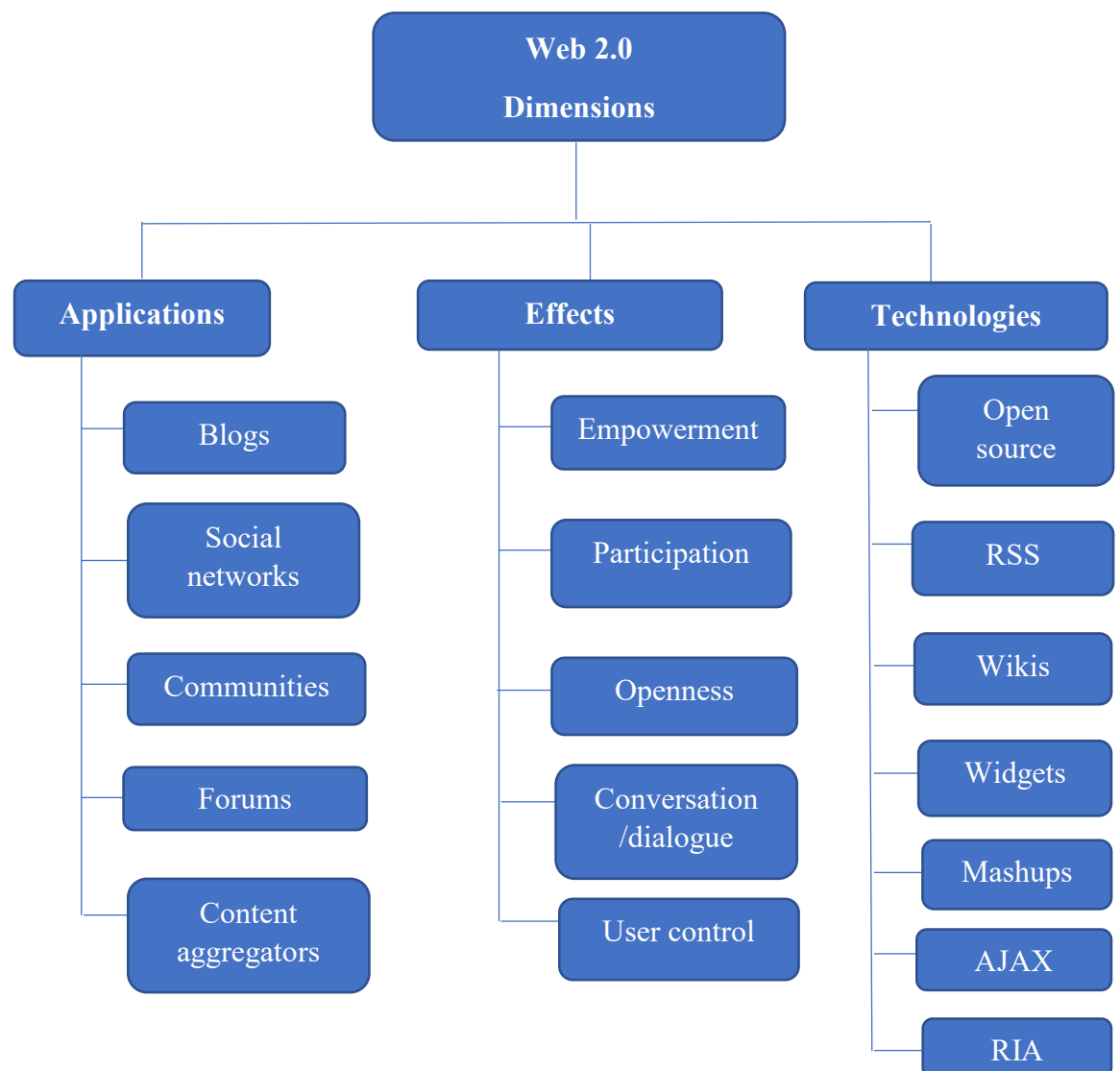
not verified. In some cases, such could be detrimental to other people's careers, as online users tend to over broadcast by sharing important and private matters. For example, Katlego Maboe, a South African media personality, was involved in a 'scandal' as loosely the word is used, because the word is subjective. The presenter's 'baby momma' (as referred to by the millennial generation) shared a video of them having an argument about Katlego's cheating scandal. You can notice that if a story catches the internet, it blows and spreads rapidly. The companies and brands he worked with had to reconsider their association with the presenter and therefore his contracts were discontinued. This caused a lot of his work pulling out. In my opinion, social media could either grow or break a person; for example, users such as celebrities, politicians, prominent figures, influencers, and everyone well-known. Katlego cheating story, Somizi abuse scandal, and other prominent figures who found themselves in such situations of cheating scandals and alleged abuse, the internet and social media could ruin their career, as private matters might affect your job. Social media platforms such as twitter have created a space where issues previously viewed as taboo and provocative, are now discussed freely with the support of others online. Examples include matters amid the LGBTQIA++ community, rape and rape culture, women and children abuse, gender-based violence, and others.

Moreover, in relation to language use online, these platforms present language challenge because of how diverse these online communities are. The study looks at the ability of these communities to engage and interact about the topics of interest in a holistic manner that encompasses individuals from all language groups. The above-mentioned social media platforms form part of microblogging. Generally, microblogging is the term referred to the activity of social media users sharing and updating others through short messages. Grossek & Holotescu (2010:2151) give a brief definition of microblogging by stating that "Microblogging is considered the Web 2.0 technology of 2009 with more and more users from various domains taking interest in it." Based on the definition stipulated by Grossek & Holotescu (2010) that acknowledges microblogging as a digital form that falls under Web 2.0, the researcher can argue that microblogging is the use of internet and online orientated social media platforms through using mobile devices, where users from diverse linguistic backgrounds come together, create, and produce, share, like each other's content and so forth.

Microblogging is where social media users post and share short forms of content, such as brief texts and some would be in form of a thread (brief texts posted after the other or follow each other), snippets of videos and audio, links to articles, GIFs, memes, and others. Lovink (2011:5) as quoted by King (2014:24) claim that "Web 2.0 applications are delivered by broadband

telecommunications, which allow users to, at no cost, upload and share content.” While, Junco, Heibergert & Loken (2011) claim that these applications are designed to be used in an interactive, dialogic, collaborative way.

Figure 1.1: Dimensions of Web 2.0 as quoted from King (2014)



Thus, there is a growing popularity in microblogging, especially twitter (Lau, Collier & Baldwin, 2012; Lee, Palsetia, Narayanan, Patwary, Agrawal & Choudhary, 2011; Saha & Menezes, 2016). This form of social network which is digitally mediated, has changed how information is consumed and the production of it, (Thorne, Black & Sykes, 2007). Eleta & Golbeck (2014) argue that twitter enable users to write in different languages but does not

provide support for translation. The research provides insight on how the diverse language groups connect and interact within the social space of different twitter users, referring to the trending tweet in Sesotho *O jewa ke eng?*

According to Tanja (2016), twitter allows for participatory citizenship. The short sequence in tweets start with a hashtag and these allow users to engage with and view all related tweets (Backstrom & Haslum, 2016). In the researcher's view, trends on twitter create conversations where many language users contribute and share them. Trends or topics can motivate users to retweet or comment, that raises more discussion between users online. A trending topic can include tweets in different languages whereby users communicate using the languages they are comfortable with, for as long as they understand what the topic is about. Twitter trends allow users to discuss and engage on emerging events that happen in real life (Hendricks, Kolb, Lehman & Montague, 2015; Osborn, 2010; Zubiaga, Spina, Martinez & Fresno, 2013).

The *O jewa ke eng?* (What is bothering you?) tweet grew rapidly on twitter, where users of different language groups started sharing vital information, issues that bother them, and hilarious content such as the creation of memes (See the next section for more). Social media allows for participation in different events such as creation of awareness, buying and selling of products, advertisement of jobs, expression of diverse opinions and discussions (Eleta, & Golbeck, 2014; Wang, Ma, & Li, 2015; Bagozzi, & Dholakia, 2002). This tweet was communicated in an African language but that did not stop it from reaching diverse language users across Africa. Mercer (2000) expresses the fact that through language, individuals can think constructively and analytically together, thus, enables people to create, share, consider new ideas and reflect on their actions together collectively. This statement does not merely speak to a specific language group but every person from whichever ethnic group they come from. Language basically brings people from diverse language groups together. This encourages the use of bilingualism and multilingualism; the study aims to explore these two concepts in relation to language choice on twitter and the trending tweet *O jewa ke eng?*

Twitter is used as a tool to disseminate information to masses and promotes interaction, but the language barrier causes segregation between participants. Saha & Menezes (2016) describe "Twitter language network" as a connected system of diverse languages that plays a role in how information gets spread. It is important to be cognisant of the fact that there is change in how information is spread and received. The use of previously disadvantaged languages is

emerging and platforms such as Twitter have created a space for multiple diverse users to engage and communicate in any language they want to use, in whatever situation.

1.2 “IF FREEDOM OF SPEECH IS TAKEN AWAY, THEN DUMB AND SILENT WE MAY BE LED, LIKE SHEEP TO THE SLAUGHTER “ _George Washington

This section discusses the tweet *O jewa ke eng?* in relation to language choice by diverse language users. Furthermore, explore language use on twitter in relation to the tweet and how social media benefits or destroys languages. A tweet that transpired on twitter *O jewa ke eng?* was tweeted by the user Keabetswe Jan with the twitter handle @akreana_ on the 5th of January 2019 and the tweet has since gained more traction and continues to do so. The tweet has played a significant impact in peoples’ lives, and this has led to the creation of *O jewa ke eng?* foundation. The tweet started off as light where people would say they are bothered by simple things but later trended and people started sharing intense and heart-breaking information about things that bother them. This section encapsulates the discussion of language choice on twitter, through reference to the tweet, theory on the topic and observation on tweets under the trend *O jewa ke eng?* which was used as a method to evaluate language choice and language use in the platform. According to the user, the tweet was not intentional, she was just sitting and asked herself what is it that bothers other people on twitter. She then tweeted the question in her home language, the tweet started slow, and later more people started to engage with it and it blew up and trended.

Social media platforms such as twitter have opened many doors for its users i.e., job opportunities, a social space to discuss and share information on ways to deal with mental health matters, sexual assault, sexual harassment, create online families, create awareness on previously viewed as taboo topics and so forth. As such, language plays a crucial role in being inclusive and accommodative of your audience, as the platform has diverse and vast number of people. Most times people use a universal language to accommodate diverse individuals, and the language happens to be the dominant language of power, English. Kea echoed the same view on the use of a universal language being used to accommodate diverse individuals, as the tweet attracted multiple people from different language backgrounds. However, she indicated that it is also important for African languages to be used because “we are taking our languages to the world”. Even though the original *O jewa ke eng?* tweet user did not plan on tweeting in

her home language with the intention for the tweet to blow up and attract all masses across the globe. She indicated that she normally tweets in her home language alongside other languages inclusive of English and this has nothing to do with the intention to promote and preserve African languages online but a personal preference. (See findings chapter 5). This might sound contradictory to what she said about African language speakers utilising their African languages and taking them to the world, but this relates to how the tweet blew up. She indicated that she supports the use of African languages, but the specific tweet had nothing to do with language use and promotion. However, this is something she normally does, she tweets in her home language alongside other languages inclusive of the dominant English language. This is a matter of language choice.

In the researcher's view, African people are the carriers of their own languages and for them to be known they must use them and not only promote dominant languages. While there are certain aspects that still need more working on i.e., racism, homophobia, we live in a democratic and slowly developing country where we are no longer treated as inferior. We should work in decolonising the olden ways that lead to our languages being marginalised and viewed as inferior. We have the responsibility to put our own languages in the map. Such is possible through education, music, sport, and other places where there are diverse individuals and unity is endorsed.

Arguably, the use and choice of language on social media depends on the user, as social media platforms are casual and do not necessary require one to always communicate and engage in a standard and professional language. As a result, new terms develop every day and these do not necessarily mean that people must use them in professional settings, as there are restrictions in how language is used in all settings. Social media provides people with the freedom to voice out their concerns, views, and opinions, what and how they feel about certain issues.

The *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet did not only reach audiences globally but continues to be used as a tweet for people to go to for assistance, sharing information, job posts, advertisement, discuss different issues such as economic, social, religious, academic, mental health, sexual assault and harassment, violence, awareness creation, to grow their follower base, recruitment, offer advice, and others. Language is important and plays a role in communication and how people decide which language to use. Through observation on twitter, the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet user Kea mostly engages in English alongside her home language. Even though social media platforms such as twitter allow its users the flexibility to use casual language and new

terminology, words and phrases that develop every day, language choice is affected by various factors, and this determines when and how users communicate on social media. Through the same technique of observation, it was easy to confirm that the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet did not necessarily attract users from other language groups to engage in their home languages, but majority engaged in the dominant language, English and still do. Even with that, the original tweet user Kea, also engages in English at times. (Refer to chapter 5 for more findings).

Moreover, the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet resulted in language barrier which is without a doubt something that occurs in majority of the spaces occupied by diverse individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. The tweet attracted many people globally and has resulted in others asking what the tweet meant. The interaction on social media is different as people behave in distinct ways and language choice plays a crucial role in them producing and sharing knowledge or any kind of information. There are translation tools on social media platforms such as twitter in this case, these tools assist in translating content others do not understand into different languages or language of choice. These tools are not always accurate, and this sometimes make it difficult to find balance in being accommodative and inclusive of all language groups. As such, language as a significant tool of communication, requires one to find ways to overcome this barrier. Thurairaj et al., (2015) alludes that English is a requirement in all areas including work, study, entertainment, and so forth. Majority of the people interact and engage in English to break the language barrier, assuming that everyone knows and understand English. In the researcher's opinion, she believes spaces such as social media are not for the faint hearted in all aspects including the use of language, writing and others. These platforms are fast paced environments where people say whatever they want, their opinions and views. They can disregard your way of writing, the language you use and so forth.

When talking about language choice and diverse users being flexible in interacting in their home languages, it is important not to dispute the fact that language use includes the way words are written and sentences structured. SMS, abbreviation of words, misspelling words, and other casual language use are perceived as possessing a negative impact and could be detrimental to the standard language proficiency. The use of these casual languages implies that people use them in all settings and in professional settings such as school, work, and others, this causes turmoil. Thus, school learners and workers find it hard to write in formal and standard languages because they are used to interacting in a casual language on social media. "It can be concluded that most of the students use misspelling in social networking sites for convenience purpose especially to save time. Furthermore, they follow their friends' trends in the social

networking sites, “(Thurairaj, 2015: 312). Additionally, the study indicates that students at tertiary tend to use and interact in an informal language of misspelling words and as such their work gets marked down and they lose marks. Social networking sites (SNS) or social media platforms as mostly referred to in this study, have proven as possible ways to be used for language learning and educational purposes.

In multilingual societies, people switch from different languages when they speak and likely do the same when they write, especially in social spaces where they are not required to write in a standard and professional language. As such, on Twitter, majority of the isiXhosa speakers who were the main participants and focus of the study, indicated that they are multilingual and engaged with the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet in English alongside other African languages, but not as much, reasons for this are stated in the findings chapter (See chapter 5). “[Multilinguality] and code-mixing in social media is the norm rather than an exception,” (Volkova, Ranshous, & Phillips, 2018: 609). Multilingual users find it easy and convenient to engage in different languages inclusive of the casual language, because social media does not require formal language use. These users also practice code mixing and code switching, as discussed in chapter 4. The use of these phenomenon code mixing and code switching sometimes happen subconsciousness or intentionally. Some users engage in multilingual languages to bridge language divide in terms of assisting other users to understand and know what is discussed or shared.

The tweet below is written in English and translated into isiXhosa by the same user. This shows the possible ways to combat language barrier and language divide on social media. This can prove to be strenuous to some people and by stating this possible solution, the researcher is not implying or proposing that users should translate their content when we have translation tools on these social platforms. The tweet below is just an example, but it is important to note that twitter and other social media platforms are fast paced environments and therefore users want to share what they want in the language they feel comfortable in quickly and the translation tools will do their job of translating for users interested in what is shared.



retweeted

3d



Learn how to speak to people properly,
fundani indlela yothetha nabantu.



1



98



131



Looking at the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet, some users did not understand what the tweet meant even though it trended and therefore that made them curious, and they asked what it means, as such other users were able to assist by translating what the tweet meant. This is something that happens with other users who tweet in their home languages. If a particular user is interested in what is discussed, they ask what is meant by tweets in African languages to understand and engage with the provided content. People who also assisted in translating the trending tweet for others played a role in bridging language divide. Looking at the tweets under the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet, majority of the users engaged in English, and this did not cause much language divide because majority of the users believe that using a common language bridges the divide (refer to chapter 5). *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet was created with the intension for other users to assist one another, through sharing and landing helping hands financially and in any other form of assistance. The aspect of language was not the main concern as discussed in the findings chapter (see chapter 5).

The hegemony of the English language tends to influence most people to use the language instead of theirs, this diminishes the use of the African languages and may sometimes lead to other African language users not knowing their own language. As that may be, social media has created a space for African language users and other minority language users to engage and interact in the language of preference. The platform acknowledges that there are people from diverse language groups, as such some users feel comfortable in engaging in their home languages. “One theme in Phillipson’s work is “linguicism”-prejudice that leads to indigenous languages becoming extinct or losing their local eminence due to the rise and competing prominence of English,” (Callahan & Herring, 2012: 324). Moreover, this is referred to as the replacement theory. It is important to note that tweets in African languages do not necessarily mean the other users will engage with the specific tweet in their African languages. The aspect of language choice arises because twitter allows the users the freedom and flexibility to engage

and interact in languages of preference. See chapter 2 and 4 for more discussion on whether language choice and language use are detrimental or help preserve and grow African languages on social media.

1.3 RESEARCH BACKGROUND: THE PROPULSION BEHIND THE RESEARCH STUDY

Nkonko (1999) claim that, dialectal languages were historically underrepresented in written sources, language was used as a tool for social segregation and control where certain groups were excluded. According to Nkonko (1999), in the democratic era language is being used as an instrument to unite previously divided communities. Language empowers masses to share thoughts about new experiences and organise life together, as a collective without having to discriminate or exclude others. Explanations for why the evolutionary emergence of language was so important for the development of our species commonly focus on the use of language for sharing information accurately, so that it became possible for humans to learn from each other and co-ordinate their actions (Mercer, 2000).

Balancing Act (2014) argues that, even though the colonial language has been made official this does not mean that everyone can communicate and interact in it. Some people feel comfortable when communicating in their home language and some code switch and code mix between different languages. The study will further explore these two concepts with regard to the use of language on social media. Ngwenya (2011) argues that it is important to see the different South African languages as resources and to utilise them to create something that helps us celebrate our differences. Social media platforms such as Twitter bring diverse individuals together.

As observed by the researcher, there are obvious language barriers on social media because the platform accommodates diverse and multiple users from different linguistic backgrounds. Besides, such barriers are caused by the fact that languages are different in terms of phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Moreover, language differs according to the four disciplines: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This contribution by twitter has drawn attention to the ways that multiple diverse languages and developing discourse practices are used in constructing relationships and establishing social identities online (Androutsopoulos, 2006). Generally, interacting in a dominant language may lead to

possibilities for expanding the individual's social network and, ultimately, wider economic opportunities (Dweik & Qawar, 2015).

Marjorie (1982) argued that since population groups were classed by language under apartheid, it resulted in the separation of black people linguistically and limited their contact with other groups. The *O jewa ke eng?* tweet communicated in Sesotho might have been a motivating factor for other language group users to engage and communicate in their native languages, being cognisant of the fact that there are people of their language groups and other language groups, who understand the tweet. The tweet might have been communicated in a language that is foreign to other users, but comprehension is crucial in such cases, this allows you to engage with the tweet, especially if it is life changing tweets such as *O jewa ke eng?* Twitter is a social space that is filled with trends and threads, but they are not necessarily communicated in English, a dominant language presumed to be known and understood by everyone.

In an article by Witaba (2020) the article discusses localisation of indigenous languages in the digital sphere. Furthermore, looks at making Swahili visible and discusses identity, language, and the internet. The essay highlighted that the language may be invisible online, but it was incorporated in Rwanda's school curriculum. This indicates that language is important and plays a crucial role in communication. However, the fact that the schools' language of teaching and learning is English is public knowledge and home languages offered by the specific schools are added as second additional languages. Moreover, the fact that Swahili is incorporated in a school's curriculum means progress and growth for African languages because they are recognised in academic and educational spaces. In the essay, the author stated that Swahili is recognised as one of the official languages of the African Union (AU), alongside English, Portuguese, French, Spanish, and Arabic. The language is also the lingua franca for East Africa Community (EAC) member states. According to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), linguistic and cultural diversity are of strategic importance for people around the world to strengthen the unity and cohesion of societies.

1.4 LANGUAGE BACKGROUND: ISIXHOSA AS A LANGUAGE PREVIOUSLY UNDERREPRESENTED

The study was pursued with the overarching aim to investigate how isiXhosa language users engaged with the *Ojewa ke eng?* trend on twitter. It looked at what determines their language choice when engaging with the tweet, isiXhosa is used as the central point in the study. IsiXhosa is an official language, spoken largely in the Eastern Cape (Pascoe & Smouse, 2012; Bloom Strom, 2018).

Prah (2018), states that the indigenous official languages are divided into clusters, Nguni that includes isiXhosa, isiZulu, Siswati and isiNdebele: “[t]he Nguni languages are relatively tightly knit, and especially isiZulu and isiXhosa are closely related, with a high degree of mutual intelligibility” (Bloom Strom, 2018:92). There is also Sotho-Tswana that includes Sesotho, Setswana, and Sepedi. These languages distinguish themselves from one another by lexical items, tonal patterns, and phonemes (Jokweni, 1995).

Previous studies show that, within isiXhosa there are different spoken dialects, with one standard orthography based on the isiRharhabe dialect. Other dialects include isiXesibe, isiMpondo, isiNgqika, isiThembu, isiMfengu, isiBomvana and isiGcaleka (Peires, 1976; Bloom Strom, 2018). These varieties are not considered official languages and they are not used in education, work, politics, or other professional spaces. The isiXhosa dialect that is recognised as the standard, generally used in academic and other official spaces is isiRharhabe. The isiNgqika and isiGcaleka dialects are closest to standard isiXhosa and may be used in professional settings (Drame, 2000: 235-236). In contrast, recent orthography studies have concluded on the equality and inclusion of all dialects in all settings. People can now communicate and write in their previously underrepresented language dialects because these have been officialised, as indicated in an article by Rhodes University (2021).

All languages can now be used as standard and in both social and professional settings. Even though, not much work has been done in these languages, but this opens and creates more opportunities for native speakers of the languages to use and promote them. Such could be done through writing of stories, books, articles, poems, and so forth. This could also be through the conception of academic studies, language use on social media, day-to-day interaction, and others. Looking at the work done on radio, television and print media, there is progress in terms of content produced in and by individuals from the minority language groups such as

isiNdebele, Xitsonga, and other African languages in general. The researcher believe that this proves to be progress in the preservation of African languages, as more language groups get to embrace their languages without having to express themselves in English or must translate their work into English, for it to reach more audiences.

Additionally, in the researcher's view, isiXhosa also has varieties which were previously not recognised and used as standard isiXhosa languages. These include isiMpondo, isiBhaca, and other isiXhosa dialects, as it has been alluded above that the only language recognised and acknowledged language with standard orthography was isiRharhabe. Additionally, these languages include Tsotsitaal, slang, isiFanakalo, abbreviation and shortening of words, short message service (SMS) language and others. "When society uses its own creativity to collectively coin a term that becomes part of everyday language, it is disingenuous to attempt to impose unknown and unpopular coinage," (Prah, 2017: 218). Majority use of these languages, you will find eKasi (in the locations), while you can find the use of the SMS language on social media platforms. The terminology, phrases, and words utilised on Twitter or social media, are different from the way language is used in academic, workplace, and other professional settings that require standard, formal, complete wording, and sentencing.

On platforms such as twitter people might choose to abbreviate or shorten words because this platform allows for 140 characters per tweet. Even though you can make a thread in sharing information, some people prefer to use SMS language to pass the message in one tweet and for many other reasons discussed in the findings chapter. Thus, twitter is a fast-paced community where users engage and communicate in simple and direct language to get the message across in a short space of time. Based on how tweets, news and stories spread fast online, social media makes it easy for users to share. In contrast, this fast-paced community causes fragmentation of information online because you might get confused as to what is being discussed and where the tweet originates. While some people use the assumed non-standard languages on social media, some prefer to use the standard native languages in formal, English language use, and so forth.

1.5 THE STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

In support of the information declared by the authors referenced above, social media platforms such as twitter and others have shown great popularity online. These platforms have attracted majority of people from across all language groups, because they have created easy and fast ways to spread and disseminate information to masses rather than individuals and small groups of people whom you are familiar or related to. Such platforms have played a vital role in bringing together people of different language groups and races. The study sought to address the following research statements:

- How African language speakers particularly isiXhosa Twitter users find it to engage and communicate in their native languages on Twitter.
- Factors that influence their language choice.
- Possible ways between people of different ethnicities to bridge the gap of language divide.

In an article posted online by the UWC Gifted Priceless African Gem (2018) where Professor Kwesi Kwaa Prah attended the signing over of his Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS), which he donated to the University of Western Cape (UWC). The CASAS project works with the harmonisation and standardisation of orthographies of structurally and lexically proximate languages in Africa, development of monolingual dictionaries in African languages, promotion of local languages, education, as well as the production of research on African linguistics, language policies and the general intellectualisation of African languages. Thus, Prah revealed that 85% of the languages on the continent have been covered and the centre has produced hundreds of publications and books, the exact number being 600 publications and 130 books during that year. He then referred to D.F. Malan's words "lift the language and you lift the people", because he believes that when people use their own native languages, in this way they are lifted. The statement is very powerful as speakers and users of African languages are recognised in places; they would have not imagined themselves occupying because they are known and only intended for users who speak dominant languages such as English.

Looking at examples such as the entertainment industry and others, African language speakers who are not knowledgeable and are unfamiliar with English occupy such spaces. These individuals are known for their music, work, careers, and so forth. For example, 'Sho Madjozi'

(Xitsonga musician), Jessica Mbangeni (isiXhosa poet), Nkosinathi Mankayi ‘Nathi’ (isiXhosa musician), Jabulani Hadebe ‘Sjava’ (isiZulu musician), Lindokuhle Mgedezi ‘Mlindo the vocalist’ (isiZulu musician), Kgaogelo Moagi ‘Master KG’ (Tshivenda musician), Ndivhudzannyi Ralivhona ‘Makhadzi’ (Tshivenda musician), Amapiano (music genre where musicians sing in their native languages) artists and others. These individuals get recognised worldwide and they get nominated for awards and win awards both local and international. Moreover, South African artists not only collaborate within themselves but collaborate with international superstars too, i.e., Master KG featuring David Guetta, Kwesta featuring Wale (US rapper), Nasty C featuring Major Lazer (US super dance group), Focalistic featuring Davido, and so forth. I believe that English proficiency is no longer a stumbling block between individuals and their dreams and them reaching their full potential in terms of their careers.

Currently ‘Amapiano’ music genre is big both locally and internationally. When the artists perform internationally, they do not translate the songs but sing them as they are and the crowd dances to the music either way. Another example, Master KG and Nomcebo Zikode released a hit song ‘Jerusalema’, and the song trended worldwide and continues to do so. A dance choreographed specifically for the song was created and everyone shot videos of themselves dancing to the song, prominent figures, and others. This was done by people from various countries. With such an example, the researcher would certainly argue that social media platforms play a role in bringing diverse people together, their languages, and cultures, as people from other countries (different races) sang along to the song. The videos were posted across all over social media platforms including Twitter. It is important to note that the song is in an African language (isiZulu) and that did not create any form of segregation, everyone both locally and internationally danced and sang along to the song. Such examples echo what most people believe in saying, that music and sport bring together people from different language groups. Additionally, African languages are developed online and in face-to-face interactions, and they grow because everyone uses them to communicate and do not feel inferior amongst people of a different race or language group.

Previously, you would assume that the only language used to unite and bring together people across the world, would be English. The song ‘Jerusalema’ and other amapiano popular songs have proven the statement erroneous, as all language groups listen and dance to music in different African languages and not only white (English) music. Realistically, the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet contributed to this, for example now people from different language groups can post what is bothering them and end up being assisted by a person from a different language

group from theirs. The tweet has played an impactful and significant role and continues to do so. As alluded previously in the study, the tweet has opened room for people to express themselves, their views, and opinions, whether towards horrendous events i.e., #FeesMustFall, #AmINext (gender-based violence); topics previously viewed as taboo and private or any other pressing matters.

Prah voiced out the fact that he believes Africa cannot develop without the development of its languages and because of that, all societies that have made progress, this is through the development of their languages. He further referred to countries that gained independence, such as Asian countries. He believes that these countries have seen rapid development in terms of their languages, since they have resulted in using their native languages. According to Professor Prah, the issue of the development of African languages needs to be constantly and continuously debated. He further stated that, “If you throw your language out and take somebody else’s language then you are lost. There is no hope for you,” (UWC Gifted Priceless African Gem, 2018). The researcher shares the same sentiments with Prah in terms of language development. As alluded before, the researcher believe that languages could be promoted and developed, but if not used by its native speakers, they will not grow as much. On the other hand, with them being utilised a lot by its speakers, they develop. We cannot have African languages put online and the very people being promoted do not use them, this indicates disrepute to the people who make such efforts to put African languages on the map, grow and promote them.

In summary, this research therefore sought to analyse human language behaviour with the trending hashtag *O jewa ke eng?* The research sought to investigate the languages used by isiXhosa users when they engaged with the tweet; what propelled the use of that specific language choice; the possibility of African languages dominating on twitter; and the possibility of the promotion of African languages such as isiXhosa. The research aimed to find out if the use of African languages on twitter is supported by its own native owners and whether social networking sites such as twitter acknowledge and assist in the promotion and use of African languages, which were previously underrepresented and marginalised. With all the attempts to assist in promoting and growing African languages in spaces they were previously underrepresented in, the researcher believe that it would be fundamental that speakers of these languages use them in all spaces, to help preserve the languages.

African languages could be introduced but if not used, this could disadvantage and defies the purpose of promoting and preserving the languages in all settings, i.e., educational, social, online and others. Moreover, the new digital media has created a space where everyone is allowed to engage and communicate in the language of their choice, therefore, the consistent use of African languages online will assist in the promotion and growth of language use in digital spaces. In contrast, in new media forms such as social media people use different languages differently in written form and most times, they use the *lingo* (language) of the millennial generation where words are written *funny*, sentences do not sound correct (as per the standard use of language), and so forth. For example:

- Girls-gals/gworks/ gurls
- Mother-momma/mammie
- People-peeps
- Ask-aks
- Right-ayt
- It is giving what it was suppose to gave
- It is klean (clean) or watever (whatever)

With the new policy of all languages being officialised, this then means that individuals who write in short form, abbreviation, tsotsitaal, and others, stand a chance of promoting their *lingo* (language) through the support of social media, as there are no restrictions in how you write, and the policy stipulates the equality and inclusivity of all languages. With the growing popularity of social media and the internet, these platforms could be utilised as ways to help preserve African languages online using Human Language Machines (HLM) such as ATMs; other platforms inclusive of Gmail, Google, Wikipedia, social media translate, restaurant menus, television, radio, and print media, and so forth. African languages have been included in the aforementioned platforms and settings; therefore, the aim of the study is to further explore whether people utilise these languages to access information and others. Moreover, the research study sought to address the issues of language use and language choice online, whether the use of standard and non-standard African languages kill or develop and grow languages, specifically language use on twitter. In the attempts made to assist in preserving, promoting, and developing African languages, the use of written language form could pose a challenge, as to whether short form, abbreviation of words, other dialects and varieties are acceptable in all spaces. (More discussion follows in the study).

The next section will discuss the goals of the research.

1.6 GOALS OF THE RESEARCH

The research explored the nature of twitter with regards to language choice and how diverse individuals from different language groups choose to engage and interact and in what languages. There are different reasons why people choose to engage in single or multiple languages on social media, this study is pursued with the overarching pursuit to explore and discover the possibility of African languages being used as languages of communication (dominant languages) on twitter.

This research sought to achieve the following:

- To investigate the flexibility of isiXhosa-speaking users in engaging with their native language and gain insight on how they manage with the language divide when engaging with the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet.
- To ascertain language use and attitudes on Twitter by diverse language groups and what motivates their use of a specific language.
- To examine the possibility of isiXhosa being used as a dominant language on Twitter or being used alongside the dominant language, English.
- To examine the use of standard and non-standard isiXhosa on Twitter.

The next section will outline the research questions.

1.6.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What propels isiXhosa Twitter users to interact and engage in their native language?
2. Does language use on social media help improve language vocabulary and ability to speak the language, or not?
3. Does engaging in your native language create miscommunication on Twitter?

4. Is there a possibility for African languages to be used as dominant languages on social media?

The study sought to explore the impact and role played by social media on language, whether positive or negative. Thus, look at ways it can help preserve, grow, and develop the languages online, seeing that there is a vast number of languages and other language dialects and varieties.

The next section will discuss the structure of the research.

1.7 THE STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH

The remainder of the thesis is organised as follows:

Chapter 2: This chapter introduces the topic at hand, explores and discusses the reasons behind what propelled the study and the history of languages. Moreover, this chapter reviews and critically discusses literature on language choice, bilingualism, and multilingualism, primarily focusing on Twitter and the trending tweet *Ojewa ke eng?* In this chapter, the study draws on multiple theories and literature to create a comprehensive and complete study.

Chapter 3: The chapter describes and outlines the methodology used to conduct and collect data to complete the thesis.

Chapter 4: Furthermore, the chapter discusses factors that contribute to language use on social media, referring to discovered themes and concepts such as language shift, language attitude, code switching and code-mixing phenomenon.

Chapter 5: The chapter outlines and critically discusses the findings and data collected referring to the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet.

Chapter 6: This chapter looks at language promotion and development on the internet and on social media platforms such as Twitter.

Chapter 7: This chapter outlines data recommendations and provides a conclusion to the study.

1.8 LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

The research study was conducted in an unprecedented time of uncertainty where the world was hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. This time made things uneasy, as research with participants could not be done face-to-face because the country was in lockdown and people had to quarantine and not engage in face-to-face interactions. Everything started operating online but to get participants was not as easy as one would assume because most people were pre-occupied with ‘easy’ and exciting trends that only require them to create, retweet and comment. On the other hand, the study required serious and thought through answers and opinions on the topic.

It was easy and not so easy to conduct research online, as most people started using social media to keep them busy. However, relating to serious and professional aspects such as research and academics, other users were sceptical because they wanted to remain anonymous. When the researcher gave the potential participants the approved ethics letter that state their anonymity, they were willing to participate and share their views and perspectives relating to their engagement with the tweet. Therefore, it was then easy to collect data for the study, as more participants started participating in the interviews and surveys.

1.9 SUMMARY

We live in a digital age where information is acquired and shared online, where people’s lives are known by everyone, and basically where everything happens. Online platforms such as twitter have created space for engagement, sharing, advertising, creating friendships, meeting new people and so on. In the new digital age, we basically live in a technological and internet world, a world of the coming together of different language and ethnic groups. Social media platforms have created a space that is both safe and dangerous. Trending tweets such as *Ojewa ke eng?* create an online community where information sometimes gets fragmented because everyone and anyone shares their side of the truth and what they think they know. In whatever story that breaks the internet, language plays a crucial role in how the receiver receives and understands what is conveyed. In some cases, there would be miscommunication due to language misinterpretation. One would argue that the use of a universal language helps bridge language barrier between diverse individuals. On the other hand, the use of African languages

is also important, for the growth and inclusivity of African individuals that are not literate or proficient in English.

The way diverse twitter users decide on which languages to engage in, indicates human language behaviour online. Following a specific setting whether professional or social, a person decides to use their native, first or second language because the latter has no power over language use by its users on the platform. This is a choice one must make when deciding on which language(s) to engage in, on twitter or generally online. The use of social media platforms not only indicate growth in the use of African languages but also shows the proficiency of these platforms to bring about unity to diverse communities. As alluded above, twitter does not only assist individuals or companies in advertisement and creation of awareness but creates online communities that bring about support to each other. This platform has given people from different language groups freedom to be themselves, they can say and comment whatever they want and in whatever language.

Twitter is a platform that allows people to tweet and update others about stories and events that transpire in their lives or their surroundings. Popular tweets such as *O jewa ke eng?* have not only contributed to the promotion of African languages but in community engagement too. The tweet has created a free space for other users to share what is bothering them, in this way they can be assisted or consoled by others. The researcher believes that if no one knows what you are going through, it becomes hard for them to assist. While, if you share, then you find that there are other people who are going through the same thing and would be willing and able to assist you on ways to overcome the situation you are currently facing at the time.

There is promotion of African languages online and people have the right to choose what they want to see, read, and engage in and in a language, they are comfortable in. In the researcher's view, on Twitter different languages are represented by the native speakers of the language and others who speak the language as their first additional or second additional language, since we have bilingual and multilingual users who engage in multiple languages. An isiXhosa native user might tweet something in isiXhosa and many other users retweet and comment in the same language or use a different language to engage with the tweet. Twitter has given its users urgency over language use, language choice, their own content and what they post and tweet. One might argue that social media helps promote African languages through speakers of the language using it. However, it must be noted that social media allow its users the freedom to use both formal and informal language to express their views, and this includes the abbreviation

of words, tsotsitaal and so forth. Moreover, language especially in written form varies in terms of what the user is communicating about. For example, we now have influencers (people who advertise brand products and work and get paid for the services) and other people who use platforms such as Twitter for professional and work purposes and they are required to communicate in an appropriate language (standard language that is written in full).

In professional settings such as the workplace, education sectors, and others, you would be required to write tweets in an appropriate manner and in full, this could be because not everyone knows or is familiar with the languages such as SMS language, tsotsitaal and so forth. This raises concerns on whether social media promotes African languages, or it destroys them, because they are not used in the appropriate way, as everyone uses certain words in the way they know and how they use them in their communities (refer to the section on language dialects and varieties for more). Now that the new policy promotes the equality and inclusivity of all languages, this raises concerns as to whether this only applies to formal languages such as languages used at schools, work, church, or to informal and non-standard languages too.

This first chapter has introduced what the thesis is about. The introduction has given a broad overview of how the thesis is structured and what it discussed. In the chapter that follows, the study provided an outline of previously conducted literature and theory and discussed theory on social media and language by various authors, referring to themes that transpired during the research study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

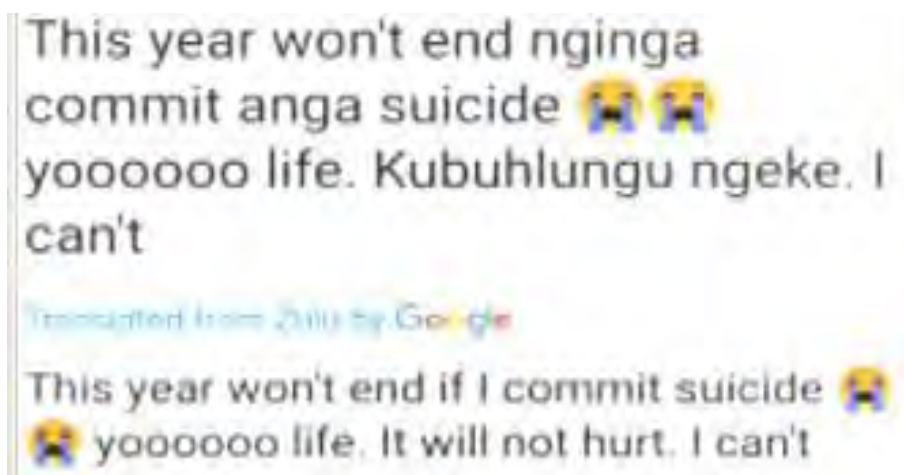
2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses and delves more about language choice on twitter by looking at previously conducted theories and literature around the study. The first part gives a background and history of African languages on social media and online. It further discusses twitter as a social media platform used to discuss, share, and disseminate information to masses. Furthermore, reviews and critically discusses literature and theory on bilingualism and multilingualism as concepts that contribute to the use of language by different individuals.

2.1.1 HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN LANGUAGES AS HISTORICALLY MARGINALISED LANGUAGES

African languages and cultures have been historically marginalised, and this has led to them being inferior to Western languages. For speakers of the African language groups to occupy certain spaces, they must know English. Most African languages, however, including isiXhosa are typically not recognised by word processing programs such as Microsoft Word i.e., when typing in isiXhosa the text is underlined in red and grammatical errors are not detected. The online space lacked translation material online, it has since improved but translation is not the greatest, you can tell sometimes the translation machine uses direct translation and meaning gets lost.

You find such examples in Appendix A, where a person can select different languages for the text to be translated to the language of their choice. An example of this can be seen on Gmail, you receive the email sent to you in the language that a specific person originally sent it in, then you can choose to select another language, where the text gets translated to different languages from the original. Twitter has since introduced Google translate, for tweets to be translated from original language used but the translation is sometimes shaky and does not give the correct or accurate meaning and translation gets lost. A tweet would be written in a certain language and when you translate, it does not give the complete or correct meaning conveyed by the original tweet (See tweet below).



In this tweet, the user is voicing out her feelings by saying “this year won’t end without me having committed suicide” (nginga commit anga suicide) but the translation indicates that the user said, “this year won’t end if I commit suicide”. The translation is totally different because it implies something the original tweet was not referring to. In such cases, incorrect translation misleads and miscommunicate the message sent out. One can tell that Google translate still has a lot to work on, as such mistakes might mislead other users who do not understand tweets in African languages/languages different from theirs. The user who communicated this tweet code mixed between isiZulu and English. (Refer to chapter 4 about code mixing for more).

At the same time, perusal of the *Ojewa ke eng?* trend on twitter reveals the use of isiXhosa, alongside other African languages as well as English. This indicates the growth of African languages online and in my argument, the development depends on them using the language appropriately so that speakers from other language groups know and understand the specific language both in spoken and written form. On twitter you find words abbreviated and shortened or written in opposite i.e., aks instead of ask. In the researcher’s view, there is nothing wrong with the way people express themselves online but if the content produced is aimed at educating others, then the researcher believe that the written language should be written appropriately and formally, so that people do not get confused. Social media language can be confusing and if you saw what is trending a minute later, you would be more confused as nothing is communicated in a conventional manner.

The researcher proposes that everyone need to be cognisant of the fact that people on social media mostly use the informal language to express their views and opinions, as these spaces

do not completely restrict them as to what manner to conduct themselves in terms of writing, unless they violate the rules and policy of these platforms. Social media platforms such as Twitter are flexible in terms of language writing but that also depends on each user, based on what they are communicating, topics they are addressing, and so forth. Even though twitter is impersonal, the users might decide to communicate in a formal way to address pressing issues or prominent people such as the Ministers, to address businesses and potential employers.

During the Apartheid regime, English and Afrikaans were the only official languages. These two languages had won native speakers of the Bantu languages (Snail, 2011; Prah, 2018). These languages were used as languages of instruction in educational settings and others. The African languages or Bantu languages as referred to by Snail (2011) were historically underrepresented because South Africans had knowledge of the two official languages, and they mostly contributed to the development of them. “Historically, language in South Africa has been deployed by government as an agency of control,” (Alexander, 2013: 68). These African language groups were divided into two main groups, isiNguni and Sesotho and they were divided according to their linguistic differences. Snail (2011) gives an outline of the language groups and their classification.

IsiNguni group

IsiXhosa

IsiZulu

SiSwati

IsiNdebele

XiTsonga

Tshivenda

Sotho group

Sesotho

Setswana

Sepedi

Table 1.1: The table below shows Language Demographics from Snail (2011)

Language	Linguistic group	Classification	Number of speakers
isiXhosa	isiNguni	Bantu	2.1 Million
isiSwati	isiNguni	Bantu	841 000
isiNdebele	isiNguni	Bantu	37800

isiZulu	isiNguni	Bantu	5.3 Million
Setswana	Sesotho	Bantu	1.1 Million
Sesotho	Sesotho	Bantu	1.6 Million
Sepedi	Sesotho	Bantu	2.6 Million
xiTsonga	isiNguni	Bantu	1.0 Million
Tshivenda	isiNguni	Bantu	126 000

The table depicts how South African languages are classified and which clusters they belong to. The table shows that the majority of isiNguni speakers constitute most of the African languages in South Africa (Snail, 2011). Majority of isiXhosa speakers are found in the Eastern Cape, isiZulu speakers are mostly based in KwaZulu Natal and other language speakers you can find in their respective areas. In places such as the Gauteng province, you can find people from different language groups because the setting is diverse. Such areas encourage multilingualism as people communicate in different languages rather than theirs. “The other languages will always be important vehicles of communication in the regions where they are the mother tongues of large numbers of people,” (Snail, 2011: 70). Cities such as Johannesburg are dominated by diverse African language speakers, and they communicate and engage in their native languages instead of English which is a colonial language that holds power over other African languages. The table above indicates the numbers of Bantu speakers in all African languages, and I further explain the fact that majority of a specific language group could be found in a specific province or area.

However, even though certain areas are predominantly i.e., isiXhosa language speakers, you might find that there are other diverse language speakers within the area, and they speak their native languages. In terms of social media, twitter is an epitome of a platform that indicates the versatility of people in one area and brings about unity and acceptance of all language groups. For example, a tweet might be communicated in isiXhosa, and you would think that it is meant for amaXhosa, but it reaches a wide diverse audience and users from other language groups engage with it in isiXhosa or other languages, just like it happened with the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet. This indicates multilingualism on social media. (More discussion on multilingualism in the section that follows).

The next section introduces and critically discusses social media and its factors.

2.2 SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES CONNECT USERS ONLINE

Social networking sites, could also be referred to as social media, have become popular and they are mostly used to disseminate and share information across the world. “Social media are online means of interaction among people; involving computer-mediated tools and Internet-based applications that allow people to create, process, share or exchange information, ideas, pictures and videos,” (Solo’Anaeto & Jacobs, 2015:38). These sites include Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and others, they are used as platforms to discuss social, economic, political, religious issues and so on. Thurairaj, Hoon, Roy, Fong, Tunku, Rahman et al (2015) refer to social media networks as mobile or internet-based social platforms that are created and designed to enable users to communicate, collaborate and share content across contacts and communities.

In the researcher’s view, the use of social networking sites makes it easy for people to attract and build relationships with people from diverse and different language groups. For example, in terms of advertising and creation of awareness where you need more people, on these sites it is easy to recruit more people to engage and communicate. ‘Online platforms enable individuals form a wide variety of linguistic backgrounds to communicate,’ (Jurgens, Dimitrov & Ruths, 2014: 51). People use social platforms such as Twitter, to communicate, engage and share their opinions about social matters that affect or have an impact on them. Looking at social campaigns such as #BlackLivesMatter #FeesMustFall and others, these social networking sites do not limit you to people you know or are familiar with, but they broaden your online network. The online presence of people from multiple diverse communities enables individuals to form new virtual communities.

In the early development of digital environments, users utilise digital networks to organise, support and communicate, giving rise to a social entity known as a virtual community. Virtual community is viewed as mediated social spaces in the digital environment that allow groups to form and be sustained primarily through ongoing communication processes (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002). “The internet use also has the effect of linking together web users with the same ethnicity, into a tightly knit online community,” (Poster, 2010: 41). Contrary to popular belief that people of the same ethnicity and language group become a knit online community,

the researcher believes that twitter threads such as *#OJewaKeEng?* have shown that these communities can be built by diverse people from different language groups through sharing the same interest. According to Prah (2017: 219), “When we use our languages for education and import intellectualised capacity to them, the social gap between the colonially received knowledge constituency and indigenous constituency is bridged. The use of our languages for education and general social practice therefore implies the intellectualisation of indigenous knowledge”.

The next section provides an overview of twitter as a platform, its terminology and features of this social networking platform referring to *#OJewaKeEng?* tweet.

2.2.1 WHAT’S TRENDING ON TWITTER?

Twitter is a social media platform utilised by a vast number of individuals from across the globe. This platform allows people from different parts of the world to come together and engage on any matters they want to engage, discuss, and communicate about, these are basically matters of interest. Solo-Anaeto & Jacobs (2015) define twitter as “a free social networking and microblogging platform that allows registered members to stay connected and broadcast short posts (140-character limit) called tweets. Twitter members can follow each other and rebroadcast other users’ tweets”. While Backstrom & Haslum (2016) define twitter as “an online social network in the shape of a micro-blog platform, which first started in 2006”. Naaman, Becker & Gravano (2011) define twitter as “a popular SAS service, with tens of millions of registered users as of June 2010. Twitter’s core function allows users to post short messages, or tweets, which are up to 140 characters long”.

In this regard, the researcher argue that twitter is a social platform that allows its users to broadcast their tweets, short updates, and others. These users have the freedom to tweet in private only for their followers (tweeps) or publicly for every individual user to see. The other users can choose to like, share, or comment on the tweet. Twitter enables its users to follow each other, inspirational individuals, celebrities, politicians, and anyone of interest to them, without that other user having to follow back. This reflects in that, some users have less and others more followers.

Previously conducted studies indicate the rapid increase and popularity of Twitter as a microblogging social networking platform (Lau, Collier & Baldwin, 2012; Lee, Palsetia,

Narayanan, Patwary, Agrawal & Choudhary, 2011; Saha & Menezes, 2016; Hattem & Lomicka, 2016; Dovgopol & Nohelty, 2015; Otsuka, Wallace & Chiu, 2016). Twitter keeps attracting more people to join by creating their own accounts and start interacting and attaining information online. Twitter has syntaxes such as the username indicated by the at-sign, comment, retweet indicated as RT, like and share. (See tweet 1 for signs). Zubiaga, Spina, Martinez & Fresno (2013) gives a brief definition of the following syntaxes user mentions, replies, retweets and hashtags. User mentions indicate that when a user decide to mention another user in their tweet, they should put at-sign (@) before that user's name, they are basically tagging that person. (See tweet 1). Replies refer to a case where another user wants to direct to the other user or basically reply to a specific tweet. They mention the user's handle which starts with the at-sign and reply to that tweet.

Retweets are a reshare of the tweet posted by another user i.e when a user finds a certain tweet to be of interest to others, they retweet (RT) it for every other interested user to see. The tweet will attach an RT followed by the handle of the original user who posted at the beginning of the tweet. Twitter and other social media platforms permit its users the freedom to make their accounts private, where the content produced by the user can only be consumed by their followers. Social media platforms are set in an engaging and conversational manner that requires other people to see and engage with the content put out. Therefore, the account can be private, but the followers would still have access to the tweets created or communicated, while the only people who will not gain access to the tweets would be the people who do not follow that user. Twitter has a peculiar way of operating online, users can retweet other users' tweets, which means that people who are non-followers can still access the tweet without having to follow the person.

“Hashtags, similar to tags on social tagging systems or other social networking systems, hashtags included in a tweet tend to group tweets in conversations or represent the main terms of the tweet, usually referred to topics or common interests of a community,” (Zubiaga, Spina, Martinez & Fresno, 2013: 1404). The hashtag is represented by the sign #. (See tweet 2 for an example). Hashtags makes it easier for users to see a trending tweet and using a hashtag attracts more users to see what you have tweeted. Dovgopol & Nohelty (2015) argue that hashtags are used for the purposes of finding posts of interest, organising a group message, and determining the most popular topics of discussion. “When a hashtag is tweeted more frequently, it may be classified as trending by Twitter's own trend detection algorithm,” (Backstrom & Haslum, 2016: 7).

Tweet 1

The top arrow indicating to 'Replying to' is an example of a user mention in a tweet by a certain user. In this case the other user is replying to the original user by tagging them in their tweet. The other bottom arrows indicate which sign each syntax is in a typical tweet.



Tweet 2

This tweet is an example of a tweet where a hashtag is used. In this case, the user uses a hashtag *#Ojewakeeng*. Hashtags assist users' tweets to reach multiple other users and more audience base to engage with the tweet or attain information put out.

Hashtag



2.2.2 WHAT'S POPULAR AND WHAT'S TRENDING?

“Twitter defines trends as a topic that is emerging in popularity,” (Backstrom & Haslum, 2016: 7). There are trending topics on twitter where you can check on the tab to see which ones are the top trending topics, these are characterised by hashtags i.e #*Ojewakeeng*. Otsuka et al. (2016) argue that trends are when “twitter displays a list of immediately popular keywords and hashtags on the user’s homepage to help others discover the emerging topics in twitter, and these keywords are referred to as *trends*. Trends are user-locality aware but are not context-sensitive”. Zubiaga, Spina, Martinez & Fresno (2013) state that twitter defines trending topics as “topics that are immediately popular, rather than topics that have been popular for a while or on a daily basis.”

This shows that trending topics are usually topics that are popular and mostly being discussed at the specific time. Backstrom & Haslum (2016) proposes that “a trend is the equivalent of an emerging hashtag,” because twitter trends “excludes topics that constantly have a relative high frequency for an extended period of time.” Trending tweets such as *O jewa ke eng?* are still relevant today because they have a high activity burst (increase in frequency) as referred to by Backstrom & Haslum (2016). Specifically looking at the #*Ojewakeeng?* tweet, it allows people to discuss, interact and share important information.

The tweet has attracted and drawn positive attention to individuals across the world, who want to attain and share impactful information. Looking at the retweets and comments, people interact with the tweet mostly to advertise their businesses, share job posts, advise others and so on. The tweet might not be on the timeline on twitter every day because there are other trending topics and the list changes every time, but *O jewa ke eng?* tweet stays relevant. Some twitter trends come and go i.e celebrity news. A celebrity or politician will be talked about and what they did or what happened to them, for a while. Then something new comes up, the trend will be based on that currently discussed topic. Below is an example of twitter trends.

Twitter trends

“Not all the trending topics emerge equally. Different happenings, either in the society, on a TV show, or on the Internet, can motivate users to share and discuss on a topic, producing a

sudden increase of associated sharing and subsequently the creation of a trending topic,” (Zubiaga et al, 2013:1405). Moreover, twitter broke barriers to professional journalism where news were only broadcasted by media houses through their journalists going on the field to investigate and report on daily happenings and events. This microblogging platform has made it easy for any individual to broadcast any event taking place, people can report on news, sport, entertainment etc. They use their twitter accounts to share news and no longer wait for mainstream media to report on events or news. Looking at news where the President addresses the Nation, individuals listen and watch on TV and quickly report on twitter, discussions arise, and users converse and share information. This speaks to the immediacy of news; the online platform has created a space for quicker and free access to information; and fast engagement on topics of interest.

Zubiaga et al. (2013) explain four categories that trigger trending topics, and these are mainly news, ongoing events, memes, and commemoratives.

- **News:** Looking at breaking news where twitter users who are not professional journalists broadcast news immediately online before any media outlet does. For example, a couple would be fighting in the street or there is a car crash on N1 road (example of soft news as explained in the introduction section), people quickly take out their phones, record and share on twitter. When any media outlet catches on, the story would have been broken out. This, then raises a question of; Are microblogging platforms like twitter taking over mainstream media? The mainstream media house would then report on the news with facts but do people still care about facts?

The story would trend with or without facts, as individuals keep updating other users online. “We can define that a trending topic can be categorised as *news* when it is produced by a newsworthy event that major news outlets either had reported it by the time the trend popped up or will report it soon after it broke on Twitter,” (Zubiaga et al, 2013:1405).

- **Ongoing events:** These are trending topics because twitter users’ tweet about ongoing events, they even live-tweet an event taking place at that specific time. Ongoing events could be conferences, musical festivals, sport events, protests, and others. Twitter users will live-tweet that specific event and other users gain experience as if they have attended that event. Users who are at the event are basically sharing the experience with others.

- **Memes:** These trigger trending topics as they are spread widely and they could be to send funny messages and are attractive to users, that they get to reach a large community. An individual or organisation can create a meme out of a video or image they find funny, share it on twitter and create a message or share an idea of what that image could possibly portray. These messages change all the time as another user can use the same picture in a different scenario.
- **Commemoratives:** This trigger trending topics when users celebrate, congratulate, or commemorate an important day or event. These could happen when people celebrate a persons' life such as wishing celebrities or any well-known people Happy birthdays. In a different event, these could happen when people commemorate or celebrate an important day such as World Aids Day. People who have passed such as celebrities, politicians, struggle heroes and heroines and so on. For example, commemorate Lebo Mathosa, Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko, and others.

Table 1.2: The typology table below show examples of the trending topics based on the four triggers explained by Zubiaga et al. (2013).

Type	Trending topic	Description	Sample tweet
News	#RIPMotjekaMadisha	Soccer player Motjeka Madisha was involved in a car accident and he died.	I don't know how to feel, a lot was waiting for you ahead #RIPMotjekaMadisha
Ongoing events	#FeesMustFall	Students from different institutions were protesting for the increase in fees.	It seems #feesmustfall worked partially for the new generation. But did nothing for the generation that was fighting for this

Memes	#FamilyMeeting	When the South African President Cyril Ramaphosa is going to address the country at a certain time, people remind other users by saying we have a family meeting or engage in other topics using the hashtag.	Yeah can finally get my Christmas presents in May, hope they weren't perishable #lockdownroadmap #FamilyMeeting
Commemoratives	#WorldAIDSDay	People were commemorating World Aids Day celebrated on the 1 st of December ever year.	Post #WorldAIDSDay activist's fatigue hit me real hard this year.

2.2.3 THE USE OF LANGUAGE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

This section looks at language use on social media referring to the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet. Social media platforms cater to individuals of every race, culture, ethnic group, religion and so on. Therefore, it is important to understand the fact that these platforms have created a free space for people to engage and interact in languages they are comfortable in, as they do not restrict users to specific languages. Zubiaga et al. (2013) state that trending tweets could be written in different languages. This shows that tweets or hashtags written in African languages can trend and people of different language groups can interact and engage with that specific tweet. Most times, it goes as far as people not asking what the tweet means, with or without understanding it, people start engaging. The possibility of this interaction is through users who engage with the original tweet in English. Therefore, other users who do not know the language (could be any African language the tweet is communicated in) get to understand what is being discussed

or shared, and they start interacting without asking the original tweet user what he/she meant. People on social media can communicate and interact in their native languages or English. “A large-scale study of the languages used on twitter reveals that almost 49% of the posts are written in a language different from English,” stated (Eleta & Golbeck, 2014: 425).

Arguably, twitter, as an online platform where people from different parts of the world communicate and engage on matters of interest, allows flexibility for everyone to use any language. This platform allows for limited and sometimes incorrect translation of tweets, where a user tweets something, and the translation says something completely different from the original tweet. Other users might engage in English as a language of lingua franca, while others use their native languages. The use of different languages is also based on the group of people you are trying to convey the message to, your target market or niche. In some cases, when a user conveys a message to their peers or friends, they can direct message that other user. In this case they might choose to communicate in their native language and the conversation flows because they are literally holding a conversation together online. Knowledge sharing plays an important role in determining which language to engage in, especially on breaking news such as sharing information about power outage times, gender-based violence cases and so on. The use of a presumably common and known language, English, when people share information on issues of common interest is important to note.

The use of different languages on twitter raises a challenge of having to make sure that majority of people understand and can engage with your tweet. In the case of *O jewa ke eng?* tweet, majority of people understood the tweet, but engagement was mostly in English. It could be argued that the use of the English language assisted people from other language groups to understand what the tweet means, but at the same time users from other language groups knew what the tweet meant. Some users communicated in Sesotho as the language used to communicate the tweet, while others used different languages. Language use on social media in this digital age works differently because the use of a dominant or user native language does not determine the amount of engagement the tweet will attract. The *O jewa ke eng?* tweet attracted more engagement and, in a way, influenced users from other language groups to engage in their respective languages, while others alternated between two or more languages. This raises a question of bilingualism and multilingualism that follows in the study.

The creation of proliferate communication channels by the new technologies, has created exceptional potential for linguistic, cultural, and creative exchange across geographically

dispersed sites (Thorne et al., 2009: 204-205). There is no standard language use online, anyone and everyone can interact with people from other ethnic groups in languages they feel comfortable in, based on their own reasons discussed by the study in the next chapters.

“Although Twitter enables the use of many languages and writing systems, it does not offer support for translation or features for strengthening connections between language groups. For example, there are not embedded linguistic resources on the interface, such as machine translation, dictionaries or transliteration tools, and translations are not linked to the original post,” (Eleta & Golbeck, 2014: 431).

The next section introduces and critically discusses bilingualism and multilingualism. Further, discusses language choice, language shift and language attitude online. Theoretically, the following section looks at code mixing and code switching as factors that contribute to language choice online. The use of multiple languages on twitter encourages bi- and multilingualism. This is a factor that contributes to the development to improve the growth of previously underrepresented languages.

2.3 ACKNOWLEDGING DIVERSITY ONLINE: BILINGUALISM AND MULTILINGUALISM

The researcher believes that we live in a diverse world with diverse language groups, therefore, cannot shy away from the notion of bilingualism and multilingualism. People are inhabited by different linguistic groups, thus, come from different but somehow similar ethnic groups. The general explanation of bilingualism is that bilinguals are people who know and understand two languages. According to Waris (2012), bilingualism refers to the use of two languages or two codes. A bilingual person is someone who speaks two languages, while having achieved native-like fluency in each one. Nababan as quoted by Waris (2012), divides bilingual into two categories and these are ‘bilingualism’ and ‘bilinguality’. “Bilingualism is the ability to use two languages in interaction with other, as habit. Bilinguality is the condition of being able to speak two languages,” (Waris, 2012:128).

Normally, people have their native language as a first language and the language they acquire after as a second language. On the other hand, multilingual speakers are people who know and understand more than two languages. Bilingual and multilingual speakers are people who

generally know their native language and another language or more, their home language and first additional language which they normally acquire from school and more languages which they may acquire from their community. This is quite relevant to multilingual communities where you find that the community consists of i.e., Xhosa, Coloured, Zulu etc. Bilingual and multilingual children are then faced with a language predicament of having to decide on which language to use when communicating with their family, peers, teachers and so forth. Faltis (1989) proposes the use of code mixing and code switching as phenomena for bilingual speakers to use to overcome this communication and language predicament.

Language is an integral part of a culture. We cannot separate a language from its respective culture and vice versa. (Nawaz, Umer, Anjum & Ramzan, 2012:74). In the researcher's view, we cannot dispute the fact that a child could be born from mixed race or ethnic group, which then means that they are automatically bilingual. In some cases, they might know both their parents' languages, if the parents are Xhosa and Tswana, it could be easy for the child to learn and know languages that are linguistically closer to these. The child might then be identified as multilingual because they know more than just their two native languages.

Language plays a vital role in culture. "African culture relates to the beliefs, customs, traditions, practices and behaviours of different people in human groups or tribes within the African continent," (Solo-Anaeto & Jacobs, 2015:41).

Moreover, communication is the foundation of any culture. Cultures and values are passed and kept alive from generation to generation, and this is done through communication and socialisation. This is enunciated in the cultural transmission function of the mass media. The coverage and reporting of people and activities of different cultures by the media contributes to the sustenance of cultures. This helps people from other cultures to know and appreciate other cultures. (Solo-Anaeto & Jacobs, 2015: 40-41). Same applies to language use on social media, when people interact in their native languages like the Sesotho tweet *O jewa ke eng?* was, without thinking that no one will engage with the tweet because it is written in an African language. Digital media has created a space where internet users can engage in their native languages or other African languages. Depending on the popularity of the user or topic of interest, the tweet reaches more other users, and with retweets and hashtags it reaches a wider diverse audience.

Following the trend of the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet, other African language users started to tweet in other languages besides English. Prior to the trending tweet, there were twitter users who

communicated in African languages, but their tweets obviously did not trend, based on their amount of following and not being popular/known. Social media works in the favour of those who are popularly known in the space. Other tweets in languages besides English sufficed on twitter, to call out a few, these were #UmjolowithAzola and U’right? Ushoda’ ngani? and others. These were not primarily communicated in English, people from different language groups engaged with them in different languages and this showed the diversity of the digital space. English is influential because many users still believe in engaging in English rather than their native languages or other African languages. In these trending tweets majority of users use English, some use their native languages and others code mix and switch between languages. This is discussed more in detail in chapter 4, when analysing the data collected.

People might identify as multilingual because of different languages they acquire from different domains inclusive of school, church, multilingual communities, and others. According to Wolff (2000), “widespread multilingualism are groups of people who use two or more languages regularly and who often apply the languages they use for different purposes or switch between them in very systematic ways.” For example, multilingual speakers might speak isiXhosa at home, English at school, slang with their friends, isiZulu, Sesotho, and others in social spaces where they grew in communities dominated by people of other language groups, such as Soweto in Gauteng. (Hale, 2014; Eleta & Golbeck, 2014) believe that multilingual users play a significant bridging role in the global social media space. South Africa is a prime example of multilingualism, and this is mostly seen in the online space. Looking at the trending tweet *O jewa ke eng?* the ability of isiXhosa users and others, to know and understand other languages, they were able to engage with the tweet without having to ask what it meant.

In multilingual societies where there are diverse language speakers, Piller (2004) believes that in such societies, the language spoken by a large community can be considered superior to those spoken by the minority. The community language is mostly spoken by the majority and has a wider social function. Therefore, using the community language serves more benefits to the speakers and it can be influential on their language choice because it helps expanding their social network. The social media space raises questions about language barrier where people who are not familiar with other languages besides theirs, find it difficult to understand foreign languages. Bilingual and multilingual speakers find it easy to engage with tweets written in other languages. English is predominantly used as the lingua franca language in these advanced technological communication platforms such as twitter.

In contrast, one would think that English is always the lingua franca language, but an African language can also be, looking at cases where African language speakers come from different language backgrounds. In such cases, you find that the speakers use one of the African languages as the intermediary language between themselves. It could be a group of four people, with two who speak isiXhosa, one isiZulu and the other Sesotho. Taking into consideration that these are African language speakers and the other two, their languages are similar. Now, in such cases the users might decide to use isiXhosa as the intermediate language of communication between themselves. Believably so, this is mostly easy when the speakers are all multilingual and at times knowing the basics of another language helps.

According to Prah (2018), the growth of multilingualism is mostly common in African-language speakers. However, Schlettwein (2015:1) points out that, “Previous studies have found that multilingual individuals hold more favourable attitudes towards English than towards indigenous languages...” De Klerk (2000) as well as Ndimande-Hlongwa & Ndebele (2017) suggest that various research studies show that most African-language speakers, including parents and students, prefer English as the medium of teaching and learning, because it is imagined that this will confer on them certain social advantages. It is observed that “[c]hildren who learn English become assertive and confident...” (De Klerk, 2000:18). Much of the research on language carried out attests to the dominance of English (Wardaugh, 1986; De Klerk, 2000; Simeon & Murray, 2007; Prah, 2018).

“A multilingual online environment is important for enabling access to people that do not understand English or other languages of international communication, while the ability to switch between languages and translation are necessary for breaking the language barriers. The potential of social media to bring positive social change, with its support and collaboration networks, crowdfunding opportunities, citizen science and journalism, will not be really fulfilled until we leverage the mediation skills of multilingual users and help them in their quiet quest of interconnecting the World. Now, twitter and other social media platforms of international appeal have the opportunity to rewire our frontiers.” (Eleta & Golbeck, 2014: 431).

Social media platforms such as twitter allow users the flexibility to engage and interact in different languages but lacks translation machines and tools. Certain tweets by users can be translated but most times you find that the tweet gets translated to isiZulu and you do not get to choose which language you want to see the tweet translated into. These are mostly tweets

written in English, but the translation is not accurate, it looks like direct translation where the machine says word to word. “Although Twitter enables the use of many languages and writing systems, it does not offer support for translation or features for strengthening connections between language groups.” (Eleta & Golbeck, 2014: 431). Continuously, the authors state examples such as the fact that twitter has no embedded linguistic resources on the interface, such as machine translation, dictionaries or transliteration tools, and translations are not linked to the original post.

Bi- and multilingual language speakers generally engage and communicate in different languages during specific times, this takes us to the next part of the chapter which looks at language choice online. This part discusses language choice as a factor that contributes to bi- and multilingual speakers deciding on which language to communicate in and when.

2.3.1 LANGUAGE CHOICE IN MULTILINGUAL COMMUNITIES

People choose to engage using different languages for various reasons. For communication and interaction to happen, language plays a significant role in connecting people, could be people of the same or different language groups. Language choice is when a person decides which language to use and in which domains. Since South Africa is a diverse country with people from all over the world and they all come from different linguistic backgrounds, language choice is rather imperative to consider. When speaking about language choice in relation to multilingual speakers, they are constantly challenged with having to choose which language to use and in which domains. In simple terms, language choice could be defined as a situation where people choose which language to use and when. Ansah (2016) argue that “in a multilingual community, the multilingual speaker needs to make the right language choice which principally depends on the domain of usage and the linguistic repertoire of speech participants”. When you are conveying and putting a message across, it is important to be cognisant of diversity and inclusion, people need to understand the language used, to interact with your content and shared information.

Language choices refer to the individuals’ preference in language. This is the language they feel comfortable in communicating in, know and understand more. Language choice indicates that choice is linked to aspirations, social and economic factors (Bissoonauth, 1998). People

choose to engage using different languages for various reasons, among others; not to exclude others, draw more people to the conversation and so on.

Transmitting a message for people to understand plays an important factor, as communication and understanding promote better interaction. “Language choice is a careful selection of a word, phrase, clause or sentence of another language within the speaker’s linguistic repertoire...” (Dweik & Qawar, 2015:4). Moreover, the occurrence of language choice seems natural, automatic, and unplanned for bilinguals and multilinguals. Children are born competent to become bi- or multilingual, and parents speak their indigenous languages with their children and English is acquired at school from a young age (De Samudio, 2006 & Baker, 2000).

Language choice is compelled by various factors such as educational attainment, occupation, social status, rural or urban origin, the formality of the context and others (David, 2006). “Dominant languages influence language choice of a speaker,” (Dweik & Qawar, 2015: 5). According to Auer (1998), a speakers’ choice of language in conversation is influenced by factors such as extra-linguistic features like topic, setting, relationships between participants, community norms and values, as well as societal, political, and ideological developments. This indicates that people do not only use one language over the other at a time, but they might also code switch or code mix languages in a conversation, more on this is discussed in the following sections.

Ansah (2016) conducted a study on language choice on the case study of Larteh, Ghana. The study focuses on the factors that are considered in language choice made by multilingual speakers in Larteh. While Brokensha (1966) conducted a study on language choice in Larteh, discussing the linguistic situation of the area by focusing on three languages Leteh, Twi and English. Leteh was described as a domestic language, which was learnt by children as their first language. English was learnt at school and school lessons were taught in Twi. To some extent, Twi was a prestigious language, and associated with education and Christianity. English is normally used as the home language and the native language would be used as the second language in academic spaces and so on. Johnson (1973) and Brokensha (1966) as quoted by Ansah (2016) argue that, even though children in Larteh spoke English and Twi for practice at home, this was seen and considered as rude and disloyal. In most African cultures the importance of respect is instilled on children while they are young, children cannot address their elders/adults in a rude or informal manner.

When children use English or any other language that the elders are not familiar with, they are viewed as being disrespectful, unless the family is familiar with the language. This was mostly done in the olden days where English was acquired from school and in monolingual environments people would interact in their native languages because predominantly the environment uses a specific language. In relation to isiXhosa native speakers who were not only monolingual but multilingual because they acquired more languages in places of work, people would speak English with their bosses and other languages with their diverse peers and colleagues. English would then be used as the go to language when the diverse individuals do not hear or understand each other as other languages are harder to understand than others. People from the rural areas would go and find work in big cities where there are more and diverse people from different cultures and language backgrounds.

In such instances, language choice is important to consider because in places where there are people of different language groups who do not know English, it happens that they speak their native languages and others adapt to the intermediate language they all decide to use. This indicates that, even though English might be a language of power, in a circle of different language groups people can choose to interact in an intermediate African language. Multilingualism is then attained and promoted through such cases where people get to learn other languages to make communication easier and for them to hear and understand what is said in a different language from than English.

In studies conducted by some researchers, they view the spread of English as benign, posing no threat to the existence of local languages, which indicates that all languages can work in a dominant level and be used in all domains. The use of language online and in social media platforms and websites has improved in terms of being able to find content and information in other languages online, this speaks to the likes of Wikipedia, Gmail, and others. In these platforms, there is an option to change and receive information in other languages rather than English, an email might be sent in English, but the receiver is able to change/translate the email into a language they want to read it in. In terms of Wikipedia, you can do the same thing by reading Wikipedia in isiXhosa instead of Wikipedia in English. On the other hand, on social media people have the freedom to use the language of their choice without being governed by rules and regulations. In contrast, there is still one language of power which can be understood almost by everyone, and this raises a question of whether it is possible for African languages to be used as dominant languages in all domains inclusive of Academic, Church, Work and so on.

At the same time, Nunberg (2000) observed that the use of English on websites does not necessarily come at the expense of other languages, nor is the language used in websites necessarily determined by economic factors. In a study he conducted with Schutze prior to 1999, they found that countries with a relatively low number of speakers and a high competency in English were most likely to use English on their websites. Similarly, Danet and Herring (2007) suggested that English should be reconceptualised, from being an imperialist tool to being a multinational tool. These authors noted that the use of languages other than English online is steadily rising, as indicated in the aforementioned. Furthermore, Uberuaga (2001) argued that, in platforms such as radio and television, the internet provides an outlet for, and thus promotes, minority languages. Thus, Wright (2006) in his study, conveyed that minority languages and dialects of Europe such as Occitan, Sardinian, Piemontese, Ladin, and Frisian, are used extensively on the internet, even though in restricted domains. This implies that the internet assists in the promotion of multiple diverse languages inclusive of the minority languages. The internet has no restrictions in terms of the languages people can use to communicate and interact online. Social media platforms such as twitter are personal and there are no terms and conditions or policies and regulations that restrict users from communicating in their language of choice.

The platform even offers languages where users can choose which language, they want to consume the tweet in. Even though majority of these languages are international, but this indicates the significant role played by different languages online. The translation online still needs more work in terms of how other sentences are constructed when being translated to another language. Social media platforms are not created for the segregation of different language groups, but they help unite users from different linguistic backgrounds, so they can assist and advise each other, share ideas, information, and so on. Social media platforms such as Twitter assist in the promotion of African languages that were previously disadvantaged, African language users engage and communicate in languages of choice without feeling the pressure to use a powerful and influential language. If a user does not have high level of proficiency in English, this does not necessarily deteriorate their language ability to engage, as twitter provide a social space for users to create and produce content using their personal accounts.

Hale (2014) conducted a study on the global connectivity of the twitter retweet and further discusses and analyses network and the role of multilingual users engaging with content in multiple languages. The argument is that users who write in multiple languages are more active

and authorise more tweets than monolingual users. Moreover, English plays a bridging role in the global connectivity of the online community, but multilingual individuals online play a more important role in bridging the language divide in the global connectivity of the network. These users may be able to share and assist combat language divide on social media by reiterating the tweets in other languages by means of translating what the original user of the tweet said. Twitter has a feature of ‘quote tweet’ that allows the users to retweet through quoting the original tweet, multiple language speakers can translate or comment under the tweet, or comment by quoting the original tweet. When other users engage with the tweet, users who do not know or understand the tweet in the language it was communicated in, they can get a bit of understanding from the other users who decide to engage with the tweet in different languages rather than solely English or original language communicated in.

Dor (2004) argue that economic globalisation will determine the languages of the internet to a large extent, in a way that does not exclusively promote the use and spread of English as the language of power. In a way it results in global diglossia, with the language English used for purposes of international communication and local languages “commodified” for local purposes by savvy international companies. Thus, globalisation will have an impact on local languages but not result in total extinction or replacement of the languages.

Contrary to the aforementioned information on English not being a threat to African languages, even though some studies indicate the flexibility of other languages rather than English, we cannot dispute the fact that there is still a need for more use of these languages in academic, work, and other domains and the preservation of these languages online. All professional domains need to cater and accommodate for African languages to acknowledge inclusivity and diversity and to promote language development in areas of inferior and previously underrepresented language groups. There is a need for lesser used and inferior languages to be utilised in all domains and to dominate the internet and all other spaces, just as English is. Majority of research conducted indicates that there is still a gap in language use in professional, academic, and other settings, whether written or spoken.

Ansah (2016) study describe language use in Ghana and the different occasions in which they decide or are expected to change languages. In relation to the use of language in certain places, children in Larteh were obliged to communicate and interact in their native language and not English. The language choice depended on the settings where people are and who they were communicating with. For example, in Larteh, English and Twi were used in educational spaces

and the children would speak their native languages when they get home. English and Twi were acquired and learnt at school, the environment was monolingual and therefore certain languages which were not encouraged. The researcher noted that Twi was the language of the Bible, hymnals, and prayer books at church.

Thus, in other events such as traditional ceremonies, Leteh was the primary language of choice. In some parts such as when they recite poems, libation pouring, orations, speeches and others, Twi phrases were used except for English. This proposes the use of code switching between languages, an example could be that of church where the pastor or reverend would read the Bible scripture in English to accommodate visitors and explain the word in the native language. People in Larteh were cognisant of the fact that not everyone who attended church was one of them and therefore inclusivity matters. The researcher indicated that, him and his wife could tell that English was used at church because they visited, and the community could notice that these are new people who are different from them and speak a different language from theirs. This was done to accommodate the other party and make them feel welcome. This raises a talk of multilingualism in monolingual environments and how language choice plays a crucial role in bringing together everyone.

The fact that children in Larteh must speak a specific language in certain domains and change when they are home and speak their native language, indicates that the aspect of language shift happens in all environments even in monolingual environments. It is important to note that even though we live in a post-apartheid era, people in different environments would still choose English as the language of communication for different reasons. An example, looking at an isiXhosa or any other African language speaking individuals, especially in academic and workplaces. When you encounter a new person, you immediately speak English to see which language the person speaks. At times, the conversation might end up being in English throughout due to language preference and the inability to communicate completely in vernacular. This mostly happens in academic, workplace, and other settings. Linguistic diversity and inclusivity are important aspects of language communication in societies that are encircled by various language groups.

In a case study on Ghana conducted by Agyekum (2009), majority of the formal sectors such as the legislature, executive, judiciary, the print media, education, businesses, and others employ English in their deliberations. Moreover, public documents in Ghana are written in English and Ghanaian vernacular languages are reserved for ‘unofficial’ interactions, as argued

by Agyekum (2009). These interactions include daily conversations, hawking and trading, local arbitration, religious rituals, funerals, puberty, and marriage rites, and so forth.

In the heterogeneous cosmopolitan areas like Accra these customary rites are performed either in English or a mixture of English and the respective Ghanaian languages; but this depends on the ethnic group that is performing the ritual. In the urban areas with high rate of multilingualism, some church services are conducted in English with translations into the Ghanaian languages. Some have early morning services in English and the other services in the Ghanaian languages like Ewe, Ga, Akan, etc.

The concepts of code switching, code mixing, language shift, and language attitude will be discussed in the next chapter. The above discussed mostly relate in spoken speech more than written form. In contrast, people might communicate and interact in their native language in their communities and with their peers, but they can write in a different language. For example, people who are both isiXhosa speakers might decide to write in English when communicating and engaging on social media because of reasons such as abbreviation of words, slang and SMS language use that does not require formal language and complete/full word use. The world is gradually changing and means of communication are moving with the digital times. The choice of a particular language is viewed with reference to the extent its use matches community expectations for the domain or type of activity.

The next chapter explores and discusses the research designs used to complete the study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter describes and outlines the methodology used to collect data to complete the thesis. This chapter referred to published books and articles online and used twitter as the main research site to collect tweets because the study revolves around a trend that transpired from twitter. The study outlines the sampling methods used to source for research participants. The research integrated both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 native isiXhosa-speaking participants, both bilingual and multilingual. This was done to obtain data that is more detailed and open-ended questions were asked. These kinds of interviews allowed for flexibility to ask follow-up questions. Open-ended interviews follow a certain procedure to address key themes instead of specific questions (MacDonald & Headlam, 2015).

Data collected is analysed according to the themes that emerged from the survey and interviews. These themes are analysed through using the theoretical framework and literature discussed in chapter two. Following the quantitative method, an online survey was posted for 100 isiXhosa participants who contributed to the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet. Specific questions were posed to provide a broader overview of the research and the snowball approach was used to source more participants, drawing on followers of those interviewed and others who were attained from twitter. To analyse the tweets, the document analysis method was utilised.

3.1.1 SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN RESEARCH

Data was collected through twitter, a social media microblogging platform, tweets were attained under the *#Ojewakeeng?* trend. A twitter user tweeted *#Ojewakeeng?* back in January 2019 and that is where the tweet originated. The tweet translates to *what is bothering you?* and it trended and gained traction from people all over the globe, people who come from different language and ethnic groups. Since the research is based on native isiXhosa-speaking users, their engagement with the tweet was analysed using retweets, direct tweets, and threads under the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet. The main concern was to look at the languages they used to engage

with the tweet and what prompted them to use the specific languages they used to interact. As alluded in the introduction of the research, the study looks at language choice by isiXhosa speaking users on twitter. Language use is analysed through looking at human language behaviour on twitter, mainly focussing on the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet.

The tweets that got more interaction through responses and retweets and could be communicated in any language, were used. These are tweets by isiXhosa native users who engaged with the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet. Some of these tweets would follow a thread because more people would be commenting and engaging with them. Mostly, these are tweets where users are asking for assistance or advice on products to use for their face, body, hair and so forth. Other tweets included advertisement, awareness creation and some were people asking for financial assistance to buy necessities or settle their academic debts and others.

Since we live in a digital age, technology and the internet are utilised as means to collect data and conduct research. Social media is now used as a research method to collect data and it is constantly evolving as researchers are finding and developing new ways to understand the way the online audience use social media channels such as twitter, their language behaviour, and conversations they create on these platforms. In terms of using twitter as a research method, a researcher gets to observe and sometimes engage with the content produced online, different user's opinions and views about certain topics and what's trending at the specific time. Social media platforms have their own discrepancies when it comes to the efficiency and validity of data collected and obtained online.

Social media is a social platform with a vast number of users, this includes a diverse range of individuals. Social media makes it easy for qualitative researchers to gain access to a massive and diverse group of individuals online, and the content they generate. Researchers can identify voices of individuals which may not necessary be heard through more traditional approaches, such as semi-structured interviews and internet surveys with open-ended questions. In contrast, this study incorporated these methods without having to do face-to-face interaction of interviews and handing out surveys. The digital age and new technology are not exactly a diminishing factor for main traditional methods but works as an advantage to recruit and attract a vast number of diverse individuals online. This shows that it is both an advantage and disadvantage to traditional media.

The use of hashtags can be of great assistance in collecting data and attaining more participants, the tweet *Ojewa ke eng?* was used as a hashtag where individuals would tweet to respond to this 'question and answer' thread and use #ojewakeeng to spread the tweet. Such tweets gain more traction as more people would know about it and hashtags are a convenient way to access

the tweet and other tweets relating to it. Twitter features such as hashtags, comments, retweets, and trending tweets assist researchers in attaining tweets and reaching more users. In this way, it makes it easy for any researcher to recruit more participants. On the other hand, it is also easy to get the specific group of participants you want to use for your study. This could be done through looking at their accounts and bios (user profile).

While collecting data from interviews and surveys can require an effortful and time-consuming contribution from participants and researchers, collecting social media data can be more scalable than the normal and usual traditional approaches. Once equipped with the resources to access and process data, researchers can potentially scale data harvesting without expending a great deal of resources. Social media analyses may also be more ecologically valid than traditional approaches. Unlike approaches where responses from participants are elicited in artificial social contexts (e.g., Internet surveys, laboratory-based interviews), social media data emerges from real-world social environments encompassing a large and diverse range of people, without any prompting from researchers. Thus, in comparison with traditional methodologies as suggested by (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2017; Lietz & Zayas, 2010; McKechnie, 2008), participant behaviour is relatively unconstrained if not entirely unconstrained, by the behaviours of researchers.

These opportunities also come up with challenges, because of the following attributes outlined by Parker et al. (2011). Firstly, the author state that social media can be *interactive*; this is in a manner that its content involves the interactions of users with other users e.g., conversations, or even external websites e.g., links to news websites. The ill-defined boundaries of user interaction have implications for determining the units of analysis of qualitative study. For example, conversations can be lengthy, with multiple users, without a clear structure or endpoint. Hence you will notice that comments under a specific tweet do not make sense and you sometimes get confused, as some users advertise themselves, speak about different things and start fights under the specific tweet. Moreover, interactivity thus blurs the boundaries between users, their content, and external content (Herring, 2009; Parker et al., 2011).

Secondly, content can be *ephemeral and dynamic*. In such instances the users and content of their postings are transient, stated (Parker et al., 2011; Boyd & Crawford, 2012; Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). Moreover, this feature arises from the diversity of users, the dynamic socio-cultural context surrounding platform use, and the freedom users have to create, distribute, display, and dispose of their content (Marwick & Boyd, 2011).

Lastly, social media content is *massive in volume*. The accumulated postings of users can lead to a large amount of data, and due to the diverse and dynamic content, postings may be largely

unrelated and accumulate over a short period of time. Researchers hoping to harness the opportunities of social media data sets must therefore develop strategies for coping with these challenges. Hence the study looked at content produced and shared under the specific tweet #Ojewakeeng? One cannot shy away from the fact that any trending tweets are massive in volume and sometimes interactivity blurs the boundaries between users and content online. This specific tweet attracted a lot of diverse individuals on twitter and content keeps accumulating as more and more people keep reverting to it for assistance, to share information, speak their minds and so forth.

The next part that follows outlines the types of sampling research designs utilised to collect data for this study.

3.2 THE SAMPLING METHOD TO GATHER RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

As a researcher, when you are conducting research about a group of people whether based on ethnicity, religion, race, sexuality, and others, it is impossible to collect data from people individually. You need to know the group of people you are going for, therefore, the sample you choose would be people who will represent the group. Looking at this study, the sample integrated isiXhosa native users who are both bilingual and multilingual. We live in a world where people adapt to languages which are not their native but mostly use those languages as theirs. For the most part isiXhosa users who participated in the research were predominantly Xhosa because both parents are Xhosa and others were raised Xhosa since one of their parents is Xhosa. In contrast, culturally people believe that you are what your father is, if the father is Xhosa, then you are automatically Xhosa.

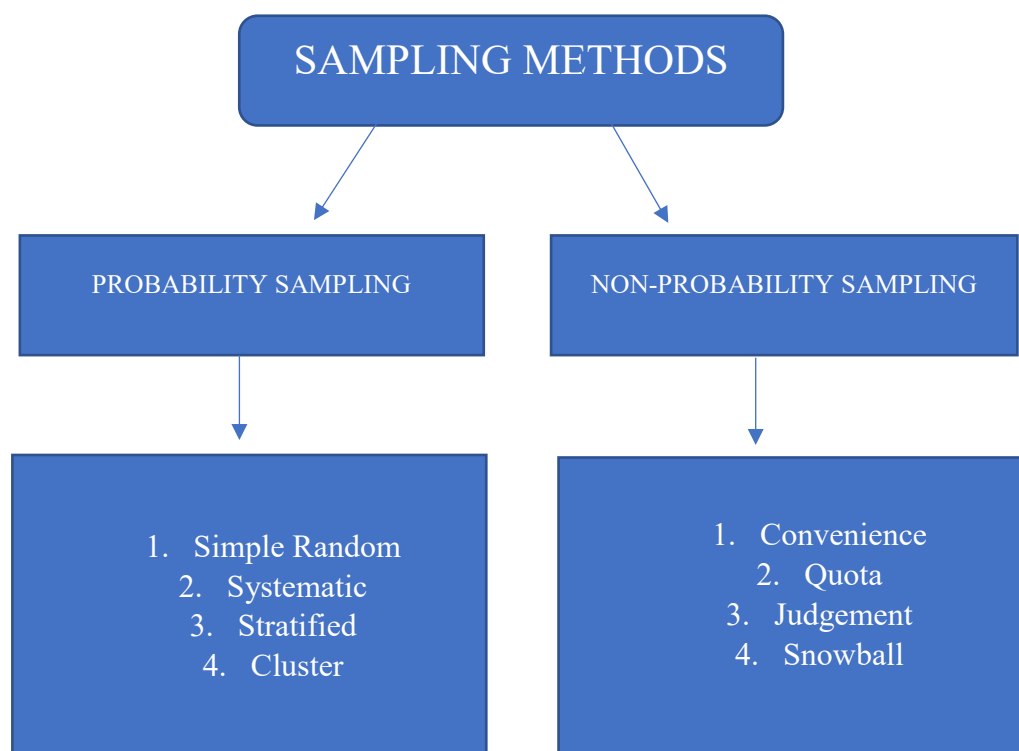
It becomes complicated when the parents are not together, and the child is born from two different cultures and obviously different language groups. If the father is Tswana and mother is Xhosa, but the child was raised on the mother's side and they mainly speak isiXhosa, now the child identifies as Xhosa. As an advantage, they can classify themselves as multilingual because they know English which they acquire from school; isiXhosa which is basically the language they were raised to know and believed to be their native and isiTswana which is said to be their native because culturally a child belongs and should take the father's side. The world is constantly evolving, and cultures are being challenged by the way things are done.

“The study of how language is used, and how members of the culture acquire and display

knowledge of usage, has been approached in different ways by philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists of language, social psychologists, and so on. Notwithstanding, these approaches to the cultural context of language all recognize that the formal study of linguistic codes is necessary but not sufficient to our understanding of how people communicate,” (Schiffman, 1996: 7).

Additionally, it is important to choose a sample that suffices the purpose of the research.

Figure 1.2: Sampling examples



Sampling can be defined as a process of picking units from the population of interest to collect data that will be analysed. According to McCombes (2019), sampling is used to determine the size of the population to use for the research and sometimes people look at specific demographics. These are race, gender, age, ethnic group, language, location, and others. This type of research mainly allows researchers to infer data collected about a specific population based on results from a subgroup of the population, without having to investigate every individual. Research based on a group of people such as this study that focuses on isiXhosa native users, the selection of a sample of people to use in collecting data is important, as it is rarely possible to collect data from every person in that specific group as stated above.

McCombes (2019) draws on two types of sampling a researcher needs to consider when selecting a sample that will represent the whole group, these are probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is a method that involves random selection, merely allowing the researcher to make statistical interpretations about the whole group. According to McCombes (2009), on the other hand, non-probability sampling is a method that involves non-random selection based on convenience or other criteria, allowing the researcher to easily collect initial data.

In terms of probability sampling, when determining the number of participants to involve in the survey, this method was utilised because the aim was to get participants that will represent the whole isiXhosa language group, seeing that the survey required quite several participants. On the other hand, non-probability method was integrated in selecting participants to contribute to semi-structured interviews because these were more in-depth interviews. Both methods were used to provide a balanced research. According to Palinkas, Horwity, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoaqwood (2011), sampling has different strategies such as Criterion-i, Criterion-e, Typical case, Homogeneity, Snowball, Stratified purposeful, Purposeful random, and others. Moreover, embedded in each of these strategies is the ability to compare, to identify similarities and differences in the phenomenon of interest.

Table 1.3: Difference between probability sampling and non-probability sampling.

PROBABILITY	NON-PROBABILITY
The sample is selected at random.	Sample selection based on the subjective judgment of the researcher.
Everyone in the population has an equal chance of getting selected.	Not everyone has an equal chance to participate.
Used when sampling bias has to be reduced.	The researcher does not consider sampling bias.
Used when the population is diverse.	Useful when the population has similar traits.
Used to create an accurate sample.	The sample does not accurately represent the population.
Finding the right respondents is not easy.	Finding respondents is easy.

3.2.1 THE USE OF PURPOSEFUL SAMPLING IN RESEARCH

According to Patton (2002), purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources. Moreover, Cresswell & Plano Clark (2011) declare that purposeful sampling involves the identification and selection of individuals and groups of people that are knowledgeable or experienced with the phenomenon of interest. Additionally, to the notion of knowledge and experience, the following authors Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) note the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner. This method was used with participants that were willing to participate in the research, as they were asked for permission and given a document stipulating the purpose of the research and the clause of anonymity. These participants were chosen according to being congruent to the research and their contribution would be aligned to the purpose of the study.

In contrast to the aforementioned about the notion of knowledge and experience, the use of probabilistic or random sampling is to ensure the generalisability of findings by minimizing the potential for bias in selection. Morse & Niehaus (2009) claim that sampling methods are intended to maximise efficiency and validity, whether utilised in qualitative or quantitative methodology. Thus, note the importance of sampling being consistent with the aims and assumptions inherent in the use either method. Palinkas et al., (2011) argue that sampling strategies for quantitative methods used in mixed methods designs in implementation research are generally well-established and based on probability theory. In contrast, sampling strategies for qualitative methods in implementation studies are less explicit and often less evident. Furthermore, mixed method designs are preferably the best methods to use in implementation research because they provide a better understanding of research issues than using either qualitative or quantitative approaches separately alone (Palinkas et al., 2011). The study integrated both qualitative and quantitative approaches in collecting data to complete the thesis.

“Although qualitative methods are often contrasted with quantitative methods based on depth versus breadth, they require elements of both to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Ideally, the goal of achieving theoretical saturation by providing as much detail as possible involves selection of individuals or cases that can ensure all aspects of that phenomenon are included in the examination and that any one aspect is thoroughly

examined. This goal, therefore, requires an approach that sequentially or simultaneously expands and narrows the field of view, respectively.” (McCombes, 2019).

3.2.2 USING SNOWBALL SAMPLING TO RECRUIT MORE PARTICIPANTS

The study incorporated both probability and non-probability sampling in selecting the participants to use and represent the whole isiXhosa group. Twitter is a diverse space where people who are isiXhosa native users might not be using their native language as the language of communication but use English or other African language because of their personal reasons. Looking the cases of bi- and multilingual speakers, some might be using isiXhosa alongside other languages to engage and interact on twitter. Thus, some individuals might be code mixing and code switching between languages when engaging online. They might code mix or switch in their tweets by writing the whole tweet in one language and maybe another one in a different language from the one they had initially communicated in. On the other hand, they might use different languages simultaneously in one tweet.

For the representation of the group, research participants were selected through the snowball method. “Snowball is a special nonprobability method for developing a research where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances...” (Katz, 2006:4). McCombes (2019) states that one of the objectives of snowball sampling is to identify cases of interest from sampling people who know people that generally have similar characteristics who, in turn know people, also with similar characteristics. Social media now forms part of research methods utilised to collect data; it also assists in finding research participants to contribute to the study. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and others, have made it easy for researchers to gather a representative sample online without having to meet them face-to-face.

Techniques such as crowdsourcing data and gathering a representative sample through social media without meeting face to face was feasible, especially now that the world is in a pandemic. On social media, you can find individual accounts, group pages and others. This makes it easy to attain and recruit more participants who come from the same language group. According to Zhuravleva De Bot & Hilton (2016), when a researcher is investigating, for example, language shift in a society, it is easy for the researcher to contact the target population (e.g., speakers of the language in focus) through social media channels such as Facebook group or a public page based on a common interest in the target language. You can also ask the people you got from

these groups, to also contact their friends who speak the same language. In this case the researcher is basically employing the snowball sampling technique. Though, in the case of this study, data was collected through twitter.

Moreover, Zhuravleva De Bot & Hilton (2016) argue that, in other social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Twitter, where there are no public groups and pages, a researcher would have to find participants either in real life (i.e., at a school/university/their friends etc). The researchers can also find participants through browsing their social media profiles and feeds and then be referred by them to further participants, and in this case snowball sampling technique is applied. “A researcher may also find their target population by browsing through Twitter hashtags connected with languages,” (Zhuravleva, De Bot & Hilton, 2016: 606). On twitter, hashtags and threads assist in gathering more people who speak the same language. This study mainly used the snowballing technique to attain and recruit more participants for the study. The participants were friends and acquaintances, and this was not enough, so snowballing was applied in terms of asking the already participating people in the research to suggest their other isiXhosa speaking friends who they know engaged with the tweet.

The main aim was to get people who engaged with the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet and are isiXhosa users. Firstly, scrolling through hashtags, memes, and posts where people would put Xhosa food and ask which weather people would have the meal for, and others was helpful. In some cases, the users would tweet isiXhosa phrases or share things amaXhosa parents normally say or do, these were also helpful because it became easy to get more isiXhosa participants. Secondly, looking at some of isiXhosa users’ followers and checking their bios/profiles helped a lot. These made it easy for me as a researcher to get more isiXhosa speakers through seeing the way people engaged with the tweet, the languages they used and so on. The technique of crowdsourcing through other user’s twitter accounts assisted because, normally people would have followers from the same language group and others from different language groups since social media is diverse. It was then easy to get more isiXhosa participants through followers of other users.

Finally, scrolling through twitter obviously helps in being able to see and get more isiXhosa users because some people tweet in the language. Sometimes, you would find that some users tweet in isiXhosa when engaging in other tweets, but they are not isiXhosa users. These are usually multilingual users who are interested in the language and like using certain phrases and

words in that language, but the research mainly used isiXhosa native users as participants for the research and the use of snowballing assisted in attaining more isiXhosa users.

Conducting research with human participants is time consuming and having to meet them once in while on agreed time between both parties, could be draining as you must make sure that you are all available and the set time is suitable for both. On the other hand, introduction to new digital media comes as an advantage in terms of assisting researchers in conducting research and collecting data through online means of communication such as twitter and others. This shows that conducting research online nowadays is convenient and cost effective, the researcher does not have to physically meet the participants but use these new means to interact and engage with them.

3.3 MIXED METHODS UTILISED AS METHODS TO CONCLUDE THE STUDY

The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches to conduct data to conclude the study. This is mainly because the use of quantitative methods gives an overview of the study and that on its own would have not been enough for this study. While qualitative methods balance this by contributing more detailed and in-depth data. These two methods worked well together for this study, to answer the ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions. The use of both methods strengthened the study in a way that both the ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions were answered, and the objectives of the study were achieved. Various authors define and see qualitative and quantitative research methods in distinctive ways. Patton (2002) argue that “qualitative methods are, for the most part, intended to achieve depth of understanding while quantitative methods are intended to achieve breadth of understanding”. (Patton, 2002). On the other hand, Miles & Huberman (1994) believes that “qualitative methods place primary emphasis on saturation (i.e., obtaining a comprehensive understanding by continuing to sample until no new substantive information is acquired)”. In the researcher’s view, the data acquired through quantitative methods balance the data acquired through qualitative methods because qualitative data bases emphasis on more detailed information rather than an overview, provided by the quantitative data.

While Maxwell (2010) argues that a researcher can use numbers in their study and that does not entirely mean the study comprises of mixed method. According to Maxwell (2010: 480)

“The use of numbers is a legitimate and valuable strategy for qualitative researchers when it is used as a complement to an overall process orientation to the research. The inclusion of quantitative data does not inherently make the research a mixed-method study. However, it does have some potential dangers and should be used with a clear awareness of these”.

The author’s statement is how he sees and views the use of numerical data in a study, but the researcher of this study believes that both qualitative and quantitative methods are not only about simply numbers and detailed data, but the way they were conducted, and type of questions asked. Arguably, qualitative data is data acquired through receiving thoughtful answers, and allows the participants to provide more detailed data. While quantitative data provide straight to point answers that are not supported through more explanation and do not provide more description about the specific answers.

Using quantitative methods contributed significant data that led to more follow-up questions for qualitative methods to contribute deeper insights into what has been provided in the surveys, as an add-on to the original questions for the main interviews (qualitative method). It became easy to explore on the information that was provided using quantitative research methods. Quantitative methods provided more numbers orientated data and for the study to be complete, more in-depth insights were to be provided. This is where the qualitative methods came in, as they provided more detailed data. The researcher believes that the combination of mixed research methods benefited the research study positively as the study managed to provide more insightful and in-depth data, which has proven to be complete for me as the researcher and the aims and objectives of the study were achieved. As such both methods played significant roles in completing the study.

Instead of generalising, in the case of utilising quantitative methods, one can state the number or percentage of specific individuals in the particular group of study, that have provided the same information under a specific inquiry. In the researcher’s view, numbers support certain statements to summarise how many people or objects, the increase or decrease in the topic of interest discussed and so forth. This method can be useful in terms of comparing previous statistics and current statistics about the study. The method does not only provide numerical data but assist in questions to follow up on, as ways to develop more data based on what is provided. In this way, both qualitative and quantitative methods offer significant data and the researcher believe that they work well together in assisting the research on acquiring and providing more data. The distinction between the two is generally the fact that the other offers numerical data while the other offers more detailed data. For example, in this study the

researcher first posted the online survey with specific questions and on the other hand had specific open-ended questions for the main interviews. When more people answered the survey, the researcher was able to strengthen the main interview questions based on the answers gotten from the survey. Following, the researcher then conducted the main interviews, where she was able to ask follow-up questions based on what was provided by the participants who contributed to the online survey.

3.4 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The document analysis method was used to analyse tweets: “Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents - both printed and electronic (computer-based and internet-transmitted) material...” (Bowen, 2009:27). This form of analytical method requires a holistic overview of data, for it to be examined and construed to elicit meaning, gain understanding and enhance empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rapley, 2007).

Bowen (2009) conducted a study on document analysis as a qualitative research method and stated the type of documents that may be used for systematic evaluation as part of a study. These documents are advertisements; agendas; attendance registers; and minutes of meetings; manuals; background papers; books and brochures; diaries and journals; event programs (i.e., printed outlines); letters and memoranda; maps and charts; newspapers (clippings/articles); press releases; program proposals; application forms; and summaries; radio and television program scripts; organisational or institutional reports; survey data; and various public records. Furthermore, argue that scrapbooks and photo albums can also be used as documentary material for research purposes. These types of documents are found in libraries, newspaper archives, historical society offices, and organisational or institutional files. (Bowen, 2009: 28) claim that:

“Researchers typically review prior literature as part of their studies and incorporate that information in their reports. However, where a list of analysed documents is provided, it often does not include previous studies. Surely, previous studies are a source of data, requiring that the researcher rely on the description and interpretation of data rather than having the raw data as a basis for analysis.”

The study incorporated the use of online newspapers, academic articles, and twitter. Contrary to popular belief, these sources are no longer only attained through traditional media. The

online space can be used as sources to collect data, the documents mentioned above by Bowen can be accessed online. As indicated by Bowen (2009), prior literature is generally utilised by researchers in their studies. This type of data integration is done to acknowledge that there is similar if not same research conducted and published prior to yours as a researcher. Referring to previous conducted studies helps because researchers not only reference those studies, compare, or review them, but new research adds on and helps grow the research and academic space with additional acquaintance.

Although there is much research done by linguists on language but there is room for more, as new media changes and shapes the world differently. More research means more knowledge provided to different masses' interest in knowing and understanding language in the new digital space. Research is conducted to produce updated information about a specific topic of interest. Linguists in their field of expertise conduct research to compare old and new, to examine whether somethings have changed over the years from how they were before and to basically update outdated information.

Labuschagne (2003) argue that the analytic procedure involves finding, selecting, appraising, and synthesising data contained in the documents. Thus, document analysis provides excerpts, quotations or entire passages of data that can then be organised into major themes, categories, and case examples specifically through content analysis. While Merriam (1988) suggest that documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem. The study methods were triangulated inclusive of observation and interviews. This was done to validate and corroborate data obtained during the study, as advised by Angers & Machtmes (2005). Documents for this study were collected from online newspaper articles and magazines, academic articles, and books.

“The rationale for document analysis lies in its role in methodological and data triangulation, the immense value of documents in case study research, and its usefulness as a standalone method for specialised forms of qualitative research. Understandably, documents may be the only necessary data source for studies designed within an interpretive paradigm, as in hermeneutic inquiry; or it may simply be the only viable source, as in historical and cross-cultural research. In other types of research, the investigator should guard against over-reliance on documents.” (Bowen, 2009: 29).

Bowen (2009) proposes that in research, researchers are analysts and therefore they should not exclusively focus on documents. Even though documents can be a rich source of data,

researchers should be cautious in using them in their studies. Thus, documents should not be treated as a necessarily precise, accurate, or complete recordings of events that have occurred. Researchers should not just use documents available to them, they should make sure that the documents are relevant and connect to their study. The documents should correlate to the research problem and purpose of the study. Furthermore, should ascertain if the content of the document fits the conceptual framework of the study. Additionally, documents are context-specific, so they should be evaluated against other sources of information and not used as standalone. This is necessary in research because researchers should note that the topics of interest could have been covered by other researchers and could be similar. In research, there are complete studies by different authors and others are peer review articles and so on. Basically, research studies are updates and add-ons in the research sphere. It is sometimes highly unlikely that a study was never done.

Studies conducted shed light on various and different areas of specific fields of research by focusing on diverse topics of interest. It is important to use documents that meaningfully contribute to the study explored. “Document analysis is a process of evaluating documents in such a way that empirical knowledge is produced, and understanding is developed. In the process, the researcher should strive for objectivity and sensitivity, and maintain balance between both,” (Bowen, 2009: 33-34). The purpose of collecting data is to explore, share and disseminate knowledge to others. Therefore, it is important for the study to be balanced and verifiable, and the use of other documents helps fill in the gaps as suggested below by Bowen (2009:33) suggest that:

“When documents are being used for verification or support, however, even a few can provide an effective means of completing the research. The absence, sparseness, or incompleteness of documents should suggest something about the object of the investigation, or the people involved. What it might suggest, for example, is that certain matters have been given little attention or that certain voices have not been heard. The researcher should be prepared to search for additional, related documents, which could fill gaps in the data and shed light on the issues being investigated”.

This study focused on a specific group of people whose language was previously underrepresented in different domains and spaces. Such voices were not heard because the language of power dominated and was taken more seriously than minority language groups. English was considered a majority language because most people communicated and interacted

using the language. Research discovered that most people who used the language as their own, were not even mother-tongue speakers of the language.

Referring to other documents on research conducted previously, plays a significant role in providing context and background information about the study. In this way, it is easy for more people to understand the purpose of the research. The study is conducted with the overarching aim to provide updated information on how things have changed and the possibility of them to change for the better for minority and underrepresented language groups. The world is constantly changing and means of communication form part of the topics of interest when we talk about social media and the internet. The study then provides research on language use and language choice in the new digital and technological age.

The observation technique was used to gather and analyse language use on twitter. In document analysis, this technique was utilised to validate and corroborate data obtained during the study, as alluded above. This worked very well in this study because one of the sources used to gather data and participants to interview was twitter, an online social media channel. Observation was done online, through analysing tweets written in different languages and whether isiXhosa native language users used isiXhosa or other languages to engage with the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet.

3.5 SUMMARY

This chapter presented methodological research designs used to collect data to complete this study. Thus, described the research design methods that were used because they were suitable for the study. Since the world is in a pandemic, this section discussed measures taken to adjust the situation when collecting data. This meant doing research through online channels inclusive of Twitter and WhatsApp. Such ways were fast and convenient ways to attain participants online and through online, the responses were quick even though over thought.

CHAPTER 4: FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE USE OF ISIXHOSA LANGUAGE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section discussed themes that were discovered during the research study, and these are mainly concepts such as language shift and language attitude. Moreover, the section discussed the hegemony of English as the dominant language, then looked at the different varieties and dialects of isiXhosa language, as the language of focus in the study. When looking at language use and language choice, you are bound to make reference to the fact that people use multiple and various different languages, and this sometimes differs according to the settings one finds themselves in. Thus, the study critically discussed the concepts of code switching and code mixing as themes that were discovered during the collection of data.

4.1.1 THE VERSATILITY OF LANGUAGE SHIFT IN FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTION

This section mostly discusses the versatility of language shift in face-to-face interaction. Examples and more discussion about language shift online can be found in chapter 4.4, the discussion about code switching and code mixing. “A language shift may be defined as the change from the habitual use of one language to that of another” (Weinreich, 1953:68). Wardhaugh (1986), as well as Adams, Matu & Ongarora (2012) argue that people are faced with having to choose which language to use, when and where. According to Ravindranath (2009:1) “[l]anguage shift is a process by which a speech community in a contact situation (i.e., consisting of bilingual speakers) gradually stops using one of its two languages in favour of the other.” Nawaz et al., (2012) argue that language shift is a social phenomenon that has resulted from the cumulative pressure of social, economic, and political factors.

They might choose to switch between different languages or mix them. Some interlocutors might prefer to use both languages consecutively in one sequence (Fasold, 1984). Research conducted by Halim & Maros (2014) indicate that when the principle of economy is applied to the blogging context, bloggers normally switch to English because its terms can be abbreviated or further contracted. This can certainly save the bloggers' time since the use of abbreviations and contractions reduce their typing effort. However, bilingual individuals might code switch between certain languages based on their emotions and what they are expressing. This shows

the choice of a language preference they feel will adequately get the message across.

Kandler & Steele (2017) & Garret (2006) posits that, language shift is the process whereby members of a specific society or community where people use and speak more than one language while they abandon their original vernacular language in favour of another language. This might not necessarily be done through conscious choice, at times people might move to a certain area or country and suddenly adapt to the popularly used language and end up effectively abandoning theirs in favour of the newly found language. Major factors that trigger off language shift include economic considerations, migration and settlement patterns, exogamous marriages, government policies and political factors, education, media, and religion, claims Agyekum (2009). A commonly known example, a person might have moved to a new country where no one knows nor understand the person's native language. They then adopt a new language and use it as their own, an example, foreign individuals who have moved to South Africa to better their lives by creating new business ventures that help them survive and furnish for their families back home.

These individuals include Pakistan, Nigerians, Zimbabweans, and others. When they get to South Africa they scatter and live-in different provinces, in this case, you find them speaking the commonly used languages in those specific areas. These languages might be referred to as the lingua franca of those specific areas. At times, the foreign individuals might have shifted to the languages spoken in their areas and only use their home languages when they communicate amongst each other. This indicates that their home language is not totally diminished or dead but there has been a shift in language use, because they are in a foreign place where only themselves know their native languages. These people chose to abandon their home languages because of the situation, and this speaks to language choice, where people must decide on which language to use and when.

These people are enforced to learn and communicate in the common language used in the specific area, as this is beneficial for them economically. Since one of the reasons why they migrate to South Africa is for their economic survival. The only way to combat language muddle between them as business owners and their customers, is to communicate in a commonly known language. It is important to note that not everyone has the knowledge of the English language, therefore, immigrants might feel the obligation to learn an intermediate language that their customers are familiar with, as some of them also are not fluent in English.

It is also without doubt that they might use English in certain instances where they cannot fluently articulate themselves in the intermediate language.

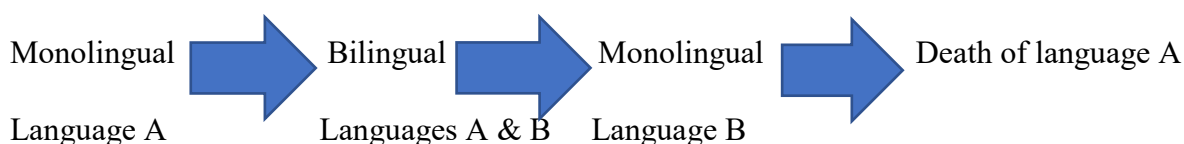
Agyekum (2009) conducted a study on language shift looking at a case study of Ghana. The study found that language shift may also result from the language spread and that may sometimes bring about language replacement. Looking at colonial languages such as English and French, they spread fast in the world and that led to their economic and technological gains influencing majority of the people to learn them. Thus, after a while these international and colonial language replaced the indigenous languages. The author then believes that globalisation has accelerated the process of language replacement and language shift in most African societies.

People might decide to shift to another language because it is dominant and influential, an example of these languages include English and other intermediate languages that dominate in specific areas. Dominant intermediate African languages are mostly area based, such as isiXhosa that dominates in the Eastern Cape, isiZulu in KwaZulu-Natal, Sesotho in Free State, and so forth. A person born of both parents Xhosa but was born/raised in Gauteng grows up speaking isiZulu as if they are Zulu, because they were raised in an area dominated with isiZulu speakers and they shifted languages. It could also be that the parents also speak isiZulu and only speak isiXhosa when they visit their rural homes in the Eastern Cape. They may at times completely speak isiZulu as their native language, as they have resided in the province all their lives. Some families may have entirely moved to Gauteng. The parents could have landed in the province for work purposes and ended up shifting to speak isiZulu as the specific area they reside at, is mostly dominated by isiZulu speakers and language of communication is mostly isiZulu.

Agyekum (2009) suggests two categories of language shift, and these are namely, intra-national language shift and international language shift. Thus, describes international language shift as the situation where people shift to an entirely foreign language that is not one of the native languages of their country. In Africa, these languages are the colonial languages such as the use of English in Ghana, Nigeria, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Kenya, or the shift to French in countries like Togo, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Benin. By intra-national language shift, the author refers to a situation where one indigenous language in a geographical area within a country assumes a lingua franca status and other speakers of other

languages thus shift to this language, as indicated in the example of language shift in South Africa.

Agyekum (2009) proposes a structure in which languages operate in language shift and may end in the death of another, as the dominant and superior language gets adopted and the native minority gets replaced and most times abandoned. In such instances, many of the languages that are led to death and abandonment are native African languages because they are not as dominant and used in prestigious spaces where they are a requirement, and they are almost always a minority. Language shift is normally a down-to-top approach. It is usually a weaker, minority or lower-status linguistic group that shifts to a stronger, dominant, majority or higher-status linguistic group and not the reverse. The superior group or language is associated with status, prestige and social success and wider context of usage. Furthermore, Holmes (2001) posits that a dominant group has little or no incentive and motivation to adopt the language of a minority. This situation is prevalent in Ghana where most people shift to English, the official language or to Akan a major lingua franca. As indicated in the aforementioned information above, English is dominant and used as the lingua franca, but sometimes African languages can be used as lingua franca.



In most language cases whether written or spoken, people are confronted with choices about which language to speak. When it comes to processes of globalisation, urbanisation, and long-distance economic migration which have led to increased interactions between groups of people who speak different languages, there is usually a need for a common language for means of communication.

“Historically, in warfare, disaster, or repression situations, the dominant language may be forcibly imposed as a deliberate policy of its native speakers. In other cases, inequality may be expressed less directly. Often the language seen as more modern, useful, or giving access to greater social mobility and economic opportunities is chosen as the lingua franca, thereby driving the process of shift”. (Kandler & Steele, 2017: 4851).

Even though people are confronted with choosing which language to communicate and engage in, but in the aforementioned instances, they are mostly enforced to speak English as

the language of power. “Any language that has economic considerations attached with it, will enjoy superior position”. (Nawaz et al., 2012:80). Minority languages were then seen as inferior to the languages of power and prestige. These were mostly African languages, therefore, African language speakers had to learn English and Afrikaans to get employment, as most job opportunities were labour work, and the bosses were Afrikaner and White. White and coloured people had the privilege in the Apartheid era, and people of colour were unfortunate as they were not educated and lacked skills.

This section has discussed language choice and thus discovered that the dominant language of power still plays a role, even in the new media/digital space. Even so, African languages are being used online and seemingly the digital space has created a space for African language speakers who are not fluent in English, to communicate and engage in their native languages. Thus, promoting previously underrepresented languages in written and spoken form.

With the moving and migration of people to different and new environments and societies, for economic survival, education, and so forth. People have acquired new languages and can now classify themselves as bilingual and/ or multilingual. This allows speakers of different languages to shift between languages and this could be based on specific settings; for example, they speak English at school or work, speak isiXhosa with the family and peers and so on. This section discussed language shift and highlighted the fact that this social phenomenon is a result of social, cultural, economic, psychological, and historical factors.

4.1.2 THE ROLE PLAYED BY LANGUAGE ATTITUDE WHEN ENGAGING ONLINE

Language attitude is another concept to take note of when it comes to language use and language choice. The attitude factor influences the language twitter and other general users decide to use. “Attitude can be defined as a disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution or event,” (Ajzen, 1988: 4). Language attitudes in communication influence people’s reactions to other language users. Moreover, language attitudes can be affected by variables such as accent, voice quality, lexical diversity, and others (Bou, 2015). Marjorie (1982) argues that, since tribal groups are defined by language, this resulted in separation of Black’s linguistically and limited their contact with other groups. Nawaz *et al* (2012) proposes that attitude is the main factor of language shift and a persons’

language choice and attitude towards their native language determines the future of that language.

According to Petty & Cacioppo (1981: 6), the term attitude should “be used to refer to a general and enduring positive or negative feeling about some person, object, or issue”. Generally, language attitude indicates the feelings a speaker has about their own language or other people’s language, whether beautiful, ugly, poor, rich and so on (Dweik & Qawar, 2015). Attitudes towards a language may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language. Holmes (2008) argue that people classify different languages or varieties as elegant, expressive, vulgar, musical, polite, impolite, pleasing, or unpleasing.

“This categorisation has influenced the users’ attitudes towards the language because it reflects who they are and represents the social groupings they belong to. As a result, people develop either a positive or negative attitude to other languages based on how the community identifies and labels them. A language becomes appealing to the speakers who have positive attitude towards it and prefer it in most interactions. On the contrary, if speakers have negative attitudes towards a language, they develop resistance in using it,” (Dweik & Qawar, 2015: 6).

Real life examples include isiXhosa speakers classified as rude, mean, and they are always fighting and shouting, and their language is vulgar. This is because, isiXhosa language group are naturally loud as an ethnic group of people. On the other hand, Zulu speakers are classified as humble, polite, respectful, and they are submissive. This is all based on the way their culture is set, Zulu speakers are said to be polite people who are grounded in their culture. In contrast, both language groups are rooted in their cultures, but isiXhosa speakers are usually misinterpreted based on their outside look and being loud. Another example, the isiSwati language is said to be the language of love because it is beautiful and has a soft sound.

Furthermore, Richards, Platt, J. & Platt, H. (1992) state that expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, and social status. In terms of isiXhosa, most people believe that the language is difficult based on its lexical tones, phonology, vocabulary, and others. It is often difficult to say certain phrases and words in isiXhosa because of the clicks such as ‘nxi’, ‘nqa’, ‘gqi’, ‘kra’, ‘ngxa’, ‘xho’, and so on. Non-isiXhosa language speakers develop negative attitude towards the language and resist using it because they claim it is hard. Social media has created a space where people of other language groups become fond of other languages besides theirs. Trends in isiXhosa ‘phakama mkam bakubone’ (stand up my wife so

they could see you), ‘dololo’ (nothing), ‘mntase’ (my sibling), ‘ndibuyekile’ (I have stopped, mostly referred to alcohol) and others. These brought unity between diverse language users on Twitter and most people from other language groups used these phrases to engage and share, even though they do not fully understand nor are fluent in the language. Moreover, you find such new phrases and words in other languages too i.e., in isiZulu you find people saying the phrase ‘ziyakhala ke manje’ which basically translates to saying, ‘it is happening’, and others.

Such has changed people’s perspectives and views and they now see isiXhosa language groups differently. Their attitudes towards the language and its people slightly changes online because now isiXhosa language group is viewed as the group that could lead the nation, hysterically. Even the language sounds polite and hysterical online. Online users from other language groups also use these trending phrases on twitter, this indicates that their perspectives about isiXhosa being rude and vulgar, changes based on how the language is used on social media. Through observation on twitter, isiXhosa language is viewed as the best language and its people are humorous, especially in relation to the creation of memes, skits, and so on.

In terms of other languages and their social status, it is difficult for people to access certain spaces without knowing or understanding majority and dominant languages. Such languages kind of forces a person to learn otherwise they will disadvantage them. In contrast, this does not entirely mean people should desert their native languages but rather learn other languages and contribute to the development and promotion of African languages previously underrepresented. This also helps make communication between individuals easy. People do not only have to learn English but other African languages as well.

Moreover, being multilingual assist users of different language groups to be able and willing to meet the counterpart halfway, if they do not know or understand the English language. People need to be cognisant of the fact that not every environment consists of individuals who have knowledge of the English language, for example segregated minority rural areas. In such areas, they have a minority group of people who speak a specific language and only acquire and learn English at school, even there, learners are taught the subjects in the African language. Thus, in most cases even the workplace or church are dominated by people of the same language group and therefore, they all communicate and engage in that specific language. In such instances, they might not see a reason to learn English, as they are not familiar with the language and mostly not exposed to places where they would be required to communicate in the language.

“Thus, learning an additional language may serve symbolically as an emblem of its user’s new identity, and provide a new lens through which to view the world. Learning appropriate linguistic habits involves more than learning the language, it often involves social and psychological adaptation, changes in beliefs, attitudes, values, and other behavioural patterns. Language is thus a powerful symbol of heritage and identity; it is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self within different social encounters, and “gains access to-or is denied access to-the powerful social networks” (Pierce, 1994:2) cited in De Klerk (2000).

Holmes (2008) state that the use of dominant language expresses impersonal messages which create social distance between speakers. On the other hand, the choice of a less dominant language is useful to express personal messages because it helps the speakers to establish solidarity in interactions. Managan (2004) also believes that the choice of a dominant language provides people the prestige and the chance to socialise more with other people the thing that leads to a possibility of expanding the social network and gaining more economic success. Once a person becomes a member of a certain language group, this group becomes his or her social network and develops a sense of identity which can be revealed through language choice and manner of speaking. The language of power, English, is mostly used to combat barriers to understanding different language speakers.

4.2 THE HEGEMONY OF ENGLISH IN ALL SETTINGS

The use of a dominant language is generally popular in cases of communication between people of different language groups. The use of English as a language of communication is common because it is believed that everyone knows and understands the language better than languages, they are not familiar with. Much of the research on language carried out attests to the dominance of English (De Klerk, 2000; Simeon & Murray, 2007; Prah, 2018; Wardhaugh, 1986).

Some individuals may choose to use English on twitter because of factors such as their followers being diverse and they may not know isiXhosa, while others want to attract a larger audience base for people to engage with their tweets. “English Language proficiency is a requirement in all areas of work, study, entertainment and communication” (Thurairaj, Hoon, Roy & Fong, 2015: 302). This notion is not entirely accurate because the world has changed, people are no longer denied the opportunity to communicate in their native languages,

especially in cases of entertainment and communication, people now present on radio, television, sing and so forth, using African languages. There are social spaces that promote Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) using different languages. Twitter is a linguistically diverse social media space where users might choose to communicate in English, isiXhosa, both, and any other language.

In terms of work, people can communicate in their languages and are not entirely restricted from doing so. Maybe, in cases of having to present work to clients and employees, it is compulsory for them to use English to accommodate and comply with company policies and others. When it comes to areas of study, children are taught in their native languages and in higher institutions students can study isiXhosa, German, French, English and Linguistics and others. Irrespective of such, English still dominates in other domains and specific places such as work, higher institutions of learning, and so forth. Callahan & Herring (2012: 327) argue that “the use of English in higher education relates to prestige and career advancement”. Moreover, “the choice to use English in education varies across countries and is often related to the status of the country’s native language.” (Callahan & Herring, 2012: 326).

The use of more than one language is quite common in South Africa. It should be noted that most language group speakers are compelled to be bilingual because if they only know their native language, that limits their access to opportunities. The knowledge of English does not mean that people are bound to succumb to having and communicating in one language. The use of multiple languages on twitter helps improve the growth of languages, especially underrepresented languages. In contrast, interacting in a dominant language may lead to possibilities for expanding the individual’s social network and, ultimately, wider economic opportunities (Dweik & Qawar, 2015). A more dominant and prestigious language used in both formal and informal domains is usually favoured because it can help to gain prestige, better economic access, authority, and power. (Dweik & Qawar, 2015; De Klerk, 2000; Managan, 2004; Pillai, 2006).

African, local and minority languages might disappear or completely diminish, as the dominant language of power takes over. (Krauss, 1992; Fishman, 1998). English has previously impacted other languages negatively in terms of them being underrepresented and viewed as inferior. As the world is slowly accommodating other languages, there are no restrictions as which language a person uses on the internet, social media, with their peers and so forth. The replacement

theory argues otherwise, because it believes that English imperialism is here to diminish other languages. For Phillipson (1992) cited from,

“The spread of English is an expression of cultural imperialism, dating back to the colonization by England and the United States of countries such as India and the Philippines and perpetuated through ideologies associated with English language teaching. One theme in Phillipson’s work is “linguicism”—prejudice that leads to indigenous languages becoming extinct or losing their local eminence due to the rise and competing prominence of English. We refer to this view henceforth as the Replacement Theory”.

While English dominates globally and regionally, some researchers believe that the language is not there to take over or replace others but help promote flexible communication between individuals. The status of English has always had a negative impact on other African languages, as they were viewed as inferior and underrepresented. Thus, its prominence has resulted in the decrease or no use of African languages by the native speakers of the language. However, the internet and globalisation have changed the world and there is an increase in the use of African languages online. Social media platforms and the internet have created a space for users to use diverse languages both minority and majority and not only English, with the presumption that everyone knows and understands the dominant language. Now English is being used alongside other languages, for example you can view emails on Gmail in different languages or in the language of your choice; Wikipedia in different languages; google translate for Google search and social media posts on platforms such as twitter and others; companies such as Cadbury have introduced the tool for people to write in their African languages; Wimpy has introduced menus in African languages; websites at schools and higher institutions are in other languages, and so forth.

The dominance of English has impacted upon speakers’ choices and their attitudes to their own native language. Factors that shape these preferences are historical, economic, political, cultural, social, and psychological. Many scholars lay the emphasis in their explanations on the realities of the economic incentive in language preference: “The importance of English for success in any field can hardly be emphasised because it is the language of financial activities...” (Nawaz, Umer, Anjum, Ramzan, 2012:74). For speakers of the indigenous languages to occupy certain spaces, they must know English. It is quite evident that dominant languages influence a speaker’s language choice.

4.3 ISIXHOSA LANGAUGE DIALECTS AND VARIETIES IN SPOKEN AND WRITTEN FORM

The Eastern Cape province is predominantly Xhosa, and all these people form part of one language group, they are all amaXhosa but speak different dialects within isiXhosa. Looking at places such as the Eastern Cape, where certain areas are historically divided by names and language varieties. There are areas such as Transkei and Ciskei, people are linguistically categorised into amaMpondo, amaGcaleka, amaHlubi, abaThembu, and others. In isiXhosa, the dialect mostly used and identified as the standard language is isiGcaleka and isiNgqika. These dialects are mostly recognised in academic spaces. The different language varieties and dialects vary in geographical areas. You might find other people pronouncing words in different ways because in their area that is how they say the word. For example: in relation to saying something is nice, in isiXhosa people would say ‘imnandi’ and others say ‘imandi’. Another example, when complementing someone to say they look beautiful, in isiXhosa people say ‘awumhle’ and some say ‘akumhle. Others say ‘seke’ instead of ‘sele’ which translates to ‘has’.

In social spaces, in relation to spoken form people can speak their different dialects. While in professional and academic settings people who speak these dialects are obliged to engage and written form should be done in the standard language used. In contrast, social media is not necessarily a professional setting unless a user uses the platform for work and the requirement is the use of a standard language, which in most cases the language would be English, rather than an African language. Internet and social media users, especially on twitter normally do not have to conform to language restrictions. Instead, the use of dominant languages and the ideologies surrounding minor language use online does not necessary restrict African language speaking users from using their native languages online.

Social media platforms such as twitter do not prohibit its users from using a language of their choice. In many cases, the users engage in a casual conversation as they sometimes convey minimalist messages and create threads when conveying longer messages. This is where the user creates a series of connected tweets to provide more context. An example, when a user is telling a story of what occurred in a certain area i.e attempted kidnapping and others. They would create a twitter thread by connecting multiple tweets to add more information on what they are talking about. Twitter flexibilities allow the users to use more tools in their tweets, these include gifs, images, videos, polls and so forth. Twitter language is casual and as a result

the users tend to make spelling mistakes and that does not block them from engaging more on the platform, as it is a flexible platform that allows its users to use any language of their choice.

While this indicates the lack of translation tools and auto correct that assists with grammar and spelling checks on social media, twitter acknowledges the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the users online. Blodgett, Green & O' Connor (2016) conducted a study on demographical dialectical variation on social media by looking at the African-American English on twitter. This study was conducted in recognition of different dialects and varieties in diverse settings and language groups. The study looked at the annotation and use of words on the internet. The way language is utilised online (mostly written form) is different from language use in professional settings such as educational, workplace and others, whether written or spoken. Moreover, there are dialects and varieties within languages across the world and these were previously underrepresented in written form. The digital age has introduced social media platforms that can be used to connect diverse individuals from across the world and these users are bound to make linguistic choices when engaging on these public platforms, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Blodgett, Green & O' Connor (2016) adopts Kong et al. (2014) view that "a tweet consists of a sequence of one or more disconnected utterances". Their study of demographical dialectical variation on social media, also looked at the syntactic dependency annotation on twitter messages and they discovered that, "multiword tokens like an untokenized 'don't (do not) or 'af' (as f*ck, syntactically a PP) pose a challenge," (Blodgett et al. 2016). People on the internet normally use a casual language when they engage, certain words are shortened, and certain phrases used instead of full and standard language. In some cases, when a person is trying to not use a vulgar or offensive language, they alternate it for a more respectful word that most people use. For example, they will say "the 'f' word" in the place of 'f*ck' especially in spoken form. While in written form they might write 'shit' as 'sh*t' and so on. These are words that are not allowed in professional settings because they are viewed as disrespectful, rude, vulgar, and offensive.

Within a standard language exists different regional and social varieties and dialects. These varieties and dialects differ from the standard variety in syntax (sentence structure), phonology (sound structure), and the inventory of words and phrases (lexicon). Blodgett et al. (2016). Furthermore, Blodgett et al. (2016) study suggests that dialect communities are mostly aligned with geographic and sociological factors, as language variation emerges within distinct social

networks. In some cases, affirmed as a marker of social identity. Majority of these dialects have traditionally existed in oral contexts, however, have been underrepresented in written sources. National language policy (NLP) tools have been developed from text which aligns with mainstream languages. Just as African and minority languages have been underrepresented in mainstream domains, the different dialects and varieties were too. Consequently, with the rise of social media and the internet, these previously underrepresented varieties and dialects have been playing an increasingly prominent role in the online conversational space, where traditional NLP tools may be insufficient. The use of these dialects online may have both positive and negative impacts, as the speakers' opinions may be sometimes misinterpreted. According to Hovy & Spruit (2016) as quoted by Blodgett et al. (20216) "this impacts many applications: for example, the dialect speakers' opinions may be mischaracterised under social media sentiment analysis or omitted altogether."

The study investigated the dialectal language in twitter data that is already made publicly. It focused on African American English (AAE), a dialect of the Standard American English (SAE) that is mostly spoken by millions of people across the United States (US). Furthermore, Blodgett et al. (2016) then defines AAE as a linguistic variety that has defined syntactic-semantic, phonological, and lexical features. According to Green (2000), it was discovered that not all African Americans speak AAE and not all AAE speakers are African American. However, the speakers of this variety have close ties with specific communities of African Americans. In relation to the South African context, for example, looking at isiXhosa speakers in the Eastern Cape, not everyone speaks isiGcaleka but others speak different dialects. Looking at English speakers, not everyone that speaks English is White, others are Coloureds, Indians, Afrikaners and so on.

"A speaker's choice between varieties is also structured. It is systematically linked to social relationships, events, or situations," (Gal, 1987: 287). Language varieties such as shortening of words, slang, isiFanakalo, tsotsitaal, sms language and others, can be found in almost all languages. People use codes to describe things, people, and these were commonly made through face-to-face interaction, but these also happen online. On social media you mostly find the use of SMS language where users shorten words to create more space, so that they can convey a longer message. Language varieties such as shortening of words can be found in English and other languages inclusive of isiXhosa. Language varieties are commonly used when engaging in English and these include shortened words, from basics such as 'how are

you' (hw r u), 'what are you doing' (wht r u doin'), and others. Examples of abbreviated words in English are:

Tbh-To be honest

OMG: Oh my God

TMI: Too much information

Tbt: Throwback thursday/Throwback time

The use of these language varieties has become more common online because of the amount of space one has to utilise when sending a message. As alluded at the start of the study, twitter allows for 140 characters and has since introduced a thread. This is sometimes shorter for people who want to say more, in such cases they create a thread (series of tweets) by writing tweets that follow each other as a conversation. Under the same tweet, the thread creates a series of tweets to make more emphasise and add more information on the original tweet. In this way, other users know/understand and follow the story or message being conveyed.

Examples of easily shortened words in isiXhosa are kaloku (klk), sabaweli (sbwl), mntase (mntwana waseKhaya), haike (hayi ke), and continuously the shortening and abbreviation of words in isiXhosa is done through omitting the vowels or certain letters from a word. Examples are:

Njani (how)- Nj{a}n{i}?

Wenzani (what are you doing?)- W{e}nz{a}n{i}?

These examples are mostly in question form, and some are just words, but sometimes not all vowels are completely removed from the words. In relation to talking, such words have certain letters that are silent, and they sound more silent when a person talks and says the word fast. These silent letters can be seen and known that they exist, in a written form. Majority of isiXhosa speakers leave certain letters silent when they talk but this might not be the case in written form where they must write in an academic or workspace and other professional settings. While on social media, the latter has no control over how people write because social platforms such as twitter allow for abbreviated and informal language use. Such examples include:

Abandazi (They do not know me)- Abandaz{i}

Uthanda ukuhamba (She/he likes going)- Uthanda uk{u}hamba

In contrast, people could possibly use a language that saves more space to convey a longer message. For example, isiXhosa user could possibly use their native language because they could write a sentence in one word, which allows for more space to tweet a longer message. In contrast, most isiXhosa users prefer using English when engaging with the ‘*O jewa ke eng?*’ tweet, as discussed more in chapter 5. The above has shown examples indicating that English is longer than isiXhosa in writing than it sounds when people talk. In isiXhosa one could literally write a sentence in one word, while in English a sentence is depicted in more words.

In this constantly evolving world, language use is affected whether African languages or the English language. On social media people come up with different things every day whether serious or hilarious, these include memes and so on. As indicated previously, people might decide or choose to use English even though it is longer in writing than isiXhosa. One of the factors that contribute to the use of English and slang more includes the fact that words are not written in full, they are abbreviated and sometimes written in English and have a different meaning from what is normally known. Majority of twitter users engage in slang and tsotsitaal and this has been a trend for some time and people who are always on Twitter understand what someone is saying when they use these words in their tweets. These are ‘woke’ users who are always connected. Below are examples of such with meanings:

Table 1.4: Slang words and meaning.

Words/sentences	Meanings
1.GOAT (Greatest of all time)	The real one
2.Mize	To ignore someone
3.Woke	Alert
4.Do not sleep on me	Do not underestimate me/take me for granted
5.You cav (Cav taken from the word ‘cava’ in Tsotsitaal)	You understand/you get it
6.Keep it on a hundred	Keep it accurate and authentic
7.Umgowo (slang word from isiXhosa)	Going through a lot
8.Cap	You are lying
9. Sbwl (sabaweli)	Craving
10. Qlyv (qaluyiva)	It is my first-time hearing about it

The table shows that every language has a slang language within in it because people create informal words taken from their original language and make them slang. These are easy words to use when communicating, in this way people do not always sound serious and formal but can sound jokingly. The first word ‘GOAT’ people would normally use when they admire someone and acknowledge them for being great and they could be great in whatever aspect of life including their career, field of expertise, fashion sense and so on. The word would then be shortened to ‘my G’. Second word ‘Mize’ is an English word that is used as slang, but the meaning is the same as it is in its originality. Third word ‘woke’ this is the same as the previous word, and it is normally used to refer to people who are always on the lookout and know things. Fourthly, the phrase ‘do not sleep on me’, as defined in the table, people use the phrase when they are telling someone that they should take them serious and not underestimate or take them lightly. Instead of someone saying this upfront, they use such phrases to convey the message. The fifth word ‘cav’ is a slang word which in full is ‘cava’ as in ‘you get me’. Different languages have their own slang words for saying this, in isiXhosa they say ‘uyandifumana’, isiZulu ‘uyangithola’ and so on. This slang word ‘cav’ has made it easy for people to use as it is short and sounds quick and informal. On the other hand, the ones in isiXhosa and isiZulu are way longer and sound formal.

The sixth phrase ‘keep it on a hundred’ means be truthful and accurate, and it is used when telling someone not to lie but tell the truth. Instead of saying it in a formal manner, you use this phrase. The seventh word ‘umgowo’ means going through a lot. It is a mix of two languages isiXhosa and English; the word is basically an English word said in isiXhosa. When used in a sentence people normally say ‘ndiya gowa’ which translates to ‘I am going through a lot’. Umgowo: um (isiXhosa)go (English)wo (isiXhosa), then the word is said in isiXhosa as a word from the language. The eighth word ‘cap’ means ‘you are lying’ and the last word is ‘sbwl’ (sabaweli in full), it is a Xhosa word that means ‘craving’. Normally, people use the abbreviated word, and it has since been trending as everyone uses it in whatever. People would post themselves living a soft life, getting gifts, promotions, employment, bursary, or school acceptance, and so on, the other social media users in the platforms where these are posted, would comment ‘sbwl’. People would usually text or say ‘sbwl’ when they crave or wish for something and normally it is in relation to good things. The tenth word ‘qlyv (qala uyiva)’ generally worded as ‘ndiya qala uyiva’ in a sentence, which translates to ‘it’s my first time hearing it’. Each day on twitter words in isiXhosa are abbreviated and they trend, some trends

come from videos which arise from television or radio and generally traditional media, and they are turned into memes and trends.

These examples of shortened words show that abbreviated, slang, tsotsitaal and any other varieties can be found in all languages, as people do not always use formal language to communicate. In certain spaces, people use different language varieties and social media platforms have created a social space where people can communicate and engage in informal languages and the use of these words trends as most people interact in them. Such forms of communication can be found in how different language groups refer to certain things instead of using the standard formal approach. Examples in isiXhosa and other languages include how people refer to money as:

IsiXhosa: Imali, Inyura, Itshankura/Ishankura

IsiZulu: Itshelete, Imali

Sesotho: Chelete

Different language groups refer to money in their own way, sometimes in a similar way but the written form is different. Then within money there is ten-rand, twenty rand, fifty-rand, hundred-rand, and so on, different language groups have certain words/phrases to describe or say the word 'money'. This also relates with the areas people live in, at times isiXhosa speakers would say 'money' in different ways even though they are all native isiXhosa speakers, they would refer to the same thing but use different ways to say it. The areas where people come from or live, play a role in language use. Examples in English to isiXhosa:

Ten-rand: Itiger ('tiger' word borrowed from English), igreen, jacket, ten, and so on.

Twenty-rand: Itshoko ('chalk' word borrowed from English), itwin, chocko, twenty, and so on.

Fifty-rand: Five tiger, iruji, five jacket, fifty, pinkis, and so on.

Hundred-rand: Iklipla, hundred, and so on.

There commonly used word is iklipla for hundred rand and some people do not have special words but leave rand out and say ten, twenty, fifty and hundred. Such words are found in tsotsitaal, a language that transpired from the townships commonly referred to as the 'township slang' language. According to Hurst (2009), tsotsitaal is a language that has a long history, and it was created in Sophia town during the late 1930s or early 1940s. The language is mostly associated with criminals and gangs, how they dress, their body language, their cultural

preference, and how they conduct themselves in the communities. The kind of people who mostly use tsotsitaal i.e criminals and gangs use specific codes to communicate, the tone is different, and they refer to happenings and materialistic stuff differently from the standard use. Molamu (2003) suggest that tsotsitaal was largely used as means of communication among those interested in crime-related activities. When people use tsotsitaal they isolate others as they are using an unfamiliar or foreign language that most people do not understand.

Moreover, the researcher would argue that when it comes to the use of language dialects and varieties, in some cases people use English words as isiXhosa words because there are no appropriate words for certain things in isiXhosa, sometimes there is a word, but they are not commonly used, therefore, not known. At times, you find that for a person to say a word in isiXhosa, they must translate and define the word in a sentence (define what it is used for/what it does) rather than saying what the word is in isiXhosa as a standalone. An example: Thief-Isigila mkhuba. The word in isiXhosa defines what the person does. In contrast, there are other words commonly used as standalone, these include ‘utsotsi’, ‘isela’ and others.

When people cannot find a relevant or equivalent word, they result in using loan words. Hoffer (2005) explores the topic of language borrowing. In the study Hoffer (2005) state that loan words are a type of borrowing that forms part of language borrowing and occurs across language boundaries. According to Hoffer (2005: 53) “The speakers of a language have various options when confronted with new items and ideas in another language”. Hoffer referred to Hockett’s (1958) options that include loanword, loan shift, loan-translation or calque, and loan-blend. The definitions stated below are Hockett’s (1958) as quoted from Hoffer (2005:53-54).

1. Loanword: Speakers may adopt the item or idea and the source language word for each. The borrowed form is a loan word. These forms now function in the usual grammatical processes, with nouns taking plural and/or possessive forms of the new language and with verbs and adjectives receiving native morphemes as well.
2. Loan shift: Another process that occurs is that of adapting native words to the new meanings. A good example from the early Christian era in England is *Easter*, which had earlier been used for a pagan dawn goddess festival. Other loan shifts in English include *God*, *heaven*, and *hell*.
3. Loan-translation or calque: A loan-translation or calque occurs when the native language uses an item-for-item native version of the original. “Loanword” itself is a loan-translation of the German *lehnwort*, *marriage of convenience* is from the French,

and *long time no see* is a somewhat altered version from the Chinese. An example from the earliest Christian era is *gospel*, from *good* (good) and *spella* (story; book). The Latin source was related to *evangelist* (from *good* plus *message* plus the ending *-ist* for person). *Good Book* and *Holy Writ* and so on can be seen as loan-translations of the native form *godspella* or “gospel”.

4. Loan-blend: A loan-blend is a form in which one element is a loanword and the other is a native element, as in the borrowed *preost* (priest) plus the native *-had* (hood) in Old English to produce *preosthad* (priesthood).

Loan words are also known as borrowed words, these words are borrowed from one language and incorporated into another language to become part of the lexicon, state Li & Fung (2012). This means that some words are borrowed from other languages, especially the use of the dominant languages were the mostly accepted during the apartheid era. “The social dominance and higher status of English and Afrikaans in South Africa are strong motivating factors for the adoption of words from these languages into the African languages,” as alluded by (Calteaux, 1996: 23). Examples are Window-Ifesitile (word borrowed from Afrikaans ‘die venster’, ‘v’ sounds like ‘f’).

Table: Itafile (word borrowed from Afrikaans ‘die tafel’).

Watch: Iwotshi (word borrowed from English ‘watch’).

Candle: Ikhandlela (word borrowed from English ‘candle’).

Bilingual or multilingual people might choose to communicate in English and interpolate certain phrases in isiXhosa, the reason might be that the term is borrowed, or there is no English equivalence, and the phrase cannot be translated, or the precise meaning would be lost in translation (Mafela, 2010). Thus, indigenous languages have been enriched through the process of borrowing, a variety of words have been adopted from Afrikaans, English, and other South African languages (Mafela, 2010).

Daoudi (2011) conducted a study on ‘Globalisation and e-Arabic: The emergence of a new language at the literal and figurative levels.’ Thus, takes us through the main morphological, grammatical, and phonological features found in single-word, compound words and collocations English/French borrowings in colloquial and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). These morphological changes involve several adaptations including literal transfer without any

changes, adaptation to the morphology of the absorbing language, and calques or loan translations. These adaptations will be explained with English and isiXhosa examples.

Literal transfer without and changes: The case here is to maintain the original word in a foreign language and using it in an African language as it is, without making any changes to it. In isiXhosa, words that mostly relate to this involve words in the scientific, medical sphere and others. Examples are:

Format: Ifomathi

Office: I-ofisi

Software: Isoftware

To some extent this also speaks to language assimilation, where terms in certain fields such as technology, information computer technology (ICT), health and others, are easily assimilated into African languages, as shown in the examples above. Speakers from different language groups may pick some lexical items especially loan words for technological items, as suggested by Agyekum (2009). Moreover, these speakers might decide to rescind their original language when using these words and use them as the new words, instead of finding them in their native languages. It is mostly believed that African languages do not have certain words that exist in English; therefore, they must borrow and loan equivalent words from other languages. This diminishes the use of African languages, as the original users of the languages use the dominant language of power.

“The degree of assimilation depends on factors such as: receptiveness of the group to the other culture and language: how prepared they are to receive the other language; the possibility of acceptance by the dominant group and the degree of similarity between the two groups,” (Agyekum, 2009: 388). Thus, assimilation becomes successful if speakers of the minority language consider the dominant language as prestigious. On the other hand, assimilation becomes easier if the two languages are very similar. An example of assimilation in isiXhosa language, the full assimilation of isiXhosa languages to English is absent but some lexical items from European languages have already been assimilated, and these include the following:

Similar examples as sourced from Agyekum (2009).

Source language	Word	IsiXhosa	English
Portuguese	Plates	Iipleyiti	Plates

Dutch	Venster	Ifestile	Window
English	Board	Ibhodi	Board

Adaptation to the morphology of the absorbing language: Morphological adaptation varies from a change of a phoneme to a change of the whole word. Examples as given by the author are:

Device: (Idivayisi- The word is lengthened by the vowel ‘I’ and the word is extended by ‘yi’ and ‘c’ changed into ‘s’ in isiXhosa).

Disk: (Idisk- The word is lengthened by the vowel ‘I’ and the whole word left as it is).

Carpet: (Ikhaphethi- The word is lengthened by the same vowel ‘I’ and ‘c’ is changed into ‘kh’).

Furthermore, the author state that pluralisation of a loan-word is another feature of morphological adaptation. One of the ways of pluralisation in Arabic is by suffixation of a morpheme to the word and usually achieved by adding the suffix. While a frequent use of loan-words is to combine them in collocations, for example words that often go together. These could consist of two or more words and the example given is ‘open file’ and more examples could include bedroom, bedside table, kitchen unit, among others. The use of borrowed words could be added with the adaptation to the native language, and you could see such in the examples stated above.

Calques or loan translations: Calques are words borrowed from another language and used without any change. In most cases, internet-based corpus is used, and the examples include hard disk, mother board, desktop, floppy disk, secure chat, electronic mail, and so on. There is a high frequency of loan words usage, as alluded above, some words do not have standalone translated words. These words normally do not have equivalence in isiXhosa and that is why the use of borrowed and calques words take place. If the words had equivalence in isiXhosa, the translation would be done through describing what that specific disk, board, mail, and others are used for and what they do. If we were to find translated words for certain English words that do not have much equivalence in isiXhosa, an example would be ‘Dinner’ which translates to ‘Isidlo sangokuhlwa’. The description still relates to the original word in a different language, but it is not a single word like the English word. The word description indicates what ‘dinner’ is, the isiXhosa translation shows what is done during dinner, the fact that it includes something that has to do with eating and when.

According to Mphahlele & Mashamaite (2005), mobile phone, internet and social media users can communicate with other users by using symbols or abbreviated forms of words and sentences to save space, time, and money. These varieties help in sustaining space to convey a longer message. “Many users have created internet slang to communicate and express their thoughts on SNSs and mobile networks,” (Thurairaj et al., 2015:303). On social media, people use shortening of words and slang because they are trending and that is the way everyone communicates online.

The use of these dialects and varieties online can be challenging. Such challenges occur in formal and professional settings where users are obliged to engage in a formal language. The use of informal language in both face-to-face interaction and online interaction, is not permitted because it sounds like that person is disrespectful. For example, you cannot use such varieties in academic, work, church spaces and others.

4.4 CODE SWITCHING AND CODE-MIXING PHENOMENON IN LANGUAGE USE

In the researcher’s view, code switching (cs) is when a person decides to alternate between two or more languages in a conversation or written speech. While code mixing (cm) is the mixing of two or more languages, people might mix certain elements of more than one language. Approximately, most scholars use the two-phenomenon code switching and code mixing interchangeably, especially in studies of syntax, morphology and other formal aspects of language, the use of linguistic units i.e words, phrases, clauses etc. Code switching (cs) is a phenomenon commonly observed in multilingual and multicultural communities. Code switching involves switching from one language to another in the same conversation (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). Myers-Scotton (1998) argue that code switching does not only apply to switching between different languages, but also to switching between varieties of the same language. Moreover, code-switching refers to the use of more than one language or variety in a conversation. In some cases, the bilingual speakers face a challenge when they are conversating with another bilingual, they switch their language code to another in the construction of the sentence to make the interlocutor understand. Sometimes the speakers do this in the same language background. (Waris, 2012). According to C.& C (1993) & Coulmas (1998) as quoted by Li & Fung (2012:1672), “in code switch the matrix language is the ‘principal’ language, where the ‘embedded’ language is the second language”. Cook (2001)

claims code switching as a bilingual-mode activity in cases where more than one language, typically the speakers' native language (L1) and second language (L2) are used intrasententially or intersententially. Most researchers argue that code switching is an alternation between two languages within a sentence or between sentences, (Grosjean, 1982; Poplack, 2001; Clyne, 2000).

According to Gumperz (1982), code-switching is used as a conversational strategy to express social meanings such as quotation, addressee specification, interjection, reiteration, message qualification, and personalisation versus objectivisation. Code switching involves switching from one language to another in the same conversation (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). On the other hand, Auer (1998) claim that, previous studies conducted about code switching indicate that factors such as extra-linguistic features like topic, setting, relationships between participants, community norms and values, as well as societal, political, and ideological developments, influenced speakers' choice of language in conversation.

Zentella (1997) proposed four conversational functions of code switching, which are namely clarification, emphasis and checking. Furthermore, Zentella (1997) explains that bilingual individuals code switch because they want to clarify and elucidate their statement when getting their message across. Another function of code switching is to repeat a message from one language to another.

Code switching is the one of alternative ways to bilingual of two or more languages in the same conversation. Hymes (1974) defines code-switching as "a common term for alternative use of two or more languages, varieties of a language or even speech styles" while Bokamba (1989) defines code-switching is the mixing of words, phrases, and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event. (Waris, 2012).

On the other hand, code mixing (cm) is when a person mixes different varieties within a single utterance or even within a single word, state Mazraani (1997). According to Gunturi (2020), code mixing refers to the embedding of linguistic units such as phrases, words, and morphemes of one language into an utterance of another language. Code mixing is basically the mixing of two or more languages while communicating, a person might be conversating in English and they decide to add certain words in isiXhosa and vice versa. It is sometimes rare for bilingual or multilingual people to stick to one language when communicating. Referring to what has been discussed in the above section about the use of different language dialects and varieties,

people might decide to mix languages in a sentence because they do not know of a word that is equivalent in isiXhosa or another language than the original. For example:

1. **English:** We were at the labs and the internet was slow, we could not finish our work.

Xhosa: Besiselab kwaye i-internet ihamba kancinci, khangе sikwazi ukuwugqiba umsebenzi wethu.

2. **English:** Me and my friends went out for a movie.

Xhosa: Mna kunye nabahlobo bam siye saphuma saya kwimovie.

Looking at the examples, the translations from English to isiXhosa show that the words in English such as ‘lab’, ‘internet’, and ‘movie’ have been borrowed from their original language and used as they are but with certain vowels/prefix to make them fit the new language they got translated into. Code mixing refers to the mixing of various linguistic units such as modifiers, morphemes, words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, (Grosjean, 1982; Bhatia & Ritchie, 2004).

A person might tell a story in English and integrate certain phrases in isiXhosa, such might happen when the person is quoting what was said by another person and there is no equivalence in English, they decide to say it in the original language it was communicated in, even though they are conversating with the other party in English. For instance, someone told the person a joke in isiXhosa, and they share it with someone else, they might communicate in English and quote the joke in the original language it was communicated in. This is done so that the joke stays authentic, and it does not lose its meaning in translation.

“Code-switching and code-mixing are well-known traits in the speech pattern of the average bilingual in any human society the world over, where both of them are the most obvious and widespread which used at different language,” (Waris, 2012:124). Code switch and code mix are considered as two different phenomena which bilingual speakers engage in when interacting. While majority of researchers argue that the two phenomena exist in similar ways, at the same time they believe that there is a difference between them, but they are like each other. According to Waris (2012), previous study of experts indicate that it is difficult to make a differentiation between code switch and code mix because there are still some concepts of rule that need attention to make it clear and this is related to interference of language. Majority of research conducted on code switching and code mixing indicate that these phenomena happen in bilingual and multilingual settings and cases, where people are faced with the challenge of having to choose which language to use and in what domains, because in some

languages there are borrowed words which people might choose to switch or mix in a conversation for purposes of emphasis or clarification.

Majority of researchers and linguists found that the concepts of code switching, and code mixing have strong similarities and sometimes difficult to differentiate (Waris, 2012; Kim, 2006), most people tend to use these concepts as if they are the same and have the same meaning. These concepts are loosely used when people physically interact (spoken form) and since they are talking and do not have much time to think through because they are trying to make the conversation flow, they might code switch and mix unconsciously. In written form/text, people code switch and code mix consciously because they know what they want to convey and how they anticipate the other party will receive the message. In code switching, bilingual speakers/users might communicate in English and switch to isiXhosa, thus, switch between the two languages and sometimes use them simultaneously in a sentence or conversation. On the other hand, code mixing happens when a speaker communicates in one language and throw in a word or two in another language, in the same sentence or conversation.

Researchers define code switching and code mixing differently but similarly. Thelander quoted by Chaer and Leony tried to differentiate between the two concepts by saying that, code switching is a speech event where a speaker switches from one clause of a specific language to a clause of another language. While code mixing is an occurrence of speech event when the clauses or phrases that consists of hybrid clauses and hybrid phrases are not supporting each other. Moreover, Fasold in Chaer and Leoni presented the criteria to differentiate between code mixing and code switching. Code mixing is when someone uses one word or phrase from one language to another language. Then code switching is when the language is arranged structurally and grammatically in other language or unintentional. (Waris, 2012). When any language speakers interact, write a text or message, they might choose to integrate certain words in isiXhosa, while the original text was in English, we would then refer to this as code mixing. When they decide to completely shift to another language, then we refer to this as code switching, because they have now decided to use a different language from the original language, they used at first.

Various researchers argue for certain reasons why people code switch and code mix in sentences or conversations. Waris (2012) state the following reasons:

One of the reasons for people to code switch from one language to another is because the speaker may not be able to articulate themselves entirely in one language, so they decide to

switch to the other language to compensate for the deficiency. In this instance, the speaker might be prompted into communicating in the other language by switching to it for a while. The author argues that this type of code switching mostly occurs when the speaker is upset, tired, or distracted in a manner. Majority of the time people find it easy to express themselves in their native language when they are upset and so on. The second switching identified by the author, commonly arises when an individual wishes to express solidarity with a particular social group. For example, when an individual is surrounded by people who speak the same language and come from the same linguistic background, could be friends, colleagues, and others. The other speaker might decide to switch from their native language or commonly used English language and decide to engage in the language of the majority in solidarity. This kind of switch is mostly done by multilingual speakers who know more than just their native language and English.

Moreover, the relationship is established between the speaker and the listener when the listener responds with a similar switch. People might meet for the first time without knowing each other but immediately when an individual hears another person speak a similar language, that creates ease for them as they find it easy to communicate and might exclude others in their conversation. This creates a confusion in the third party and as the people who do not speak the same language, they do not get to hear what is being talked about. The speakers feel a degree of comfort knowing that all the other people around them are excluded in the conversation and they are not listening to them. Thirdly, the author stated that, another reason for the switching behaviour is the alteration that occurs when the speaker desires to convey his or her attitude to the listener. “In this situation, monolingual speakers can communicate these attitudes by means of variation in the level of formality in their speech whilst bilingual speakers can convey the same by code switching between two languages.” (Waris, 2012). In such instances, it is easy for the bilingual speaker to convey the message accurately without the message being misinterpreted or taken out of context. When a speaker is talking about something that annoys them, if they are bilingual, it gets easy for them to switch between languages. Another example includes; when a speaker is shouting or angry, when they vent/rant they use their vernacular languages to fully express themselves. This is because certain words might not be relevant if used in English or might have a different meaning, and the message would lose its meaning. On a lighter note, another example would be that of speaking about your parents’ siblings, in English you would easily refer to everyone as ‘aunt’. However, in your native language you can specify who you are talking about, the speaker would say the

sentence in English and switch to their native language to refer to their mother's sister.

On the other hand, Kim (2006) state the following reasons:

Bilingual individuals might be propelled by different reasons and motivation to switch or mix between languages. Kim (2006) referred to Grosjean's (1982) reasons for code switching and why people decide to code switch when communicating. One of the reasons why individuals code switch is the fact that, when they cannot find a proper word to express or when there is no appropriate translation for the language utilised at the time, they switch between languages. Furthermore, specific situations, messages, interlocutors, attitudes, and emotions generate code mixing. Grosjean (1982), then continues to state reasons that can propel people to code switch. These include the fact that individuals code switch when quoting what was said by someone else.

As quoted by Grosjean (1982) from Bhatia & Ritchie (2004), it is believed that code switch or code mix happen "On the basis of a number of factors such as with whom (participants: their backgrounds and relationships), about what (topic, and content), and when and where a speech act occurs, bilinguals make their language choice". Other people might code switch or code mix deliberately or insentiently to make an emphasis on one's group identity. For example, they would say something in English and mix or switch to isiXhosa to address an older person i.e tata, mama; talk about traditional events i.e umgidi, isazimzi; traditional food i.e ulusu, inyama yentloko and so forth.

Examples of switching or mixing:

According to my parents "umntu ngumntu ngabantu".

Abazali think that education is the key.

My mom told me to clean the house okanye uzakundibetha.

Moreover, while diverse individuals code switch and code mix, language choice varies and is based on different events and settings. At schools, some teachers would teach the subjects in the native language and not English, as the official language of teaching and learning. The teachers utilise code switching and code mixing as a strategy to learning for the students to gain knowledge of the foreign language to theirs. Most rural schools are known for teaching learners in an African language so they could understand what is being taught and they then translate it to English to help develop the students' skills in the English language. You would

think that teachers and students at schools live under the duress to teach and learn in English, however, in instances where the students cannot complete an utterance in English, they switch to their native language to convey the correct message and for others to understand the topic discussed or taught. For example, the teacher would teach a specific topic in English and further explain in the native language to make sure that all the students understood.

In addition, people find it easy to think and analyse a sentence in their native language and internally translate it before saying it out loud. Thus, they find it easy to translate what they think before saying it. This would generally happen in face-to-face interactions but when it comes to online, users on social media write what they want to share in different languages and because written form allows people to think and analyse what they are about to say. Written texts assist in providing opinions and answers that are thoroughly thought, rather than face-to-face (spoken speech) where someone rushes to get the message across, and they do not have time to think much about what to say. They might choose to switch or mix languages in one tweet. There are many reasons for this occurrence in written text on social media.

Users might decide to switch between languages to accommodate the targeted language group, some users might mix languages to try emphasise what they mean so that people who do not understand English, can get what is being said and understand it in the language familiar to them. Sometimes on social media certain users would communicate and engage in African languages without thinking or taking into consideration people who do not understand the foreign language to theirs. Twitter accounts and other social media accounts are personal accounts; therefore, the owner of the account has a write to engage and interact in whichever language they feel comfortable in and prefer using online.

One consequence of this is that a person's language choice may change with their settings: at school or work they might be required to use English, while in given social spaces they might fall back on native languages. Diverse environments, including social network sites, play a role in language choice, language shift, language mixing and switching.

“Multilinguality and code-mixing in social media is a norm rather than an exception,” (Volkova et al., 2018: 609). Additionally, multilingual speakers often mix languages inside the tweet, which is referred to as the intra-sentential code-switching. Research conducted by (Eldin, 2014; Nguyen & Dogruoz, 2013; Lignos & Marcus, 2013) indicate that multilingual speakers might mix languages across the tweets, referred to as inter-sentential code-mixing. In addition, these multilingual speakers often code-switch and code-mix between languages to express their

thoughts or feelings, to address a different audience, to attract attention or emphasise a point.

Waris (2012:133) conclude that:

“Code-switching is a term in linguistics referring to using more than one language or variety in conversation. While other expert stated that code-switching is the mixing of words, phrases, and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event. Code mixing as the term refers to the use of one or more languages for consistent transfer of linguistic units from one language into another, and by such a language mixture developing a new restricted or not so restricted code of linguistic interaction”.

(Refer to chapter four for examples on code switching and code mixing regarding the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet).

4.5 SUMMARY

The use of African languages is complicated by factors such as status, economic opportunities, and others. Contrary to popular belief that English is the mostly used language, it is not the only used but dominates. In social spaces people can communicate and engage in their native languages; in educational settings children are taught in their native languages; at university there are courses offered in other languages besides English and so on. Therefore, this shows that since we live in a post-apartheid South Africa, there is a possibility for more change and development of previously marginalised languages. Language is one of the significant factors to be considered for change, even though African language users occupy spaces, and they can engage in their mother-tongue languages, it is important to foresee these languages being dominant in economic, political, academic, religious spaces and so on.

As alluded in the introduction of the research, English is acknowledged as the dominant language. Alexander (2013) states that research done on language use in South Africa indicate that English is the most supported language choice as a lingua franca. Furthermore, state that:

“The choice of English to fulfil this role is likely to foster unity and avoid the possibility of division that the choice of another South African language might present at this stage. English

facilitates communication not only with neighbouring countries but within the wider context of international discourse...” (Alexander, 2013: 69).

This chapter outlined literature theoretical framework used in the study. Thus, outlined and critically discussed language shift, and language attitude. In relation to these, themes such as code switching and code mixing were discovered and critically discussed. The chapter discussed factors that contribute to language choice when social media users interact and engage on twitter.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter critically discusses the findings and data collected from twitter with isiXhosa speakers. The discussion will be outlined through integrating themes that were discovered through data collected. Literature and theory introduced in chapter two, will be used as a guideline to formulate the analysis of the study. The chapter will refer to tweets that were communicated in English and other languages, as it sought the use of language choice online. These tweets were attained from twitter under the assumed trending tweet *O jewa ke eng?* tweets by isiXhosa users will be used, inclusive of the other tweets by other language speakers. This is done to formulate and develop a complete study accommodative of diverse users who engaged with the tweet, to indicate how broad the spectrum of language use and language choice online is.

Users are not restricted to which language to use and when, on social media. There is a switch or shift in language that indicates language choice is affected by different factors such as social, economic, religious and others. One might think such factors require or only apply in cases of face-to-face interaction and not in the online domain. In contrast, online or in the internet space, such factors determine the way users use language and choose which to use and when. More than language use based on choice, shift, and attitude, it is more of a preference and following of trends. The world is constantly evolving, and languages are being challenged. Social media lacks strict institutional gatekeeping as present in traditional media. Users of social media have freedom to write and post all sorts of materials, which might not be socially responsible, and unethically right to people connected to them on it. (Solo-Anaeto & Jacobs, 2015: 40-41). However, twitter does have stipulated rules and if violated, the specific user bears the consequences.

Furthermore, Zhuravleva, De Bot & Hilton (2016) state that researchers naturally want to know what happens in real life and obtain data that reflects the objective reality of multilingual language competence. The *O jewa ke eng?* tweet transpired on twitter and trended for the longest time; the research sought to investigate the possibility of African languages utilised as dominant languages online. Thus, investigate the languages isiXhosa twitter users used to engage with the tweet and what prompted them to. Different themes occurred during the

research, these revealed that not only the world is diverse but multilingual when it comes to language. This section critically discusses the findings acquired from the data collected.

Most methodologies for investigating language choice and use in multilingual communities, including the ones mentioned above i.e traditional questionnaires work for different research studies. In some studies, a researcher can use qualitative independently or quantitative independently or both. This study required both qualitative and quantitative methods to conduct data, mainly because only conducting the specific study with qualitative or quantitative method limits and would have lacked detailed data to complete the study as explained in section 3.4 above.

5.1.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND ONLINE SURVEYS USED AS RESEARCH DESIGNS TO COLLECT DATA

The following sections contain results of the main study and a discussion of the results discovered through social media data. Firstly, looks at the method designs utilised in relation to how the research was conducted. Semi-structured interviews where 15 main participants were approached and 100 surveys were posted online, on twitter, and these approaches were used to see the study through. In contrast, Holmes (1997) offers an extensive review of the limitations of questionnaire surveys, among them the lack of depth that surveys offer, but also the inaccuracies and unreliable answers that the approach can bring with it. Hence, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to conduct data, to bring together a holistic study.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and online surveys. These methods are believed to be more traditional but seeing that the world is moving towards a digital sphere, these methods were utilised for completion of this research. Twitter was used as a research method to gather tweets and participants who contributed to the research. The easy accessibility and convenience of technology makes it easy to type a hashtag or a user's handle and all tweets and messages related to the tweet could be gathered from twitter. Basically, the information you want is easily accessible through this use, just as it is for online twitter users who utilise twitter for news, job opportunities, and so forth.

Surveys were used to gather overview answers to know and get an understanding of how African language speakers feel about using their native languages online and whether majority of isiXhosa speakers were aware and engaged with the tweet *O jewa ke eng?* and in what languages and why. The study focuses on twitter as a social media platform that is surrounded by diverse individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. Social media is a social space where users have the freedom to express themselves freely. Since the country got hit by the pandemic and everyone went to a national lockdown, the researcher was only able to conduct interviews through twitter direct messages (dm), emails and WhatsApp. More information was gathered through in-depth interviews that were semi-structured, to allow the participants to provide more of their views and opinions on the study. Open-ended questions were asked to attain more detailed information and well thought answers, as the interviews were done online using emails, twitter direct message, and WhatsApp.

The approach of using semi-structured interviews proved to be more beneficial in terms of conducting the interviews through online platforms and having to do follow-up questions. Moreover, every time when the researcher discovered something new from the information provided by the participants, it was easy to do a follow-up on that. In this way, it was easy to verify and get more clarity on the material that was unclear, or not understood, so as not to misinterpret the information provided by the participants. In terms of time, these online ways of collecting data were very convenient because the researcher and the participants did not have to schedule for sit-down interviews that were going to be time consuming. They also did not have to do the interviews at specific times when each participant was available to meet, which would have dragged the process, in terms of finding suitable time for everyone.

5.2 DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected indicates that majority of the isiXhosa native speakers who engaged with the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet, identify as multilingual. The interesting factor discovered in the data, is the fact that majority of isiXhosa native speakers who claim to be multilingual, did not engage in other African languages but English and their native languages. However, some engaged in different languages through code mixing and code switching, as shown in the next section of data findings. This shows that being a multilingual user does not necessarily mean that people will use different languages to engage on social media, even though they are fluent in the

language. Language dominance exists, especially with the language of power, mainly English. The language proficiency of these languages varies, as people might know the language basics, the levels could be foundation (knowing the basics), intermediate and fluency. People might know a language, speak, and understand it but cannot write it and vice versa. Consequently, they mostly engaged in English rather than their native languages or any other African language. The prevalent use of the dominant language online plays a vital role in bringing together users from diverse linguistic backgrounds. We live in a diverse world with people from other countries, who come from different language groups, cultural backgrounds and so on. Thus, power dynamics play a role in language use whether written or spoken; face-to-face interaction and online/internet. In the researcher's argument, this should not be the case, as many efforts are made to promote African languages in academic, social, professional settings, and others.

Therefore, African language speakers should make an effort to use their native languages, so as to contribute to the development of these languages. The researcher believe that it is everyone's responsibility to contribute, embrace, and help uplift their own native languages, because the future of African languages is in their hands. The researcher also advocates for multilingualism because it is important not to only know your native language and English but other languages as well (refer to chapter 2 and 4 about language choice, language shift and language attitude). In spaces occupied by diverse individuals, being able to communicate in other languages not only help accommodate the other person but enhance your language proficiency and assist in growing and developing African languages as a whole and not certain, dominant, and majority or minority languages. Take for instance places such as the banking sector, when people visit the bank and they get assisted by a teller who can assist them in their respective language, this creates some sort of welcome, accommodation, and warmth. The person seeking assistance will not feel inferior because they do not know or understand English.

It should be noted that such has been done in self-service teller machines such as the ATMs, a user can get assisted in the language of their choice, by obviously choosing the specific language they prefer to be assisted in. It is important to note that, not everyone is familiar with English, especially older people and other individuals who are not literate. We must debunk colonial ways, or we are not as 'free' as we claim to be. The researcher believes that people have the power to change and make a positive impact in advancing our languages and cultures across all spheres. Our leaders, including Nelson Mandela, Bantu Stephen Biko and others fought against apartheid, fought for freedom, and change. However, what is change if we

cannot fully embrace and express ourselves in our languages and be proud of our cultures within ‘white’ spaces. Seeing that the world is moving towards a digital space, social media platforms such as twitter have created a space for African language users to express themselves in their languages, because they write what they want and update others about whatever they want to share. In the researcher’s view, through the use of the digital age, previously disadvantaged languages have the potential to grow and be used as dominant languages online and obviously with the help of the native speakers of the languages.

Social media allow the users to observe the behaviours and published personalities of others without them even knowing, thus gauging the social environment. Moreover, gives the users a sense of importance when their interactions are highly “liked” or “shared” on platforms, which could make users feel that they are posting meaningful things. Social media also offers users an escape from face-to-face interactions and gives them a place where they can simply observe without contributing to any conversation, thus allowing them to fulfil the component of escape. (Wainner, 2018: 10). The *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet has attracted higher interactions through ‘likes’, ‘retweets’, ‘comments’ and so forth. This tweet has played a significant role on twitter through allowing users to help each other with materialistic, monetary stuff, information, and others. *Ojewa ke eng?* is a meaningful tweet that has positively benefitted the online community at large. Even though the tweet was communicated in a specific African language, it was able to attract diverse users from different linguistic backgrounds and it trended without majority of the users asking for translation. The next part discusses the results obtained from the collected data of language choice on twitter by isiXhosa-speaking users.

The next section presents the results obtained from the data collected from twitter, through semi-structured interviews and online surveys. Furthermore, the results are summarised and critically discussed to determine the extent to which the research study objectives were accomplished.

5.3 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Language barrier is generally a major hindrance when it comes to communication between individuals of different races and linguistic backgrounds. On social media, people write in their native languages, English, languages of their choice, and the rest who understand or know what is being said, engage with that tweet. Moreover, every user who gets the sense of what is said

whether through the translation tool or what other users are discussing (the comments under the specific tweet), users from different language groups engage with the tweet. In some cases, you will find that a user tweets something like asking what a typical African household would have in a cold weather. Other users engage with such a tweet, based on their experiences as African people, and start sharing what they would have in their languages i.e., umngqusho, stamp etc; or English if the specific food has an English equivalence i.e., samp and beans. As declared by the user of the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet, everyone is dealing with something. Therefore, twitter provides a space where users from different linguistic backgrounds come together and share what they are going through in hope to get assistance which is not only restricted to a particular language group but everyone.

The *O jewa ke eng?* tweet trended on twitter for the longest, gaining more reactions through likes, comments, retweets, and shares. When the tweet simmered down a bit, came along another tweet ‘Sco pa tu mana’, a gibberish word by Patapaa Amisty, a Ghanaian. This tweet was mostly engaged through the posting of pictures, while *O jewa ke eng?* is mostly text-based. Both tweets trended and have created a space for all users to share and discuss sensitive and previously viewed as taboo topics. Generally, users on twitter tweet in whatever languages they prefer, and the tweet gets a certain number of likes, retweets, and comments, if any. Other tweets written in African languages that trended and gained more traction have proven to be tweets by well-known individuals with a vast number of followers. Data collected indicates that whatever tweet whether communicated in English or any African language if it catches the eyes of many users (tweeted by a user with more following/has a fun element to it/of great assistance to others etc) it trends (makes it to the trend chat). In this way, the user attracts a more diverse audience because more people have gained access to the tweet.

Majority of the people who participated in the research study revealed that, it is important to acknowledge the fact that people know English to be a universal language and as such they sometimes insert certain phrases in the language when communicating in isiXhosa. This is caused by many reasons such as finding certain English words convenient when communicating, lack of language equivalence, and others. Social media platforms such as twitter are fast paced environments and as such most users use English as a universal language to tweet and engage with other tweets, while others prefer using their home language, a couple of the reasons stated by the participants:

“Rather than you engage in broken English where other users will laugh and make a joke out of you, just use your home language. I am fluent in isiXhosa, and I know how to write the language correctly and accurately”.

“Me not engaging in isiXhosa does not mean that I do not know my language, I am just not fluent in it, but I am fully umXhosa and am proud of my culture”.

“When I engage on Twitter, I do use isiXhosa but mostly English as a matter of preference and there is no particular reason”.

“I mostly engage in English when I comment in tweets such as *O jewa ke eng?* as I would be sharing important information for others to utilise. In this way I am aiming to reach more people so they can also be assisted, I use English so that everyone is accommodated and not left out or feel like the information shared is not meant for them as it is exclusive in language”.

“Twitter is a fast-paced social platform and having to use isiXhosa proves to be daunting for me, as I have to use long terms that I cannot fluently write”.

“I mostly engaged with the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet in English, mainly because I believe in sharing valuable and significant information and using English is important because you do not want to exclude people who mostly need the information you shared”.

On the other hand, other participants claim that they generally mostly engage on Twitter in English. Majority of the reasons include the fact that African languages are limited as indicated below:

“I engage in English because I have noticed that tweets in the language attract more users and sometimes you get to be recognised as a person who actively engages on Twitter”.

“Tweets in English are convenient for most users on Twitter, as the platform accommodates diverse individuals from different language backgrounds”.

“I engaged with the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet in English because personally, I find it difficult to write in isiXhosa. Even when I use isiXhosa, I always end up switching to English”.

These comments prove that English is viewed as dominant, as a result to attract more people or to generally engage, people use the language. While isiXhosa and other African languages are viewed as limited, some do engage in the language whether the tweet reaches more audience or not, but those are also limited. This goes to show that English still dominates, and the study is not conducted to disregard such, rather to find possible ways for languages dimmed as

inferior to also be used alongside dominant languages such as English, and not only in limited spaces. The study investigates twitter as a platform to gauge if it provides African languages the opportunity to grow and be preserved.

The following tweet indicates how the tweet attracted individuals from Nigeria and globally, as a result more people wanted to know what it means, and Nigeria had their own *Ojewa ke eng?* The person who tweeted the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet indicated in an interview she did with Drum, that she still receives tweets from international users asking what the tweet means. The tweet below is written in English which one might argue that it was written to encompass diverse individuals from different linguistic background, as the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet attracted diverse individuals who speak different languages. The user of the tweet below could have tweeted in their home language, but they did not, and this goes to show that the tweet did not necessarily attract individuals to use their home languages in promotion and preservation of African languages on social media. Individuals who understood what the tweet meant and some that know, and understand the language, immediately engaged in English and other languages of their choice whether through code mixing or code-switching in-between. In this case, the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet did not encourage other users to engage in the language or any other African languages, as indicated by a couple of users below:

“In my opinion, I do not engage with trends based on promoting my home language, for as long as I understand what is written in the tweet, I use whichever language”.

“I am not picky when it comes to language use on social media. Anyway, I am only fluent in isiXhosa and English, and I use any and whenever I feel like. Generally, I do not believe that *Ojewa ke eng?* made any difference in the choice of language people choose to use on Twitter”.



Twitter has no language regulations, and this dispensation has caused the users to use languages of their choice, unless otherwise. Majority of isiXhosa speakers have indicated that they mostly engage in English because of their work, advertising job opportunities, engaging on sensitive issues, awareness creation, educational related concerns, and others. Moreover, indicated that they do tweet in isiXhosa on their accounts and engage in the language under threads in isiXhosa, any others, replies, and so forth. Other users find it appropriate and professional to use English due to some reasons stated by the participants below:

“It is important to note that on social media we are diverse and for you to attract more audience, the use of a known language helps, and English is that language for me”.

“I engaged with the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet in English because I am seeking job opportunities. I mostly use English because I wanted the tweets to reach more people, even companies, or any other good Samaritans out there, so they could help me”.

“I use English because sometimes you find people asking what you mean, and I feel sorry for them because I believe since they are my followers, therefore they are my people. I am a social media influencer, digital content creator, promoter, and therefore my jobs require me to communicate in English, as such I tend to forget to use my home language because I am used to communicating in English”.

“Bloggers switched from Chinese to English because the Chinese words and expressions do not have suitable and precise English translations”, (Halim & Maros, 2014: 129). The study discovered that majority of isiXhosa speakers mainly communicate in their native language on their personal Twitter accounts and when they are engaging with their isiXhosa native speaking peers and friends. In this case, they know that the other party will know and understand what the tweet is about, what they are talking about and be able to engage in the same language, not obligatory.

In relation to bloggers and influencers that are isiXhosa speaking, they do engage and tweet in their native language but when they have the obligation to share information about their work with brands, the use of English plays a significant role because the aim of advertising brand work, is to attract more diverse people in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, religion and so on. Some users would tweet in English and mix a bit of isiXhosa trending words that are commonly used. Though to speculate that these would be understood by majority of other users is sometimes not the case. Twitter is a fast-paced platform and users who do not understand certain phrases and words normally ask and others will assist by giving clarity or explain what

they refer to or mean. Majority of the time they do this in English, more like they translate for the other party who is unfamiliar with the specific language. These words or phrases include ‘mntase’ (my sibling), ‘ndiya gowa’ (I am going through a lot) and others. The research discovered that, even so, it is notable for the influencers to be cognisant of the brand’s target market or niche and the contractual rules and regulations that bind them on the type of content to produce and language to use. In such instances where the use of a dominant language is advised and mostly used to accommodate the multiple diverse individuals from across the globe, then the researcher believes that more work still needs to be done.

Arguably, if companies feel that they will not attract more customers and clients if their content is in isiXhosa or any other African language, change first needs to happen in those companies. For example, we now have advertisements on television that are produced and broadcasted in African languages. In the researcher’s view, everyone always has to start somewhere and therefore brands can ask their influencers to produce content that will represent diverse cultures because the products are not only bought by English speakers but people from diverse linguistic backgrounds. There have been companies who have started doing such to promote their brand work i.e., Wimpy introduced their menu in different African languages and their influencers created and shared content in African languages.

One would think that language poses no challenge on social media because the platforms are casual, and the users write and update status about anything and everything. That is not the case because where there are people, the researcher believes there is bound to be language use and that raises the question of how diverse individuals engage with each other in tweets written and communicated in African languages, taking into consideration that not everyone knows all languages, some are monolingual, bilingual and multilingual. The tweet below proves to be the example of individuals who engage in different language through code switching and code mixing.



Tweet

My colleague resigned with his last day Friday so now he's walking around the office talking mad shit about everything. He's like " Yazi sinempimpi ezinomona apha emsebenzini, nalenja yeLine manager Ntwana siyayihlula nge experience " 🙄 ...Haybo nanku umntu ezondigxothisa 😬🥲

O jewa ke eng ?

10:14 AM · 19 Aug 19 from
Africa · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

South

70 Retweets **263** Likes



This tweet is an example of code switching where the user introduced the tweet in English and completely switched to isiZulu an African language. In this tweet, the user is generally expressing what happened at work when his colleague resigned from work. Here, language switch took place as you find that the user wrote the tweet in English and switched to isiZulu to convey what the original person said when they resigned, and further ended his comment in isiXhosa. One can simply tell that the person friend that resigned is umZulu and therefore they expressed themselves in their home language, while the one who wrote the tweet is umXhosa as they continued their commentary in isiXhosa. One will only notice the slight difference in the two languages because they are Nguni languages and have similar terminologies. Additionally, when looking at what the friend said, he added a word in English at the end 'experience' and this speaks to what has been discussed above, about English when being inserted by the users when they communicate, and this is done because of convenience,

preference, lack of language equivalence, language borrowing and others. The tweet that follows indicates the mixed feelings people have about others writing their tweets in their home languages.



“The use of the elements of English is sometimes so unconscious that it seems to fit perfectly well in speech,” (Waris, 2012:124). In such, you get examples where people tweet in English and quote what was said by another person in the language, they communicated the tweet. On the other hand, you get users who do not understand other languages and prefer content in English, a language presumably known by everyone. Looking at the above tweet, this shows that the receiver was drawn to the tweet because it was communicated in English, which made them understand where the user sharing was coming from, but everything changed when that specific user decided to switch and express what was said, in the language it was communicated in. Other cases where you find that people insert elements of English because they seem to fit, include examples of these words, ‘i-internet ibicotha so ndaluza umsebenzi wam kanjalo’. This sentence indicates an example of code mixing where the user inserts certain words in English, in a sentence communicated in isiXhosa. The two words ‘internet’ and ‘lose’ written in isiXhosa are easily included in the sentence. Sometimes a person can speak or write in isiXhosa and unconsciously insert elements of English and such words include ‘like’, ‘just’, ‘and’,

‘because’ and others. These words come easy as one speaks or write. The use of English alongside other African languages, referred to as code mixing and code-switching sometimes happens subconsciously and others do it intentionally, based on the lack of language equivalence and matter of preference.

On the other hand, other users share different sentiments about the use of casual language such as slang, SMS language and others, on social media. See replies below:

“Using SMS language on Twitter is not sufficient because, how do you expect people to understand what you are saying? I don’t interact with such tweets because I now have to try figure out what you are saying, and by the time I get what you were saying, I’d already lost interest”.

“Shortening of words is something we are all used to, since early days on Mxit and now on WhatsApp. I think such language and writing should stay in those platforms because Twitter is a fast-paced environment and we are always trying to keep up with what is trending, which means we don’t have time to try figure out what you were getting across”.

“Tsotsitaal is more like slang and those are languages we normally use in townships, as they transpired van toka af, but sometimes I feel like they work well in face-to-face interactions more than online”.



Looking at this thread of tweets from the original user who tagged the *O jewa ke eng?* user Kea, this user is conveying a message of how she/he feels about tweets written in African languages. The fact that Kea responded in the same African language that seems to be the issue for this specific user. To the researcher, this shows that the growth and preservation of African languages on social media really depends on the speakers of these languages. If we have users such as Kea, tweeting in their African languages, one can easily argue that African languages have a potential and stand a chance to be used as dominant languages on social media and anywhere, alongside English.

· 12h

Replying to @

@ if you don't understand
her language come to us we'll translate it
for you, now she's saying you're talking
dog

While other twitter users who do not understand what the *O jewa ke eng?* means, they tweet the original user of the tweet to ask what it means. In an article by Drum, Kea stated that she still receives questions about what the tweet means, and further alluded that these are mostly international people based on their location. With regards to the above tweet, majority of the people who participated in the study indicated that they are multilingual and therefore it was easy for them to understand the tweet. While others indicated that they got to understand what the tweet meant through their friends who are Sotho-Tswana language group and others who know and understand the language used to communicate the tweet.

The tweet below shows interaction between the original *O jewa ke eng?* tweet user and another user that engaged with the tweet as a way to get assistance in what had occurred between them and another company. The person started the tweet in the original language *O jewa ke eng?* was communicated in i.e., “ke jewa ke taba ya hore...” and further switched to English. Kea answered this user in English and further tagged the company involved and asked if the particular user had been assisted, in English. This engagement was in English which goes to show that the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet user does not disregard the use of the dominant language but acknowledge her home languages and express herself in her home language and other languages to show her flexibility and freedom to interact in whichever language she feels comfortable in and whenever. On the other hand, the user that wanted assistance, might have switched between the two languages consciously to get to the company with the perception that they have to interact in English, or unconsciously because they are used to communicating in that way and this is their natural habit since they are bilingual or multilingual. The use of English should not be the factor in perceiving or deeming African languages inferior, but

people should be able to interact in their home languages and still get assisted in their home languages, just like it happens in stores through face-to-face interaction, as spaces are also occupied by African language speakers and not only White/English speakers.



Additionally, in other tweets that transpired written in other African languages and others in isiXhosa i.e., #UmjelowithAzola, *Uright? Ushoda ngani?* These mentioned tweets show an element of code mixing as with #umjelowithAzola the interlocutor wrote the tweet in isiXhosa and inserted an English word 'with'. On the other hand, *Uright? Ushoda ngani?* is a tweet written in English and isiZulu, the English word 'right' has a prefix 'u' to make the tweet sound African. Some users who replied and reacted to these tweets inclusive of the *O jewa ke eng?*

tweet, would start by saying the start in the language used by the user of that specific tweet and continue to mix with English or their home language i.e., “ke jewa ke gore...” “umjolo ...” “ngishoda...”. One can find such examples under the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet on Twitter, where users tag or comment with the #Ojewakeeng and sometimes respond to the tweet by tagging the original tweet user. As such, this helps in making the tweet go viral so that it reaches more audience.

On the other hand, isiXhosa users acknowledge that they mostly engaged with the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet in English, as alluded above. While they also acknowledge that in their twitter accounts and with other tweets they do engage in isiXhosa. One can find examples of a tweet isiXhosa and comments in the same language on Twitter.

The use of English alongside other languages has proven to be something social media users do a lot. On the other hand, the use of African languages alongside other African has also shown as something that happens but proves to be difficult for some users, as discussed in the language attitude section. On twitter, you do find tweets written in other African languages by users of a different language from the one the tweet is communicated in. This indicates that some African language users do put an effort in learning and interacting in other African languages, just as most isiXhosa language speakers indicated in the study that they identify as multilingual because they have the knowledge of isiXhosa, English, and other African languages. These users are not only multilingual, but they speak and interact in the different languages, even though some indicated that they may be fluent in writing or speaking, generally more fluent in the other more than the other. In some cases, users of other languages do want to know other languages but battle with language difficulty and other factors discussed in chapter 2 and 4.

5.4 DATA FINDINGS

The first finding discovered by the study revealed that *O jewa ke eng?* tweet trended for a while, but it is important to note that trends last for a short while. In this case, the study has discovered that the tweet has high activity burst because most users and even new users keep reverting to the tweet, to share, advertise, ask for assistance, daily updates about crime events, social and political events, sensitive issues, and others.

Secondly, the study revealed that isiXhosa speakers who participated in this research know and understand their home language, but they generally communicate in English because of preference, lack of language equivalence, and other personal reasons. Majority of the speakers shared that they are fluent in their home language isiXhosa but prefer to engage in English when they engaged with the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet, as they feel that it is accommodative of other diverse users on twitter. They basically reiterated the fact that the tweet has created a space for users on twitter to discuss, share and communicate about topics previously viewed as taboo, these include conversations around sexual assault, sexual harassment, gender-based violence, women and child abuse, mental health and illnesses, and others.

Moreover, other isiXhosa users who engaged with the tweet used English to engage, for more reasons such as advertising their businesses, work purposes, attract more audience base, matter of preference, word limit, African languages being limited, and others. Furthermore, most users engaged through applying code mixing and using the shortening of words. The use of casual and unprofessional language that includes the use of abbreviated words, slang, and others. The study discovered that on twitter or any other social media platform, most users use the trending words 'mntase' (sibling), 'ndiya gowa' (I am going through a lot), 'aks' (ask), and others. In contrast, the study discovered that most users engaged in English for the purposes outlined in the first finding and as such the use of the language was rather professional in the sense that the users used standard and appropriate English and not in a casual manner.

Thirdly, the study indicate that isiXhosa and any other African languages could be used alongside the dominant language, English. However, declared by the Language Policy (LP) that all languages should be used in all settings, if not used by its native speakers, we cannot blame other language speakers for putting theirs on the map. As the speakers of the languages, we are responsible for taking our languages to the top and making sure they are used along dominant languages such as English, just like we do in political matters and others.

Moreover, the study discovered that the use of the abbreviation of words, slang, and any other casual *lingo* used on social media, currently it is not detrimental to the languages used on social media. This is mainly because the world is constantly changing, and new developments are made and others occur, just as new terms are created and used on social media. The study discovered that people are aware of when to use formal and standard language and in which cases to use the casual languages. Everyone indicated in the data conducted that they use appropriate and professional languages when they engage in formal conversations where they

do not want others to be lost in the conversation and where they are obligated to. However, it is also important to note that in each field we have certain terminologies used and these may differ from each field, i.e., finance, journalism, science and technology, politics, law, and others. This is commonly referred to as the linguistic jargon. In the case of the casual language used by the millennials on social media, this does not define the languages used in professional settings such as school, work, and others.

The study discovered that twitter users for the purposes of this study, are aware of when to use appropriate isiXhosa and how to write in full, write in a standard and professional language. Majority claim to use English in professional settings and use isiXhosa in social platforms but not all the time, as majority mostly use English as a language of preference. This also varies in terms of writing tweets that are in a form of advertising, work, educational, and so forth. Arguably, if using social media as a tool to promote and grow language, then be certain that it depends on individuals on how they perceive the way languages are used on these social platforms i.e., Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and others. It is also important to be cognisant of the fact that a lot happens on social media and as a result others use these platforms to share trending tweet, memes, other humorous information, therefore they do not care about using professional languages because that can defeat the purpose of the joke or whatever is shared with the purpose to make people laugh and so on.

Finally, the study revealed that the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet did not necessarily attract and prompted users of other languages to engage in their home languages, as a form to help promote, grow, and preserve African languages on social media. There are a few people who engaged in their languages, but majority engaged in English, and they code mixed and switched between English and other African languages. This goes to show that English still plays a huge role as a dominant language, as more people engage and communicate in the language, online and outside. Arguably, other isiXhosa users (as per the focus of the study) have indicated that they use isiXhosa when engaging on twitter, but it depends on what they are commenting on/about i.e., humorous content, personal memes, content intended with pun and others. In this case, this goes to show that the promotion and preservation of African languages depends on the users of the language because if not used by them then who? In the researcher's assessment, she believes that social media could be the tool to be used for change as many people occupy these spaces. If more people are always on their phones tweeting about something and sharing significant information, social media platforms could be used as ways to assist in promoting

African languages using these languages. See the following chapter about ways to promote African languages culture on social media.

5.5 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed language use on social media, and it is discovered that people change between languages, they do not mainly interact and engage using their native language as a stand-alone. Rather, social media users choose to use English alongside other African languages. Since social media platforms such as twitter allow its users the flexibility to engage in other languages, it is easy for the users to switch between two or more languages because they are bilingual and multilingual. Twitter is viewed as toxic, and content produced can sometimes be fragmented and people are quite selective about what to consume. Tweets such as *Ojewa ke eng?* motivate other users to share and keep motivated knowing that twitter is not only a toxic but a platform that helps create awareness and promote humanitarian work online.

Moreover, language attitude and preference contribute to the language social media users decide to use and when. These factors are also determined by the professionalism and sociality of the user's social page. It depends on whether the page is mainly used for business, social or both. The digital space has created business opportunities for social media users online and the use of using a language that will be inclusive of everyone plays a role and to some extent could be a very significant role. The chapter has outlined cases and scenarios where twitter users decide to use the dominant language, English, or switch and mix between languages. Additionally, gave examples of why this happens in some situations.

Introduction to new and social media was identified as one of the reasons why the existence of traditional means to communication and traditional media was questioned. The digital space came as a challenge, and rivalry to many companies who operate traditionally e.g., producer to customer interaction/transaction was no longer physical and through the web people can access tools, equipment, clothes, food supplies internationally and not only local. In contrast, digital media proves to be the fastest way to develop and promote companies on social media platforms. As much as many people and companies were reluctant to change, with the new ways of operating online, this has proven to be an improvement as new and digital media help companies grow and be able to attract more diverse audience and customers worldwide through the internet.

CHAPTER 6: PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES ONLINE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter critically discussed ways to promote and develop African languages using social media and online platforms. Furthermore, looked at what has been done to endorse African languages on the internet and social media space. The chapter looks at the before and after development of these languages online. It is important to note that before technology and all the digital operations, some organisations and companies were solely traditional. Then technology was introduced, some shifted to online, and some opted to operate both traditionally and online. With the unpleasant time where every business is not entirely sure about the country's future, everyone has taken measures to operate even when the country is on lockdown. This means finding reliable ways to operate without violating the regulations of the pandemic and still build a stable economy that will not only grow and develop but create job opportunities.

For businesses that are already stable and well established, they were forced to find ways to combat job retrenchment by creating job opportunities and grow businesses and form new businesses without being detrimental to the country's economy and already stable operating businesses. Furthermore, the country faced a challenge of businesses being looted, power outage and so forth. These external factors and challenges affected businesses and still do in terms of the businesses that were looted, some shut down because the owners could not afford to build them back, others suffer when there is load shedding because they have to close early, and others cannot operate because they do not have generators. In terms of language use on social media, communication played a vital role as people were sharing information and updating each other about news relating to being able to go to the stores (i.e., open, and closed stores) and others, as the country was on lockdown. One would argue that African languages developed as there were diverse speakers who used African languages to engage and communicate. For the purposes of this study, social media platforms such as twitter allow its users the freedom to engage in any languages, as such, it is not rare to see tweets in an African language on twitter. Moreover, this chapter discusses different ways used for language preservation and language promotion, growth, and development.

Social media has enhanced more than ever to better the opportunity for African countries to make their own socio-cultural statements. In the words of Ohiagu (2010), social media can help African society develop, enrich, and preserve its own cultural values and ensure that it is conspicuously represented in the emerging global culture. Due to the national pandemic ‘Covid-19’ most businesses have moved to online and they use social media as a tool to advertise themselves. In the researcher’s view, the world has been rapidly and gradually moving to the digital sphere, but some organisations were a bit reluctant to the change, while others utilised both traditional and online ways to operate. The country being hit by the pandemic which led to the national lockdown, this was a push for most organisations to move to the digital sphere, may have not completely shifted but introduced digital ways to operate.

Moreover, social media plays an important role because majority of the people use these online platforms to engage, advertise and share. For example, when Wimpy introduced their menu in African languages, social media influencers created different adverts and posts. As much as this was to advertise Wimpy as a business, African languages were promoted. In such cases, African languages grow and are preserved online, as we are moving towards the digital age. It is also important to note that African language people (i.e., isiXhosa customers) who consume and purchase from the different businesses are African. As much as some might not mind the language used to advertise/sell the products, others might appreciate receiving information in their native languages i.e., for better understanding (clarity) and so forth. The use of African languages on social media has helped grow and promote these languages in business sectors and others. As such, some African language speakers do not feel excluded or feel the pressure to engage in English as a dominant language mostly used. The use of African languages on social media assist in the promotion and preservation of these languages, as this brings diverse individuals together, as a community that is not segregated by language barrier.

6.1.1 SOCIAL MEDIA USE AS A FORM OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

People can study on social media; this can be done through doing research on the platforms and acquiring more information and collecting data. It can also be done through using these platforms to share information among each other and impart knowledge to others.

Thuraiaraj et al., (2015) conducted a study on the use of social media to enhance language learning for students in the educational settings. Additionally, language and communication play a crucial role in information sharing, specifically on the use of information technology in education. Social media platforms such as Facebook enhance communication and human interaction and can potentially be harnessed for language learning. Sources indicate that factors such as motivation, imitation and environment for learning are crucial in language learning. Various studies indicate that the use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) users has increased tremendously over the years. Social media users, especially the youth always make sure they are updated on what's trending and happening around them, which means that majority of their time is spent on twitter and the other SNS, as they stay connected online.

The use of SNSs has become a major form of communication in today's world. Instead, of friends and family sitting in formal settings such as social groups, they can now interact on social media without having to meet. These SNSs have promoted online interaction more than the traditional ways of people having to meet face-to-face to converse and discuss topics of interest. Now, if something is important and urgent, people can quickly take their mobile phone and contact their people. Recently, these SNSs are becoming more advanced as they have audio inputs where they create voice notes and talk to the other person, and they have video options where users can video call and see each other on phone. On the other hand, people receive and access news online way before the traditional media companies publish news because people online have become their own journalists and barriers to professional journalism have been challenged by these new ways of news production and dissemination.

Grossek & Holotescu (2010) critically engages us on ways microblogging platforms could benefit the educational aspect. Thus, concludes by stating that "in a society where most of the people suffer from lack of time, the authors encourage the use of microblogs in educational activities, because a microblog-based learning has as immediate consequences an unprecedented flexibility in comparison to classical education, a real participation, an interactive collaboration (it may continue after the course end). Contrary to all appearances, the teacher's role enhances. Moreover, the capacity of transforming the traditional learning structure (the students' learning performances improve) by using multimedia objects observes constructivist theory and pedagogical principles. Moreover, through the pandemic and unpleasant events that took place in the country, students learn online through online means created by schools and institutions of higher learning. As such, these new forms of learning have in a way promoted education online. As much as students can share and help each other,

they now have the ability to learn online, have educational content saved offline for them to always revert to it for the purposes of educating themselves even after the lecture has ended, if missed class they can still access the material after, and so forth.

6.1.2 USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO SUSTAIN AFRICAN CULTURE

These technological advanced means of communication have created an interactive and friendly space, where users generate and disseminate information to masses online. Social media has become a part of everyone's lives because most people do not go a day without logging onto twitter to comment, share, retweet and like. Based on obvious reasons, these platforms constitute both positive and negative sides. One of the negative reasons include the fact that social media is believed to encourage Western culture rather than promote and enhance African culture and African languages.

Solo-Anaeto & Jacobs (2015), proposes some of the ways to use social media to our advantage, by using these social platforms to transmit and make for sustenance of the African culture. These are global nature of social media; archive for cultural materials; creating virtual cultural and ethnic communities and tapping social media's multi-media nature.

1. **Global Nature of social media:** social media is a diverse space with people from different language groups and cultures, which makes it easy to promote and share information about other African cultures, their food, dress, values, lifestyle, music, dance, arts and so on. By putting this information into the world of different cultures, helps because other African cultures get to appreciate and acknowledge other cultures. For example, South African users enjoy Nigerian music, other cultures like and buy beaded isiXhosa/isiZulu clothing, people buy isiNdebele crockery made from clay by the legendary Dr Esther Mahlangu, International artworks or South African artworks of South African heroes and heroines and so on. In terms of online content, users can create Instagram/Twitter accounts solely for a specific culture. An example, a page on Instagram for isiXhosa clothing, the culture is represented on social media and people from other African cultures see and appreciate the isiXhosa culture, thus, buy the clothes and others create a replica of these. In this instance, the culture is promoted. "The use of social media for the display for African styles and

dressers has led to the infusion of African prints and materials in the designs of foreign clothes design designers.

Designers now use African materials to make fabulous attires that are displayed on runways and sold around the globe. This definitely will help in sustaining the African culture;" (Solo-Anaeto & Jacobs, 2015: 41). In the past when social media had just been introduced, the platforms were regarded as a disadvantage because African users opted to do things done by Western culture. In contrast, there is now African culture clothing lines such as 'MaXhosa' which is a representation of isiXhosa culture through clothing. The clothes are not necessarily 'imibhaco' (isiXhosa skirts), but they are western influenced made of isiXhosa print.

2. **Archive for Cultural Materials:** Content posted on social media stays online and can be viewed at any time and any day. Accounts and pages dedicated to African culture displaying videos, poems, literature, drama, music, and images such as MaXhosa clothing line, isiNdebele legend Dr Esther Mahlangu. African culture content posted and shared on these platforms can be stored and accessed anytime and in years to come. Moreover, poems and stories written in African languages on Facebook, are also archived on social media to be accessed by anyone even people from other African cultures.
3. **Creating virtual cultural and ethnic communities:** social media creates online communities, especially people of the same ethnicity. In the online space, when users engage on a discussion of a topic of interest, these individuals can consciously project African culture. "User can sometimes make posts and comments on Facebook wall and other social media in their local languages. Use African idioms, proverbs, tales, and myths that are peculiar to their ethnic group. These build virtual African communities at the same time expressing African culture. The social media thus serve as a channel to display and introduce users to different ethnicity/cultures as well as sustain these ethnic and cultural values and strengthen the ties between users of the same ethnicity," (Solo-Anaeto & Jacobs, 2015: 41).

Similarly, on twitter people can ask what a specific phrase mean in isiXhosa and amaXhosa will engage with this tweet. As you can tell, the tweet is directed to isiXhosa speaking users. This, then creates a virtual/online community of amaXhosa, even when another user writes an idiom, tale or phrase in its native language and ask for how it can be translated into English. It is easy for isiXhosa users to interact and

say what they think it can be translated into, because they have the language background and understanding.

4. **Tapping Social Media's Multi-media nature:** social media are multi-media platforms that allow users to generate content through images, music, graphics, written elements to be uploaded and shared. "With this feature of social media, plays, images, skits on different aspects of African culture can be portrayed. Examples are drama on family values, short documentary on preparing an African dish," (Solo-Anaeto & Jacobs, 2015: 41). Such has been the most produced content on social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, where people create skits covering topics about Black households and parents. Others go to an extent of comparing black parents to white and Afrikaans parents, portraying normal and day-to-day happenings. These videos cover a variety of African culture and people from other cultures get to learn and appreciate African cultures without having to study and be physically in their space.

6.2 MULTILINGUAL LANGUAGE USE IN EDUCATION

The council of Higher Education, language policy and the South African Constitution clearly outlines the aim to promote and ensure the use of mother-tongue languages as language of teaching and learning and the fostering of multilingualism, states (Ferreira-Meyers & Horne, 2017; Mweli, 2018 & Schlettwein, 2015). Furthermore, the language in Education Policy assist in enabling students to attain access to additional languages through additive bilingualism and multilingualism, (Mweli, 2018). "Language in education has been a controversial issue in South Africa in spite of the constitutional right that all children should receive education in a language of their choice and that all eleven official languages should enjoy equal status," (Mweli, 2018: 38). It is important not to side-line the effect of language in Education because mostly, people encounter the English language in academic spaces, and this assists them to be able to understand and engage in worldwide conversations and with local and international individuals. English can and is almost used as an intermediate language between individuals of different linguistic backgrounds.

"The use of English in higher education relates to prestige and career advancement," (Callahan & Herring, 2012: 327). The English language dominates in higher education as the language

of teaching and learning, and majority of the students interact in the language. The trend of English used as the lingua franca is mostly advanced in disciplines such as Science and Mathematics, inclusive of Medical/health, technology, and others. Moreover, the use of English in higher education is associated with career advancement and prestige. (Callahan & Herring, 2012).

Furthermore, Callahan & Herring (2012) echoed that the benefits of the use of the former colonial and dominant language in higher education relate to increased prestige and popularity for both institutions and individuals, locally and internationally. Additionally, for the institutions and individuals, there are also economic benefits. These include increased student enrolment and increased pay for graduates. “Access to collaboration and information is also cited frequently. The drawbacks to English adoption include risk of decline and loss of status of the native language, especially if the language does not have many speakers,” (Callahan & Herring, 2012: 327). In most cases, minority language groups struggle with their languages used as dominant or being used in spaces where other people interact in theirs and are understood. One will find people from minority language groups using other languages instead of theirs, i.e., you find an isiNdebele, Xitsonga or isiSwati person speaking isiZulu a lot, only to find that they are not isiZulu original speakers. They are using this language as an intermediate language, to be able to interact with other people who do not know or understand Xitsong, isiNdebele or isiSwati. As such they adopt a language that is mostly used and quite dominant in the specific area, and sometimes similar to theirs. This poses a challenge for these minority languages as they are not used by their original native speakers, this decreases their opportunity to be used in other spaces if the same speakers of the language do not embrace and proudly use it. (More discussion on chapter 2 and 4 above).

Historically, the choice to use the former colonial language English at schools was mandatory but is since easing up, as students can engage in their home languages and still ask for assistance in these languages from their teachers at school, knowing that the language of teaching and learning is English, and they still abide by the policy of the particular school. The language policy clearly stipulates the need for the promotion of African languages and multilingualism. Students have their home languages and English which is acquired from school, which indicates that they are bilingual. They can still use the home language at school, as they are not restricted from doing so, especially in rural areas. One can find teachers using both i.e., isiXhosa alongside English to make their students understand the school curriculum, just as students from other schools and private schools, where English is lingua franca.

This encourages code mixing where in most rural schools, teachers educate their students in English and translate the work in isiXhosa to make sure everyone understands what is being taught. In my view, such is beneficial to the learners, for as long as they are not deprived of being taught in English. Such may disadvantage them because when they get to universities, they struggle to interact or even engage with the content provided. The researcher believes that the use of English as the dominant language should not be at the expense of African languages. “Communication in a community group, as well as in a classroom, is the most important and fundamental in the delivery of intent or purpose,” (Waris, 2012: 123). If the dominant language is used alongside other African languages and is not used as a language to diminish African languages, this will contribute to the betterment, growth, and promotion of the previously marginalised languages. The researcher believes that if such starts in schools where English is learnt and attained, there is a potential for African language speakers to use their home languages and not see them as inferior and end up abandoning them.

Social media is now used as a tool to enhance language learning. These platforms offer students the opportunity to ask for information from their same language peers and possibly have it in their home languages, for them to understand better. Since students are always on their phones and on social media checking for trending topics and stories, these platforms could be used for educational purposes where students share and assist their peers online in their home languages i.e., material taught in English in class could be explained in the language of choice for the other party to understand, if they did not understand it in English. Moreover, there is Wikipedia in other languages rather than English only, there is also Gmail and Google search in other languages where people can attain information in the language of choice or preference. These ways are done to combat language divide online and therefore it is important for schools to also offer such significant ways that will help preserve African languages and not contribute to the diminishment of them or promote the hegemony of English at the expense of African languages and make them seem inferior and not worthy of being used in academic spaces and other advanced settings.

There are many things done and solutions found to combat the challenge of students who do not understand English or would like to access their information in their home language or other African languages. These include Wikipedia, Gmail, Google, and others as mentioned above. On the other hand, one cannot dispute the fact that there are other gaps that still need more work and to be looked at, and these include Microsoft word where content in an African language is not recognised or acknowledged, therefore underlined red as incorrect, and so forth.

Institutions allow for the viewing of the content in different languages. This is an important aspect as these spaces are occupied by diverse individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. “There is a growing trend for institutions with a global audience to make versions of their websites available in different languages,” as stated by Callahan & Herring (2012: 327). This enables students to access academic content in the language they can easily understand without feeling left out. It is without a doubt that language used in education is English with the presumption that this is the language that brings together diverse individuals. Students who access school content in other languages besides English, this does not mean that they do not know or understand the dominant language of teaching and learning, but they are using resources offered to enhance their knowledge and sometimes such assists them in understanding the content more. As such, translation tools assist students in understanding content in a foreign language from theirs. In the researcher’s view, the hegemony of the English language should not be a barrier for the preservation and development of previously marginalised languages.

The element of language choice is crucial as the students may choose to use English when interacting with their peers even though they are all from the same language background and search for information in English, while others search in their home languages and interact in different languages when in different spaces. The use of language does not only depend in certain settings where people only speak English at school and not in social spaces. You find that people also interact in English outside the professional and academic spaces where they are obliged to communicate in a specific dominant language of power. Factors such as language attitude, preference and others may contribute to language choice, and this may be based on personal and any other reasons. To reiterate, whereas people may feel obliged, or they are forced to speak English at work or school, they may decide to continue using the same language outside these spaces, while others may decide to change and use their home languages in spaces where they are not forced to speak a language different from theirs. On the other hand, on social media people have the right and flexibility to use any language of choice. They are not forced to use any dominant language of power; they may even choose to code mix and code switch between languages. This does not mean that they are all multilingual but with certain words and phrases created every day and trend in different languages, people might choose to insert them in a sentence or conversation.

Language use in the digital age contributes to the development and promotion of previously marginalised languages. Through the intervention of digitisation and technology, social media

platforms enable users of African languages to spread and promote their languages through using them online. As such, this motivates other African language users to interact and engage in their home language knowing that they will not be discriminated nor outcasted. This contributes to the development and promotion of these minority and previously marginalised languages and help them grow and develop. In the researcher's view, for the development and promotion of these languages there need to be support from the speakers of these languages. One cannot depend on people whose languages are not minority nor inferior, such as multilingual individuals, second and third speakers of the language, and so forth.

Speakers of the previously underrepresented languages should stand for their own languages, support them through using them and putting them on the map, because they are the only people who know and understand their languages better. They should be advocates for their own and not expect speakers from other language groups to assist, know and understand better. One might find that people who claim to know different languages do struggle at times, because of factors such as pronunciation, word definitions and word misuse, and others.

"The choice to use English in education varies across countries and is often related to the status of the country's native language. An analysis of language usage by a sample of 2,267 students in higher education across eight countries (Ukraine, Poland, Macedonia, Italy, France, Tanzania, Oman, and Indonesia) conducted by Kelly-Holmes (2004) found that students whose native language is prestigious and has many speakers use both their native language and English in their Internet searches. However, students whose native language is not spoken by many people or supported by economic prosperity are increasingly shifting to use of English." (Callahan & Herring, 2012: 326).

With the resources of being able to access information on the internet in the language of choice, students have the flexibility to search in whatever language they want to use. The above discussion has elaborated on ways to help preserve African languages and the African culture through online and social media. This shows that, as the world is constantly changing, it is possible for change to happen in language too. Communication is an important aspect of life and therefore language plays a huge role in how diverse individuals interact, share, and exchange knowledge between each other.

6.3 SUMMARY

This chapter explored possible ways to help preserve and promote previously underrepresented languages, as such referred to online social platforms and the education sector. It is important for one to note that you can promote your language through using and advocating for it anywhere and everywhere. Different settings allow for the flexibility of language choice, where a person may decide to engage and interact in the language, they feel most comfortable in. In places of business, at most times the customers are not as literate in using English and having a relatable person that speaks your language is off great benefit to the company and such assist customers, so they do not feel as though they are inferior. The use of an individual's home language does not mean that they are inferior, and the use of English is not a measure of one's intelligence and literacy. Using your home language means that you are proud of it and therefore that does not automatically make you inferior from people who mostly interact in English besides their home languages. The study explored the use of language choice online, mostly on social media.

African languages should not only be languages used at home but should be known in other spaces too and utilised without its users feeling like they are doing something wrong, or their language is not worthy to be known by people from other language groups and not worthy to be used in professional settings. This chapter discussed possible ways to help preserve and promote African languages, so they can be used alongside dominant languages and their value be seen and known.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has discussed the background to the proposed study. Furthermore, explored the research design methods utilised to complete the research, discussed the theoretical and literature review utilised for the purpose of this study. This chapter sums up and concludes the research of language choice on twitter focusing on the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet. Furthermore, critically discussed the use of language on twitter, what prompt users to use certain languages? Do isiXhosa twitter users who engaged with the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet feel flexible in interacting and communicating in their native languages? The chapter concludes the research conducted on this study by outlying the findings and making recommendations on how the study can be improved taking from the research already done. The findings of the study suggest several conclusions, and these are outlined below, in relation to the discovered data results and findings.

In this section, the study concluded, made suggestions and recommendations in conjunction with the objectives sought to be achieved by the research, which are as follows:

- To investigate the flexibility of isiXhosa-speaking users in engaging with their native language and gain insight on how they manage with the language divide when engaging with the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet.
- To ascertain language use and attitudes on Twitter by diverse language groups and what motivates their use of a specific language.
- To examine the possibility of isiXhosa being used as a dominant language on Twitter or being used alongside the dominant language, English.
- To examine the use of standard and non-standard isiXhosa on Twitter.

The study discovered that the tweet was not a trending tweet until this day but rather a popular tweet that has high activity burst. *O jewa ke eng?* trended for a particular period and has now been popular as most people including isiXhosa speakers revert to the tweet for advice, information sharing, financial assistance, or any other kind of help and so forth. With regards to the use of language choice and language use under this specific tweet, the findings concluded that the tweet was not necessarily the factor in promoting the use of African languages such as

isiXhosa, on twitter. Majority of the isiXhosa speakers who participated in the study indicated that they mostly engaged in English, which is the dominant language that still influence people.

Twitter hashtags and trends make it easy and convenient for other users and researchers to access tweets written in different languages under the specific thread. Language use online can either break or build African languages. If African language users decide to mostly use the language of power which is English rather than their languages, then we are still facing a challenge in finding ways to promote and preserve African languages in all spaces, whether professional or social. A recommendation for such would be for African language speakers to communicate and engage in their home languages to help promote African languages in all spaces. If people can speak their languages, they should make it their responsibility to use them in all spaces and spaces where they were previously underrepresented in i.e., academic, workplace, etc. Language attitude and preference can determine the future of African languages online. There are users who communicate in their home languages alongside English, in this way the study is not done to disregard the use of the English language deemed to allow people access to certain spaces (i.e., Economic, Political etc.), but to use what is there (social media) as a tool to help promote and preserve African languages.

The online community could be used as a tool for change, as many social media platforms are gathered by diverse users, each representing their own language and culture. As much as in tweets such as *O jewa ke eng?* replies and others in African languages one has to sometimes explain and translate what they mean, there are still translation tools (even though they still need more work) and other users to do that. In this way, not only does the LP implement ways to develop African (i.e., isiXhosa) languages but the speakers of the languages also contribute to the execution of their languages through the promotion, development, and preservation of African languages on social media, seeing that these platforms are huge and almost everyone utilise them.

Language use online has changed in the digital age, underrepresented languages are no longer non-existent online. Most people are bilingual and multilingual and African language speakers no longer feel obliged to interact in the language of power, English, with their peers whose native language is different from theirs. Ansah (2016) argue that factors that determine language choice are gradually undergoing modification. Diverse language users do not necessarily have to interact in English, they can choose to interact in an intermediate language understood by both parties. The use of dialects in isiXhosa is not often recognised as languages

of communication but varieties such as shortening of English words and SMS language are still used and by far relevant means of communication. Social media does not come with the negatives/bad but could work as an advantage for the creation of economic growth through businesses online and enhancement of African languages and culture.

“Africans who use social media can create pages displaying African culture. This would offer users in other parts of the world and Africans raised outside the continent a window to fully appreciate Africa and its culture/values/heritage. Today there are now pages displayed in African languages. For example, Google Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo. There are specific groups and handles on Facebook and Twitter that communicate with their members and followers in African languages. This helps to strengthen the language and keep it alive; and overall, helping to sustain the African culture alongside Western culture.”

Twitter users are flexible and have the freedom to interact and engage in the language they want. Language empowers diverse language users to share thoughts and opinions about their experiences and organise life together as a collective without having to discriminate or exclude others. Such assists in the promotion and contribution to bilingualism and multilingualism because users who are not isiXhosa learn and understand isiXhosa with more isiXhosa users engaging in their native language. English is identified as the language that commonly connects diverse users online. The study shows the dominance of English alongside the occurrence of code switching and mixing from bilingual and multilingual users.

Frequently shared posts that benefit a wider group. The use of other African languages is crucial, to accommodate other users who do not understand the original language(s) used to express the tweet. Social media should not be accommodative of certain individuals who tweet in particular languages and whose content trends because of the number of their followers. The researcher believes that social media should be used as the tool to allow all individuals to fully express themselves in the languages of their choice without feeling discriminated or excluded.

Internet platforms could be modified to make it easier for multilingual users to find content in other languages, as well as encourage them to contribute to more than one language. Translation tools should be used as ways to bridge online and social media language divide between individuals from diverse language groups. The researcher recommends that more work and enhancement should be put on these translation tools so that users do not feel lost when others share information of interest and start asking, rather, everyone feels accommodated by content produced in different languages. Twitter is used as a platform that

brings together diverse individuals from different linguistic backgrounds, this is a community where everyone shares matters of common interest and as such providing access to information and content that will be helpful for others. It is important for all individuals to access and produce the information and content in languages they feel comfortable in, knowing that the content will reach a variety of other diverse users as well, through translation tools.

To conclude, the study has discovered that trends happen at a certain period and when evaluating the progress of the *O jewa ke eng?* tweet, it is quite evident that the tweet is no longer trending but has high activity burst, through a popular hashtag. This tweet still assists users, as they always/almost every day refer to it 'quote /retweet with comment' (as per twitter language) for sharing information, asking for help, and so forth. Users who tweet meaningful information online not only attract more followers but help other people. *O jewa ke eng?* is a tweet that anyone and everyone can always go back to and ask for advice, help, information and so on. Contrary to popular belief that twitter, or any other social media platforms are dominated by scams, crime and others, there are genuine users who are willing to help without expecting more. The help might not always come from their pockets but through asking for donations from other people and creating foundations to assist unfortunate people who are in need.

South African people now live in a post-apartheid South Africa; therefore, it is crucial for people to feel comfortable in communicating in their native or any other African languages. Languages are not restricted to their original users of the specific language or ethnic group; people are bilingual and multilingual and can speak different languages. There are different levels of language proficiency, these are mainly beginner (knowing the basics), intermediate (fair level) and advanced (being purely fluent in the language). Alexander (2013) expresses that, people must eradicate means to social inequality, to bring about national unity. If social media platforms such as twitter bring diverse individuals together online, the use of minority and majority languages plays a significant role in promoting one nationality without discriminating and setting other languages as inferior to dominant languages.

Language use in the digital age could be used as a tool that contributes to the development and promotion of previously marginalised languages. This could be another way to preserve African languages online, using these languages on social media. The study has discovered how social media have shaped the global linguistic sphere since social media platforms have diverse individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. Social media users behave in distinct

ways when engaging and interacting on different platforms. The use and choice of what language to use online verses through face-to-face interaction is proven to vary, just as the use of standard and non-standard isiXhosa, the use of professional and casual language on social media, and so forth. The study revealed that the use of non-mother tongue languages is not detrimental to the mother-tongue languages and as such would not lead to language death. This is because majority of the participants indicated that they use shortening and slang words on social media as a casual way to interact and they know when to use standard and professional languages. Seeing that times are changing and in casual language use, words are changed, and new terms introduced every day and, in all languages, and not just isiXhosa. People use social media as a platform to share humorous content and as such would not make sense if written in a standard or professional language. Arguably, if social media users do not know what language to use, when and how, then that is when the question around the use of casual language would be questioned as to whether it is or will be detrimental to the use of professional and standard languages in the future.

The study discovered that isiXhosa native users mostly communicate and engage in isiXhosa on their personal accounts and when another isiXhosa user communicates their tweet in isiXhosa, you will notice that the thread is mostly in isiXhosa because users who understand the message or question asked, are Xhosa. It is quite evident that majority of these users engaged in English. Since majority of the users who participated in the study claim to be multilingual, they were able to engage with the tweet without having to ask or be told what it means in English.

“The handful of studies looking at language and social media have found that language plays a large role in structuring the hyperlink relationships between blogs and the follower/following relationships between Twitter users,” explained Hale (2014: 1). At times, a user follows a specific isiXhosa user because they are both amaXhosa and sometimes they adore the content produced by the user, it could be in isiXhosa or English.

The English language is used as a default or fall-back language because it connects the global network of diverse users from across. Societal elements such as religion, social, economic, cultural, historical, psychological factors are still auspicious of English. In contrast, this does not entirely mean, African languages do not stand a chance in being used alongside English and perceived as significant languages in all spaces. While academic spaces such as Stellenbosch University are implementing ways to promote and grow African languages so that

they are valued and others that are working on adding more effort in this initiative i.e., Rhodes University and other institutions of higher learning that already have African language studies departments and are working on having African language centres and so forth, social media can do more. Moreover, as a platform barely controlled by any tightly restrictive systems, social media has a potential to help grow and preserve African languages online, because already the platforms allow its users the flexibility and freedom to use any language of choice.

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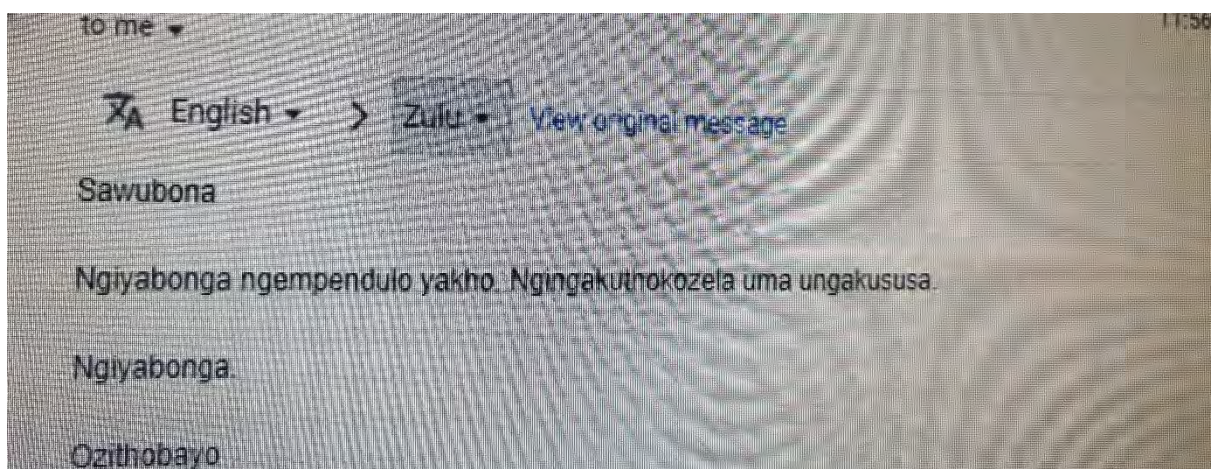
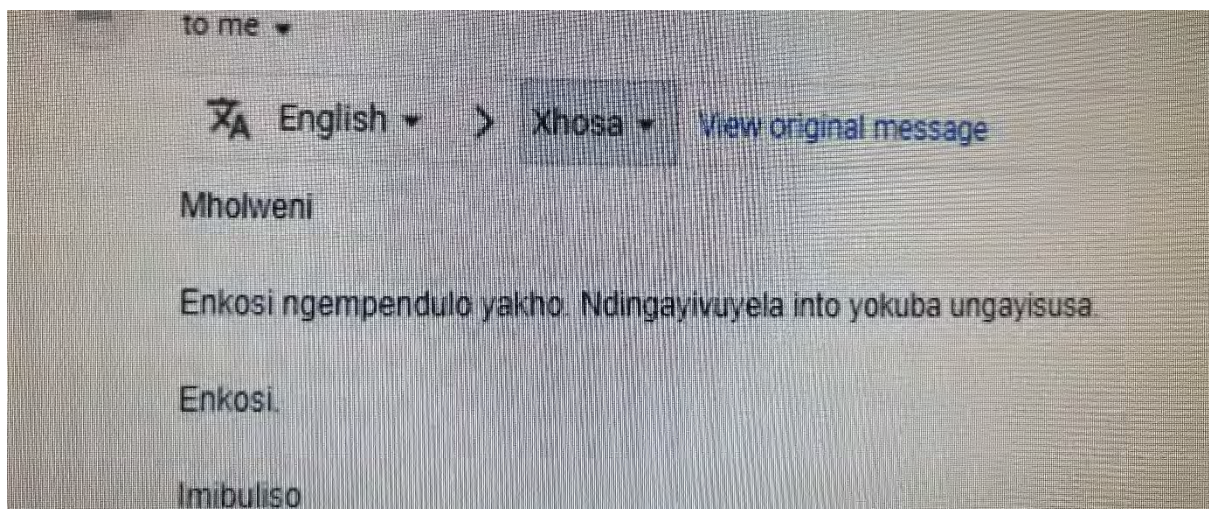
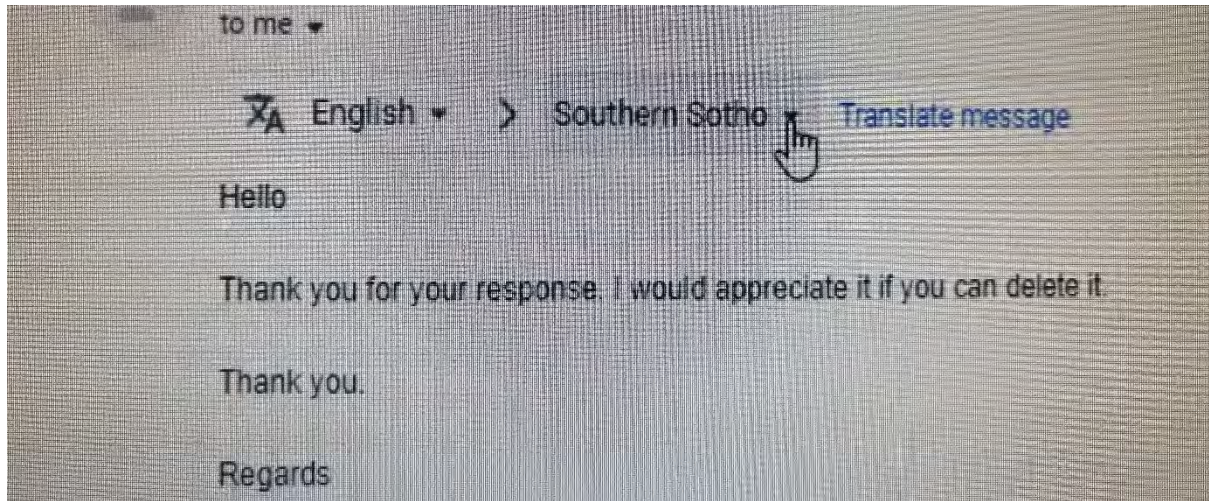
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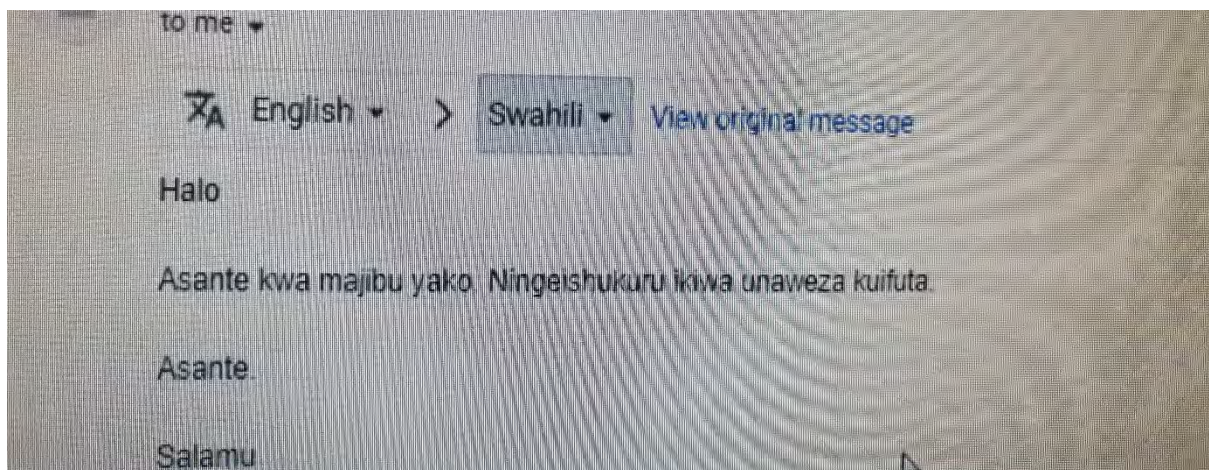
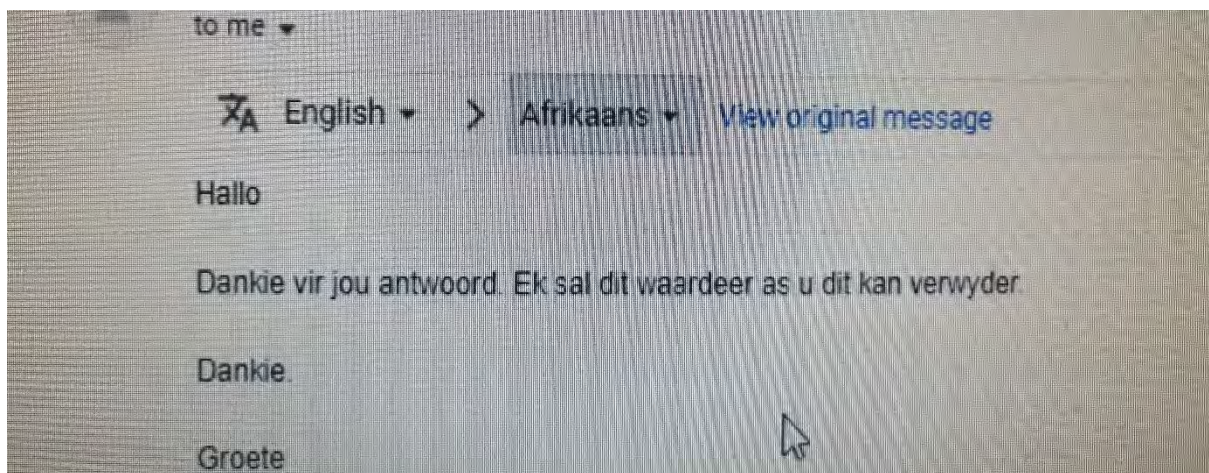
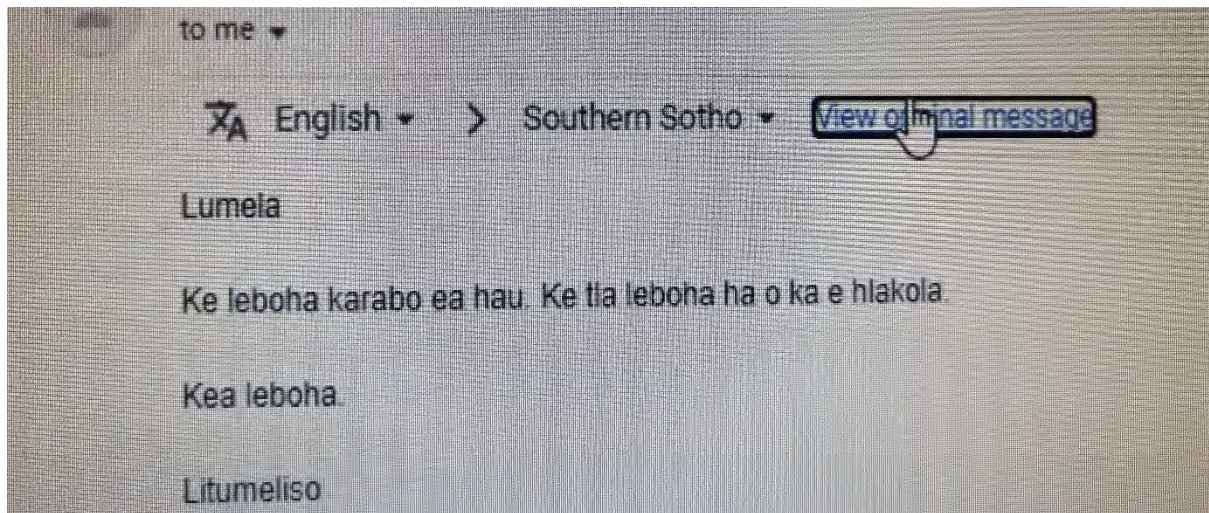
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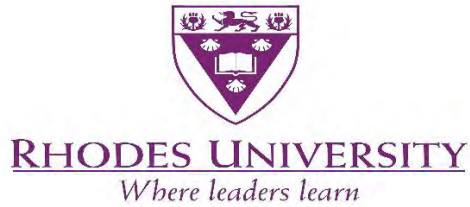
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Gmail translation tools





Appendix B: Research survey questions



Good day

My name is Zindzi Nkunzi, Rhodes University Master of Arts student. I am doing a research on language choice on Twitter, focusing on the *Ojewa ke eng?* trend. The aim of this survey is to attain information on what basis do isiXhosa-speaking twitter users choose which language to engage in. I would appreciate it if you could spare some time and assist me with the questions below. Kindly note that the participants who contribute to this survey will remain anonymous.

1. How often do you use Twitter?
 - Everyday
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - More often
2. What do you use Twitter for?
 - Personal
 - Professional
 - Both
3. Are you aware of the *Ojewa ke eng?* trend?
 - Yes
 - No
4. Do you engage with the tweet?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Sometimes
5. How often do you engage with the tweet?

- Everyday
 - Sometimes
6. How do you engage with the tweet?
- I tweet information that will be of assistance to others
 - I retweet other user's tweets and comments
 - I like other user's tweets
 - I engage with information that is already tweeted about by another user
 - All of the above
7. Which languages do you use to engage with the tweet?
- IsiXhosa
 - English
 - Other African languages
8. State the reason why you choose to engage with the specific language?
9. Do you see any importance for people to use their home languages?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not really
10. If yes, why do you think the language you choose to use is important?
11. What effect does the tweet play in the online society?
- Positive
 - Negative
12. Give a brief reason why you think it plays a positive or negative role/effect?
13. Do you think the *Ojewa ke eng?* tweet broke any language barrier to communication on Twitter? Give a reason for your answer.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
14. Do you see any possible ways to break language barrier on Twitter?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not really

State a reason why and suggest possible ways.

Appendix C: *O jewa ke eng?* tweet questions



Good day kea

My name is Zindzi, Rhodes University Master of Arts student. I am doing a research study on language choice on Twitter, and my focus is oriented around your incredible tweet *O jewa ke eng?* This tweet has taken the internet by storm and has since become a movement that has changed the world. One would think that tweets are simple short updates and sharings of information but your tweet *O jewa ke eng?* has proven to show more and significant impact on people's lives. You have created great initiatives such as #keadrive #Keahustler #Keajobseekers and these encourage people to help each other, and this is remarkable and great work! Thank you so much!

Seeing that you are the brains behind the beautiful work, I would appreciate it if you could spare some time and assist me with the questions below.

1. You communicated the tweet *O jewa ke eng?* in an African language, was this intentional?
2. While going through your Twitter account, I have noticed that you sometimes respond to people's tweets in other languages. Which languages do you normally engage in on Twitter and are there specific reasons behind that decision?
3. Have you always tweeted in your home language, and is there a specific or personal reason for that?
4. The tweet attracted many diverse individuals on Twitter, what's your take on the use of African Languages on social media?
5. In an interview you did with Drum, you indicate that your purpose is to help others, assumably everyone (people from all language groups). Even though the tweet gained

more traction from different language groups, there were certain individuals who asked what the tweet meant as they didn't understand the language used. In terms of the *Ojewa ke eng?* Foundation, do you think that you are obliged to communicate in a universal language as a way to combat language barrier?

6. In most cases people use English to break language barrier assuming that majority understand the language. The tweet (communicated in an African language) reached people from diverse language groups. In your own opinion, do you see a future for African languages being used as dominant languages online?
7. In the OJK Foundation Twitter page you communicate in English when responding to people who ask for assistance i.e '*please DM me your banking details*'. While when you're writing to share you use English and Sesotho (if I'm not mistaken) i.e '*need 20 people I can help with R100 electricity...nahanela batho ba bang*'. Do you have specific reasons as to why you use two languages in one tweet?
8. Anything you would like say or add about language use and language choice on social media. You can add any general comment. Thank you so much for your time!