

IRONIC NEGATIVES IN ISIXHOSA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the morphopragmatics of negation in isiXhosa and observes that negative constructions can also be interpreted as emphasizing the affirmative – a phenomenon referred to as ‘ironic negation’. This phenomenon suggests that negative morphology yields ambiguous structures in the language (Oosthuysen 2016). Upon closer investigation of the data, this thesis reveals that linguistic constructions that contain negative morphology split into three categories: (i) unambiguous negative constructions, (ii) ambiguous negative between negative and ironic negative (Oosthuysen 2016), and (iii) unambiguous ironic negative construction.

The data for this study was obtained from (a) questionnaires administered to 30 native isiXhosa speakers who provided intuitive judgements about the meanings of negative constructions, (b) listening tasks in which native speakers interpreted the meanings of the negative constructions, and (c) an audio recording task in which speakers read out a negative construction with a particular meaning in mind. Using a Chi-square test in the statistical program R and Praat analysis of the data, the study found that the interpretation of negative expressions is determined by the TAM in which the expression occurs, type of predicate that is negated, and the tone of the utterance.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

.	Used to convey that multiple elements in the metalanguage represent a single element in the object language.
-	morpheme boundary
1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
AC	adjectival concord
ANT	anterior
CAUS	causative
CJ	conjoint
COP	copulative
DJ	disjoint
FUT	future tense
FV	final vowel
HRT	hortative
INF	infinitive
IPFV	imperfective
LOC	locative
NEG	negative
OM	object marker
PERS	persistive
PL	plural
PRF	perfective
PROG	progressive
PROH	prohibitive
PRS	present tense
PST	past tense
PTCP	participial
REC	recent

SBJV	subjunctive
SG	singular
SM	subject marker

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not, in its entirety or part, been submitted at any university for a degree.

SIGNED: 

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study explores *ironic negation*, a phenomenon in which a negative expression conveys a positive meaning. This phenomenon, which is quite widespread in isiXhosa, does not seem to have attracted the attention of scholars as is evident from the dearth of studies on the subject matter. The current study makes an important contribution by filling this knowledge gap.

1.1. ISIXHOSA LANGUAGE

IsiXhosa is a Southern Bantu language spoken as an official language in South Africa and Zimbabwe. It is spoken as a first language by 16% of South Africa's population, making it the second-most spoken language in the country (Statistics South Africa 2012). Most native isiXhosa speakers are located in the Eastern Cape, an area which has been historically considered a homeland for the people. IsiXhosa consists of several varieties or dialects, mostly named after the tribes in which they are spoken. These include varieties spoken by the amaRharhabe, amaGcaleka, abaThembu, amaBomvana, amaMpondo, amaMpondomise, amaBhaca, and the amaMfengu among other tribes (Oosthuysen 2016). The varieties are: isiBhaca, isiNtlangwini, isiMpondomise, isiBomvana, isiThembu, isiCele, isiXebise, and isiHlubi.

IsiXhosa belongs to the Nguni subgroup under the Bantu language zone S40, according to Guthrie's (1971) classification of Bantu languages. As isiXhosa is a Bantu language, it exhibits agglutinating morphology. This means that in forming words morphemes are glued together, and each morpheme represents a single meaning. A single word typically consists of a minimum of two morphemes when it occurs in a sentence. Many morphological features common in Bantu languages are present in isiXhosa. Among these morphological features is complex verbal morphology which encodes among others polarity, tense, aspect, and mood. In terms of its phonological properties, isiXhosa, like many other Bantu languages, is a tone language which means that tone variation provides lexical as well as grammatical contrasts. Another phonological feature is that isiXhosa exhibits penultimate syllable vowel lengthening. These morphological and phonological features are expanded upon further in the literature review later in this chapter and in Chapter 2.

A discussion of negation in any Bantu language necessitates a discussion of the structure of the Bantu verb because it is on the verb that negation is mostly encoded. The Bantu verb, and by extension the isiXhosa verb, consists of a root and several prefixes and suffixes which encode a variety of grammatical information. The structure of the Bantu finite verb, according to Meeussen (1967) and adapted in Güldemann (2022:388) is presented in the template below. While the template does not reflect the full structure of all finite verbs in Bantu (as it is only a reconstruction of what the Proto-Bantu verb may have looked like) it does represent accurately what the verb looks like in modern day isiXhosa. The template shows that the verb consists of several slots and that specific morphemes occupy specific slots.

The finite verb in Bantu/isiXhosa

(pre-initial)	initial	(post-initial)	(pre-root)	root	Pre-final	final	(post-final)
TAMP	Subject	TAMP	object	verb	Derivation TAMP	TAMP	P

What is relevant to this research are all the slots in which polarity can be presented (labelled TAMP for tense, aspect, mood, polarity) because negation affixes appear in these slots. Negation is not only present in verbs but can occur with non-verbal predicates as well. The non-verbal predicates under investigation here are nominal, adjectival, and nominal relative predicates. These predicates also take on negation affixes, which means the verb template above is, to some extent, relevant in the discussion of negation of non-verbal predicates.

1.2. NEGATION IN ISIXHOSA

IsiXhosa has various ways of expressing negation on the verb as well as on non-verbal predicates. Typically, negation is expressed by a circumfix – in which a split morph attaches to either end of the (verbal) predicate. On other occasions negation is expressed by a single morph occupying one of the TAMP slots in the template discussed above. The choice of which negative allomorph to use and which TAMP position to fill is determined by the tense/aspect and mood of the sentence in which negation occurs. The various negation strategies are

discussed as they occur in the various moods in isiXhosa, namely the indicative, imperative and subjunctive.

1.2.1. SINGLE MORPHS

a) **a-**

This single negation strategy occurs in the future tense of verbal predicates¹ (1) and in the present tense of non-verbal predicates (2). This single morph appears before the subject marker (this will be referred to as the pre-initial position).

1. *akazohamba*
a-ka-zo-hamb-a
NEG-SM.1-FUT-walk-FV
'S/he will not walk.'
2. *akamhle*
a-ka-m-hle
NEG-SM.1-1-good-looking
'S/he is not good-looking.'

b) **-nga-**

The second single morph which is used for negation in isiXhosa is *-nga-* which occurs in the recent and remote past tenses in the prospective aspect. This morph appears immediately after the subject marker (a position which will be referred to as post-initial).

3. *bendingazukuhamba*
be-ndi-nga-zu-ku-hamba
be.REC-SM.1SG-NEG-FUT-INF-walk
'I was not going to walk.'

1.2.2. SPLIT MORPHS

¹ Although this single negative strategy is commonly used in spoken language, Jobela (2000) notes that the negative form of the future tense consists of the motion verbs *-ya-* (go), and *-za-* (come) which consist of the present tense negative strategy *a—i* followed by the infinitive. This suggests that, in some instances, the future tense is not marked by a single morpheme, but rather a split morph. However, as this contracted form is often used in spoken contexts (and as the split morph has been given its own dedicated section, this single morph subsection has been preserved here.

Several of the negative morphs in isiXhosa appear as split morphs. This means that the negation morpheme consists of two components which typically appear at the beginning and end of a word. In isiXhosa negation, the split morph occurs at the beginning and end of a word, and it may also occur in the middle of the word and at the end of the word.

a) *a—i*

This split morph occurs as a circumfix and is attached to both ends of the verb. This allomorph of the negative morpheme occurs in the present tense of verbal predicates (4).

4. *akahambi*

a-ka-hamb-i

NEG-SM.1-walk-NEG

‘S/he does not walk.’

b) *a—anga*

This split morph occurs in the recent and remote past tense in the perfective aspect of verbal (5) and some non-verbal predicates specifically the adjectival and nominal relative predicates (6).

5. *akahambanga*

a-ka-hamb-anga

NEG-SM.1-walk-NEG

‘S/he did not walk.’

6. *akamhlanga*

a-ka-m-hl-anga

NEG-SM.1-1-good-looking-NEG

‘S/he is not good-looking.’

c) *-nga—i*

Unlike the preceding split morphs which occurred in the initial and final positions, this split morph occurs in the post-initial and final positions. This split morph occurs in the recent and remote past tenses of verbs in the imperfective aspect.

7. *u-nga-hamb-i*

u-nga-hamb-i

SM.2SG-NEG-walk-NEG

‘You must not walk.’

d) **-nga—anga**

This split morph occurs in the post-initial and final positions. This occurs in verbal (8) and some non-verbal predicates (9) in the recent and remote past tenses in the anterior aspect. This split morph does not attach to nominal predicates.

8. *wayengahambanga*
waye-**nga**-hamb-**anga**
SM.PST.IPFV.1-NEG-walk-NEG
'S/he never walked.'
9. *wayengamhlanga*
waye-**nga**-m-hl-**anga**
SM.PST.IPFV.1-NEG-1-good-looking-NEG
'S/he was never good-looking.'

1.2.3. PERIPHRASTIC NEGATION

This negation strategy differs from the ones listed previously which express negation morphologically on the relevant predicate. Here, negation is expressed periphrastically: that is, the expression consists of a negative lexical item such as *khange* and *zange* which mean 'never' followed by a predicate. The negative lexical item is followed by the verb in the indicative mood, as illustrated in (8).

8. *khange ndihambe*
khange ndi-hamb-e
never SM.1SG-walk-REC
'I never walked.'

The other periphrastic negation strategy is *musa* which is a prohibitive meaning 'do not' and this occurs in the imperative mood. *Musa* is followed by an infinitive verb form (9). In some cases, *musa* appears as a clitic which attaches to the infinitive verb, appearing as *suku-* (10).

9. *musa ukuhamba*
musa uku-hamba
PROH INF-walk
'Do no walk.'

10. *sukuhamba*
su-ku-hamba
PROH-INF-walk
'Do no walk.'

1.2.4. TAM AND NEGATION IN ISIXHOSA

The indicative mood makes use of all the negative strategies mentioned above in isiXhosa. As mentioned above, one negative morpheme may be used, this being the pre-initial *a-*. However, often two strategies are used, the various circumfixes, in a single morpheme. The tables presented subsequently (tables 1-5) provide illustrations of the negative strategies in the indicative mood. Since tense and aspect work in tandem, each table is only divided according to tense and within it each aspect is represented. The indicative mood contains all five tenses (present, recent and remote past, and near and remote future) and four aspects (perfective, imperfective, anterior, and prospective). All aspects are only present in the recent and remote pasts. The present tense contains only the imperfective aspect. The two future tenses contain the perfective aspect. Most of the tenses and aspects require the presence of two negation morphemes. The only exceptions are the perfective aspect in the remote past and two future tenses. For the most part non-verbal predicates use the same negation strategies as verbs and thus where relevant these will be presented in the same tables.

Non-verb predicates include nouns, adjectives, and nominal relatives². Nominal relatives are a word group that would be associated with adjectives in English; in isiXhosa, they are separate from adjectives because adjectives are a closed class. IsiXhosa adjectives consist of a handful of words and numerals.

Adjective predicates are prefixed with an adjectival marker/concord; this is a subject marker without its pre-prefix/augment. The only exceptions to this are 1st and 2nd persons and class 9. In classes 9 and 10, the *n* becomes *m* before *b* and *f*, and *n* triggers *hl* (in *-hle*) to *tl*. Relative nominals are prefixed with a subject marker. This distinction is clear in the adjective and nominal relative examples in table 3. The negation strategies for these two non-verb predicates

² This thesis will only examine the nominal, adjectival, and nominal relative non-verbal predicates, however others do exist.

are identical while nominal predicates are only negated with the pre-initial negative *a-*.

The tense, aspect, and mood that nominal predicates can occur in without using the auxiliary verb *ukuba* ‘to be’³ are the indicative mood in the present tense, recent past and remote past imperfective. Nominal predicates only use the pre-initial *a-* and post-initial *-nga-* negative morphemes. The post-root *-anga* can be considered reserved for verbal predicates as it is in the final vowel slot (used to encode TAM), since nouns do not have such a slot.

Table 1: *Present tense*

	Affirmative	Negative
Imperfective (Verb)	<i>ndi-ya-bhal-a</i> SM.1SG-DJ-write-FV ‘I am writing.’	<i>a-ndi-bhal-i</i> NEG-SM.1SG-write-NEG ‘I am not writing.’
Imperfective (Noun)	<i>(u)-li-xoki</i> (SM.1)-COP.5-5.liar ‘S/he is a liar.’	<i>a-ka-lo-xoki</i> NEG-SM.1-COP.5-5.liar ‘S/he is not a liar.’
Imperfective (Adjective)	<i>u-Nomsa (u)-mhle</i> 1a-Nomsa 1.AC.beautiful ‘Nomsa is beautiful.’	<i>u-Nomsa a-ka-kho mhle</i> 1a-Nomsa NEG-SM.1-be.present 1.AC.beautiful ‘Nomsa is not beautiful.’
Imperfective (Nominal relative)	<i>um-culo u-mnandi</i> 3-music SM.3-nice ‘Music is nice.’	<i>um-culo a-wu⁴-kho mnandi⁵</i> 3-music NEG-SM.3-be.present nice ‘Music is not nice.’

The common negation strategy of the present tense is the split morph *a- -i*. This is not available for the non-verbal predicates which only use the single morph *a-*.

³ Nominal predicates that have this auxiliary are not included in this work due to spatial constraints of this thesis.

⁴ In the negative form, the subject marker is epenthesised with the labial glide *-w-* to resolve vowel hiatus.

⁵ In the negative form, the augment of the nominal relative is dropped.

Table 2: Recent and remote past tense

	Affirmative	Negative
Perfective Aspect	<i>ndi-bhal-e i-ncwadi</i> SM.1SG-write-REC 9-book 'I wrote a book.'	<i>a-ndi-bhal-anga ...</i> NEG-SM.1SG-write-NEG 'I did not write a book.'
	<i>nda-bhal-a i-ncwadi</i> SM.1SG.PST-write-FV 9-book 'I wrote a book.'	<i>khange nda-bhal-a ...</i> never SM.PST.1SG-write-FV 'I did not write a book.'
Anterior Aspect	<i>be-ndi-bhal-e ...</i> be.REC-SM.1SG-write-REC 'I had written a book.'	<i>be-ndi-nga-bhal-anga ...</i> be.REC-SM.1SG-NEG-write-NEG 'I had not written a book.'
Imperfective Aspect	<i>be-ndi-bhal-a ...</i> be.REC-SM.1SG-write-FV 'I was writing a book.'	<i>be-ndi-nga-bhal-i ...</i> be.REC-SM.1SG-NEG-write-NEG 'I was not writing a book.'
Prospective Aspect	<i>be-ndi-zaku-bhal-a ...</i> be.REC-SM.1SG-FUT-write-FV 'I was going to write a book.'	<i>be-ndi-nga-zuku-bhal-a ...</i> be.REC-SM.1SG-NEG-FUT-write-FV 'I was not going to write a book.'

The recent and remote past tenses make use of periphrastic negation, split morphs, and single morphs. These include the periphrastic *khange* and *zange*. The split morphs used are *a—nga*, *-nga—i*. The single morph used is *-nga-*. These negation strategies are also used in some non-verbal predicates as seen in table (3) apart from the split morph *-nga—i*.

Table 3: *Adjective and nominal relative Recent and remote past tense*

	Affirmative	Negative
Perfective Aspect (Adjective)	<i>u-mhle</i> SM.1-good-looking ‘S/he is good-looking.’	<i>a-ka-mhle</i> NEG-SM.1-good-looking ‘S/he was not good-looking.’ (Gough 1995: 158)
		<i>a-ka-kho-mhle</i> NEG-SM.1-good-looking ‘S/he is not good-looking.’
		<i>a-ka-mhl-anga</i> NEG-SM.1-1.beautiful-NEG ‘S/he is not good-looking.’
Imperfective Aspect (Adjective)	<i>ebe-mhle</i> SM.1.REC-good-looking ‘S/he was good-looking.’	... <i>ebe-nge-mhle</i> SM.1.REC-NEG-good-looking ‘S/he was not good-looking.’ (Louw & Jubase 1963: 205)
		<i>ebe-nge-kho mhle</i> SM.1.REC-NEG-be 1.beautiful ‘S/he was not good-looking.’
Imperfective Aspect (Nominal relative)	<i>um-thi ubu-luhlaza</i> 3-tree SM.REC.3-green ‘The tree was green.’	... <i>ubu-nge-luhlaza</i> SM.3.REC-NEG-green ‘The tree was not green.’ (Louw & Jubase 1963: 205)

IsiXhosa has two future tense forms, and they employ fewer negation strategies than the past tenses. The near and remote future tenses make use of only the pre-initial negative morpheme *a-*.

Table 4: *Future*

	Affirmative	Negative
Perfective	<i>ndi-za-ku-bhal-a</i> ... SM.1SG-FUT-INF-write-FV 'I will write a book.'	<i>a-ndi-zi-ku-bhal-a</i> ... NEG-SM.1SG-FUT-INF-write-FV 'I am not going to write a book.'

Negative subjunctives encode negation through post-initial and post-root negative morphemes. This negative strategy (the post-initial *-nga*) is identical to the recent and remote past tenses with an imperfective aspect in the indicative mood. The only negation strategy of the imperative is what Du Plessis and Visser (1992: 262) consider an auxiliary verb, *musa*. The infinitive *uku-* follows this verb, and the two frequently appear in their joined and contracted form *suku*, (referred to as the prohibitive). The negation strategies for the subjunctive and imperative are listed in table 6 along with their affirmative counterparts.

Table 5: *Subjunctive and imperative*

Affirmative	Negative
<i>u-bhal-e i-ncwadi</i> SM.1-WRITE-SBJV 9-book 'Write a book.' (Subjunctive)	<i>u-nga-bhal-i i-ncwadi</i> SM.1-NEG-write-NEG 9-book 'Do not write a book.' (Subjunctive)
<i>yi-bhal-e i-ncwadi</i> SM.9-write-SBJV 9-book 'Write the book.' (Subjunctive)	<i>u-nga-yi-bhal-i i-ncwadi</i> SM.1-NEG-OM.9-write-NEG 9-book 'Do not write the book.' (Subjunctive)
<i>bhal-a</i> write-FV 'Write.' (Imperative)	<i>su-ku-bhala</i> PROH-INF-write 'Do not write.' (Imperative)

What has been shown in this section is that isiXhosa possesses an array of negative strategies and that the choice of these strategies is dependent on TAM in which the relevant expression occurs. Morphologically, the strategies range from the use of a single negative marker to two. In addition, isiXhosa has a periphrastic strategy for expressing negation. It has also been shown that there is great overlap between the different tenses and predicate types regarding which

negation morphemes are used. Furthermore, it has been clearly demonstrated that non-verbal predicates have a less wide array of negation strategies than verbal predicates.

1.3. RESEARCH PROBLEM

In isiXhosa negation does more than simply negate the proposition in question. In some cases, negation just does the opposite: that is, grammatically negative constructions can convey an emphatically affirmative meaning of the expression. This phenomenon has been termed ‘ironic negative’ by Oosthuysen (2016). This is the term adopted in this thesis. What is interesting is that some negative expressions only have this ironic negative interpretation in the language. This means that in isiXhosa, constructions that contain negative morphology can be interpreted in one of three ways: (i) unambiguously negative, (ii) unambiguously ironic negative, or (iii) ambiguous between negative and ironic negative. These meanings are illustrated below in examples 15 a-c, in which (15a) has a plain negative meaning, (b) only has an emphatic positive/ironic negative meaning and (c) is ambiguous and can be interpreted either way.

11. The meanings of negative expressions in isiXhosa

- a. *akafanga*
a-ka-f-anga
NEG-SM.1SG-die-NEG
‘S/he is not dead.’
- b. *akamde*
a-ka-mde
NEG-SM.1SG-tall
‘S/he is very tall.’
- c. *akanxilanga*
a-ka-nxil-anga
NEG-SM.1SG-drunken-NEG
‘She is not drunk / She is very drunk.’

Ironic negatives serve a pragmatic function in that they emphasise the affirmative. This phenomenon, as hinted above, has not received much scholarly attention in studies on Bantu generally or isiXhosa specifically. Ironic negatives are pervasive in isiXhosa, and yet as far as

I am aware they do not result in any communication problems among speakers. This means that speakers can distinguish between what is ironic negative in the language and what is just plain negation. How speakers do this presents a research puzzle.

1.4. RESEARCH GOALS AND QUESTIONS

The goal of this study is to provide insights into the distribution of ironic negatives and their limitations in isiXhosa. This includes explaining why certain forms are unambiguously ironic negative, some unambiguously negative, and why some are ambiguous.

The research questions guiding this thesis are as follows:

- 1) What makes a grammatically negative construction unambiguously ironic negative?
 - i) What role does tense, aspect, and mood play in the interpretation of negatives in isiXhosa?
 - ii) What role does the predicate type play in the interpretation of unambiguous ironic negatives?
- 2) What role, if any, does tone and penultimate lengthening play in interpreting ironic negatives in isiXhosa?

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This thesis aims to contribute to the field of negation in Bantu languages and the broader field of negation cross-linguistically. The research provides a typological description useful not only to the understanding of negation but also to learners of isiXhosa with the tools to disambiguate the negative from the ironic negative. On a broader scale, the findings of this thesis will contribute to our knowledge of isiXhosa, particularly on a feature of this language that is widely used by speakers but has largely been overlooked by linguists.

1.6. ORGANISATION OF THESIS

The rest of this thesis is organised as follows: Chapter 2 presents an overview of the literature. This chapter contextualises this thesis by presenting a general description of negation, how it is used for pragmatic effect as well as a review of the literature on ironic negatives in other Bantu languages. The methodology used in the undertaking of this research is presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 delves into the findings and analysis of this thesis. The conclusion is provided in Chapter 5. The appendices containing the relevant questionnaires are provided at the end of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the relevant literature on negation and its pragmatic functions. The goal of the literature review is to contextualise the current study within the broader discourse on negation and to establish if there are gaps in the literature on ironic negation which this thesis seeks to address.

2.1. WHAT IS NEGATION?

Negation is generally defined through its relation to the affirmative. It is considered as reversing the truth values of whatever the affirmative construction asserts (Givón 2001). However, considering negation in terms of truth values does not prove useful when applied to constructions that cannot be assigned truth values (Bond 2007). Bond (2007) illustrates this point by noting that negative imperatives cannot be declared true or false. Tatarovska (2022) states that negation can be viewed in terms of three categories: non-existence, rejection, and denial. In this thesis, a negative construction is considered in line with Bond's (2007) view as being one that minimally consists of a negative morpheme or multiple negative morphemes. The number and types of negative morphemes a language employs are language-specific and are influenced by whether that language has symmetric or asymmetric negation.

2.1.1 Classification of negation

Miestamo (2005) notes that negation is divided into two forms: symmetric and asymmetric negation. Negation is symmetric when it is identical to its affirmative counterpart, apart from the negative morpheme. Asymmetric negation is structurally different from the affirmative. In languages where negation is asymmetric, unlike symmetric negation where just the negative morpheme is added, the negative construction is structurally different to the affirmative. In other words, no structural changes exist between the affirmative and the negative (Miestamo 2005).

Miestamo's (2005) study demonstrates that French is a language with symmetric negation. This is illustrated in example 1 a-d.

1) Symmetric negation in French (Miestamo 2005: 62)

a. affirmative

Jean vient
Jean come.3SG
'Jean comes/is coming.'

b. negative

Jean ne vient pas
Jean NEG come.3SG NEG
'Jean does not come/is not coming.'

c. affirmative

Jean est ven-u
Jean is come-PTCP
'Jean came/has come.'

d. negative

Jean n'est pas ven-u
Jean NEG-is NEG come-PCTP
'Jean didn't / hasn't come.'

Languages can have symmetric or asymmetric negation or a combination of these two forms. Negation in isiXhosa is asymmetric. This means that unlike in languages with symmetric negation, negative constructions in isiXhosa are structurally different from the affirmative. This asymmetry is conditioned by tense, aspect, and mood. Examples 2 a-d illustrate what examples 1 a-d look like in isiXhosa and thus demonstrate this asymmetry.

2) Asymmetric negation in isiXhosa

a. affirmative

u-Jean u-ye-z-a
1a-Jean SM.1A-DJ-come-FV
'Jean is coming.'

b. negative

u-Jean a-ke-z-i
1a-Jean NEG-SM.NEG.1a-come-NEG
'Jean is not coming.'

c. affirmative

u-Jean u-z-ile
1a-Jean SM.1a-come-DJ
'Jean has come.'

d. negative

u-Jean a-ka-z-anga
1a-Jean NEG-SM.NEG.1a-come-NEG
'Jean has not come.'

In French, the same negation strategy, *ne* + verb + *pas*, is used regardless of the construction's tense. In isiXhosa, different negative allomorphs are used depending on the construction's tense, aspect, and mood (hereafter TAM). The fact that the structure of negation changes in isiXhosa depending on these factors whereas it does not change in French under similar

conditions demonstrates why French has symmetric negation while isiXhosa has asymmetric negation.

2.2. PRAGMATIC USES OF NEGATION

Ironic negatives fall under the subfield of morphopragmatics as, even without much investigation, it is clear that the language makes use of morphology for pragmatic effect. Morphopragmatics deals with the intersection of morphology and pragmatics (Barbaresi and Dressler 2020). Negation has long been used in the world's languages not just as an opposition to the affirmative but as a pragmatic device. These include, but are not limited to, mitigation and emphasis. The following subsections review literature on how negation is used as a mitigation and emphasising device both cross-linguistically and narrowly within Bantu languages.

2.2.1. Negation as mitigation

In the languages of the world mitigation is used as means of softening or weakening what would otherwise be a potentially negative or face-threatening message (Caffi 1999). A study by Ran (2013) shows how negation is used as a strategy for mitigation in Chinese interpersonal interaction. In the language, there exists a strategy for mitigating a face-threatening interaction by using a formulaic expression which consists of a negative element which would otherwise not be used in a regular negative construction (Ran 2013). This construction consists of *bushi* (meaning 'no' or 'to be not') + an optional sentence, + a verb + an optional noun phrase (Ran 2013). The use of this signals that it is not the speaker's intention to be face-threatening, thus shifting the negative interpretation of the utterance onto the hearer (Ran 2013). There are restrictions on this type of negative construction which would not normally occur in regular sentential negation in Chinese. These include: the negative element occurring before the subject rather than in the expected position after the subject (Ran 2013). There are also seemingly arbitrary rules which make more sense when considering their pragmatic effect rather than grammaticality. These include: an optional subject, permitted subjects only being 1st or 3rd person, and permitted objects only being 2nd and 3rd persons (Ran 2013). In the context of

face-saving mitigation these restrictions make sense, and the syntactic constraints on the negation can be seen as being there to ensure that there is no confusion between the opposite of an affirmative and mitigation.

2.2.2. Negation as emphasis

Some studies have looked at the use of negation for emphasis. One way in which negation can be used to emphasise an assertion is by metalinguistic negation. Metalinguistic negation is a marked use of negation. Horn (2001) states that this form of negation consists of a negated utterance followed by a rectification of that utterance. This ensures that the two statements share the same truth values and do not contradict each other. An example of this can be seen in English:

3) Speaker A: I think that Siphso will eat this cake.

Speaker B: He is not going to eat the cake. He is going to devour it!

Speaker B does not deny that the cake will be eaten; rather, they emphasise how it will be eaten using the hyperbole 'devour'. Metalinguistic negation is not always restricted to such formulaic expressions, however. A language may use the morphology in its repertoire to distinguish metalinguistic negation from regular negation; this is the case with Egyptian Arabic.

A study by Mughazy (2003) shows that in Egyptian Arabic, metalinguistic negation is signalled by a negation strategy that is not permitted in other forms of negation. Main verbs and pseudo-verbs are negated using the circumfix *ma--ef*, and non-verb predicates are negated using *mef*. If a verb predicate contains *mef*, it is unambiguously interpreted as metalinguistic negation. In addition, *mef* can be used in a double negative construction along with *ma--ef*; however, this is only permitted in metalinguistic constructions. This is therefore one use of negation which does not deny the truth of an assertion but rather emphasises it. The language uses the morphology of negation to not reverse truth values but rather to emphasise the negative.

A study by Devos and Van der Auwera (2013) shows that in some Bantu languages, post-verbal negative markers can emphasise negation (similar to metalinguistic negation but largely in what we would consider ironic negation). This is largely done in combination with the post-initial negative and/or the post-root negative. Zeela (L331) is one such language, where the construction is interpreted as more emphatic when the non-obligatory negative marker *po* is present. This negative morpheme is also a locative morpheme, which means that a construction such as (4 a-b) would be ambiguous between this emphatic negative and a negative locative interpretation.

4) Ambiguity in Zeela

- a. *n-ki-mú-kupiil-ée-pò*
 1SG-NEG-1-hit-PRF-NEG
 ‘I have not hit him at all.’ (Devos and van der Auwera 2013:238)
- b. *n-ki-mú-kupiil-ée-pó*
 1SG-NEG-1-hit-PRF-X -16.LOC
 ‘I have not hit him there.’ (Devos and van der Auwera 2013:238)

What disambiguates the negative *po* from the locative is tone; the negative *po* is pronounced with a low tone while the locative *po* is pronounced with a high tone. Devos and Van der Auwera (2013) suggest these ambiguous interpretations are due to the changing cycle of negation. They suggest that Bantu languages undergo this cycle, specifically between the first (one negative marker) and second (obligatory double negation) stages. In these languages, there is the obligatory negative marker (usually post-initial) and a post-verbal element that reinforces negation structurally and pragmatically. Where this differs from a language like Zeela is that there is no ambiguity between this element and the morpheme from which it is derived. An example of this can be seen in Ngombe (C41), where the addition of this post-verbal negator is solely for emphasis.

- 5) *ó-ta-yán-á* *ngása* (Devos and van der Auwera 2013:258)
 2SG-NEG.1-go-PROG X
 ‘You are not (at all) going.’

These elements used to re-enforce (and, by extension, emphasize) negation and ultimately become negative markers are usually grammaticalized locative pronouns, possessive pronouns, and negative particles (Devos and Van der Auwera 2013). This knowledge is relevant to the study of ironic negatives because negative morphemes are central to interpreting this phenomenon. This is because the difference between the three interpretations of negation in isiXhosa: (i) unambiguously negative, (ii) ambiguously negative/ironic negative, and (iii) unambiguously ironic negative, might have to do with the type of negative morphemes used and the contexts in which they are used.

2.2.3. Ironic negatives

As noted earlier negative constructions can be used to convey a meaning that is the exact opposite of a negative. They can be used to convey the emphasis of an affirmative construction. Oosthuysen (2016) makes the first mention of this phenomenon in isiXhosa and coins the term *ironic negative*, in reference to it. An example of an ironic negative in isiXhosa is shown in (6).

- 6) *a-ka-se-mhle* *lo mntwana*
 NEG-SM1-PERS-beautiful this 1-child
 ‘This child is no longer beautiful.’
 ‘How beautiful this child is!’ (Oosthuysen 2016, 193)

Although this phenomenon has not received much scholarly attention in isiXhosa and other Bantu languages, it has been mentioned in passing in the literature. Ironic negatives are briefly discussed in writings on Zulu (Roberts 2018), Shona (Dembetembe 1986), Nguni (Laine, Bernander, & Gibson forthcoming) and Kuria, Gikuyu, Kamba, and Kiluba (Devos and van Olmen 2013). In these other Bantu languages, ironic negatives are noted to occur in specific contexts. Specifically, they are noted as occurring in specific moods.

Dembetembe (1986) describes this form of negation as expressing heightened affirmation. While the restrictions on the formation of ironic negatives in Shona are not specified, it is noted that ironic negatives occur in the indicative (7 a) and participial moods (7 b) along with a reduplicated pronoun (Dembetembe 1986). Crucially, it is also noted that although the

reduplicated pronoun adds emphasis to the verb, the action or state of the verb is already rendered heightened by the presence of the negation (Dembetembe 1986).

7)

- a. Ironic negative in Shona in the indicative mood

Háisi mvúrá íyoyo yanáyá nhási masikíti

‘It is not rain which fell this afternoon.’

‘It rained heavily this afternoon.’

- b. Ironic negative in Shona in the participial mood

Kwákanga kúsií kuzárá kwérwizí íkoko

‘The river was not full.’

‘The river was in great flood’

Ironic negatives in Ngoreme (Laine, Bernander, & Gibson forthcoming), Kuria, Gikuyu, and Kamba (Devos and van Olmen 2013) have been closely associated with prohibitives (negative imperatives). Since the subjunctive mood can also be used in lieu of the imperative, prohibitives do not just refer to negative imperatives. In Ngoreme, imperatives consisting of the post-initial negative marker *-ka-* and the basic affirmative verb are interpreted solely as affirmative directives (Laine et al. forthcoming). In addition, these constructions are also interpreted as conveying a sense of urging or imploring. Devos and van Olmen (2013) note that this same interpretation of prohibitives is present in Gikuyu and Kamba. In these languages, the negative subjunctive, consisting of the negative marker and verb root, is viewed as emphasising the imperative (Devos and van Olmen 2013). In Kiluba, the same phenomenon occurs, as in the subjunctive mood, the difference being the presence of two negative markers (Devos and van Olmen, 2013).

The languages, Ngoreme, Kuria, Gukuyu, Kamba, and Kiluba, are geographically in close proximity and they all belong to the language zones J, E, and L (with Kiluba being the only one in L) (Laine et al. forthcoming). It is possible that languages closely related to isiXhosa also have ironic negatives since closely related languages exhibit similar phenomena.

There is a brief mention of ironic negatives in Zulu in Roberts (1900), which was reprinted in 2018. Roberts (1900) observes that ironic negatives represent a mode of speech contrary to the speaker’s words. There are also anecdotes about ironic negatives in Swati and Northern/Zimbabwean Ndebele (Thulisile Dlamini, personal correspondence). These languages and isiXhosa form part of the Nguni group in the Bantu language family.

Although the phenomenon of ironic negation has been mentioned in some studies on isiXhosa and other Bantu languages such mentions have been largely in passing. As far as I am aware, no systematic study has been conducted on this phenomenon in order to understand how widespread it occurs in a language and what its limitations are. This study thus presents a first attempt to systematically investigate ironic negation in isiXhosa.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the data used to answer the research questions, including how it was gathered and its analysis. The type of data needed to answer the research questions was speaker intuitions on negative constructions as well as their verbal productions of ironic negatives. Therefore, speakers needed to be presented with a variety of grammatically negative constructions, and they had to decide whether each was (i) unambiguously negative, (ii) unambiguously ironic negative or (iii) ambiguous. Speaker intuitions were selected as the primary source of data because (a) no thorough research on ironic negatives exists to compare against and (b) speakers of the language are best placed to interpret the meaning of ironic negatives and to differentiate them from regular negatives and this offers insight into the language as it is used today.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: a description of the participants is presented in 3.1., a description of the instruments of data collection (questionnaires, listening task and reading task) is presented in 3.2. Section 3.3. discusses how the data was collected with each instrument, and 3.4. gives an overview of how the data was analysed. This chapter concludes with the limitations of this methodology in 3.5.

3.1. PARTICIPANTS

The data gathered from native speakers came from three different data sets. The data sets are expanded upon in section 3.2 in the data collection instruments. While these data sets aimed at gathering different types of information, the participants' demographics were primarily the same. There were 35 participants, all but one of whom were undergraduate students at Rhodes University. Most of these participants are from and have spent most of their lives in the Eastern Cape, a province with the majority of isiXhosa speakers. These participants are competent first-language speakers of isiXhosa. A secondary advantage of this demographic is that because they are undergraduate students, they are more easily accessible to contact for additional meetings because of the various easily accessible university email lists. This is in addition to their flexible schedules.

During all the encounters, participants were informed of the purpose of this research. This information included giving a broad outline of the concept of ironic negation and what the study aimed to understand. Crucially, they were provided with an informed consent declaration that outlined their rights as research participants, what would be done with their data, and channels through which they could contact the researcher.

The participants interacted with the research online as well as in person. Of the 35 participants, only five interacted with the research and the researcher in person. The nature of the two different modes of interaction will be expanded upon in the relevant sections.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

As it has now been established, ironic negatives are an understudied phenomenon. As such, there is little literature from which to gather substantial data. Therefore, gathering instances of ironic negation requires some work. Examples of ironic negatives used in this research come primarily from the researcher. A handful of data come from the literature as well as Facebook. The examples gathered from Facebook come from the comment sections of posts in the 'Grahamstown Makhanda' Facebook group and those on the Facebook page 'Xhosa Comedy News'.

These instances of ironic negatives served as a template to create more ironic negatives. This means that I used some ironic negatives that I found in the questionnaires. While the predicates differed, key elements remained consistent: The data consisted of verbal and non-verbal predicates. The ironic negatives gathered from external sources were as *akamhle* (S/he is no longer good looking / S/he is very good looking) (Oosthuysen, 2016) and various Facebook comments such as *ayisecace* (It is no longer clear / It is very clear) and *akalogqwirha* (S/he is not a witch / S/he is such a witch).

Two questionnaires were used to not have one which is too long and thus discourage participants from completing it. The second questionnaire consisted of forms which were conjugated in the same way as the first questionnaire however it also consisted of the persistive aspect which is not included in the first questionnaire.

The following predicate heads were used for Questionnaire 1:

<i>-sebenza</i>	‘work’
<i>-caca</i>	‘be clear’
<i>-gqwirha</i>	‘witch’
<i>-zothe</i>	‘nuisance’
<i>-dala</i>	‘old’
<i>-hle</i>	‘good-looking’
<i>-mnyama</i>	‘black’
<i>-nzima</i>	‘difficult’

These eight heads were inflected for the moods: indicative, imperative, and subjunctive. In the indicative mood, they were inflected for tense and aspect. The tenses were the present, recent, remote past, near future, and remote future. The aspects were perfective, imperfective, anterior, and prospective. This resulted in 69 predicates, all of which can be found in the accompanying appendices. The following table (6) gives an example of these various conjugated forms for the verbal predicates.

Table 6: Conjugated forms of ‘caca’ (be clear)

	Sentence	Tense	Aspect	Mood
1	Ayicaci	Present	Imperfective	Indicative
2	Ayicacanga	Recent Past	Perfective	Indicative
3	Ibingacaci	Recent Past	Imperfective	Indicative
4	Ibingacacanga	Recent Past	Anterior	Indicative
5	Ibingazukucaca	Recent Past	Prospective	Indicative
6	Zange yacaca	Remote Past	Perfective	Indicative
7	Yayingacaci	Remote Past	Imperfective	Indicative
8	Yayingacacanga	Remote Past	Anterior	Indicative
9	Yayingazukucaca	Remote Past	Prospective	Indicative

10	Ayizukucaca	Near Future	Perfective	Indicative
11	Ayiyikucaca	Remote Future	Perfective	Indicative
12	Mayingacaci			Imperative
13	Ize ingacaci			Subjunctive

A notable number of ironic negatives in the literature and Facebook comments occur with the persistive aspect *sa-/se-*. Below are two examples found in Facebook comments. These examples, while based on the context are ironic negatives, 1 can be interpreted ambiguously and while, to me as a native speaker, 2 can only be interpreted as unambiguously ironic negative. These show that, at least without rigorous investigation, grammatically negative constructions which contain the persistive aspect can be interpreted as ambiguous or unambiguously ironic negative.

- 1) *andisayihleki*
a-ndi-sa-yi-hlek-i
NEG-SM.1SG-PERS-OM.9-laugh-NEG
‘I am laughing at it so much’
‘I am no longer laughing at it’

- 2) *ayisejame*
a-yi-se-jam-e
NEG-SM.9-PERS-stare.in.anger-REC
‘It is staring with such anger’
*‘It is no longer staring with anger’

As with the previous questionnaire, the researcher primarily created the predicates, with only one taken from an external source – *caca*.

The following predicates were used for the second questionnaire:

<i>-baleka</i>	‘run’
<i>-caca</i>	‘be clear’
<i>-gwala</i>	‘coward’

-mbi ‘ugly’
-mdaka ‘dirty’

These predicates were inflected for the same tenses, aspects, and moods as the previous data. The key difference here is that each conjugated predicate had a form with and without the persistive aspect.

A critical difference between the two questionnaires is that at the end of the first questionnaire, participants were asked if they would be willing to meet with the researcher to audio record some of their responses. These recordings would be used for the audio listening and reading tasks.

The audio tasks were twofold: In the audio reading and audio listening task. The audio reading tasks consisted of a mix of predicates from the two experiments and two predicates that did not form part of the questionnaires. This experiment consisted of five speakers. Four of the speakers took part in one of the two questionnaires. Each speaker recorded two sentences, one with an unambiguously ironic interpretation and one with an unambiguously ironic negative interpretation. The sentences that were recorded are listed on page 29 of this thesis.

The aim of this task was to see if there were any pitch differences between the recordings that were intended to have an unambiguous negative and unambiguous ironic negative reading. Some of these recordings would also be presented to other speakers to interpret.

The audio listening task consisted of speakers listening to audio recordings and translating what they heard into English. This experiment aimed to see whether isiXhosa speakers could hear the intended meaning of each recording. To do this, speakers would have to listen to the recordings and make a judgement. Participants' responses were independent of knowledge of ironic negatives or the research because care was taken to ensure that those who participated in the experiment had not taken part in the prior questionnaires.

3.3. DATA COLLECTION

All but one of the data collections was conducted online. This was to ensure that speakers could perform the tasks without any pressure or concern that their language use/interpretations were

being judged. The following subsections discuss how the data was collected using each instrument.

3.3.1. Questionnaires

The two questionnaires were administered to understand how speakers of isiXhosa interpret constructions with negation morphology. The first questionnaire was published and administered between the 14th and 16th of October 2022. The second questionnaire was published and administered between the 25th and 26th of November 2023. Each questionnaire had different purposes: Questionnaire 1 sought to find what role TAM and predicate type played in interpreting ironic negatives. Questionnaire 2 sought to find the persistive aspect's role in interpreting ironic negatives. While these had different goals, their structure was the same, and therefore, they are discussed here jointly.

The questionnaires were administered through Google Forms. The link to the form was emailed to undergraduate students at the Linguistics and Applied Language Studies department, and those who identified as proficient L1 speakers of isiXhosa completed the questionnaire. The first questionnaire comprised 69 questions, and the second comprised 60 questions. In both questionnaires, each isiXhosa sentence was given, and participants were tasked with choosing one of three English translations that they felt best interpreted the sentence. The participant could only choose one interpretation. Each potential answer gave an interpretation that was either (i) unambiguously negative, (ii) unambiguously ironic negative, and (iii) ambiguously negative and ironic negative. Below are examples of each questionnaire's first questions, respectively.

3) Questionnaire 1 question 1:

Ebengazukusebenza

- S/he was not going to work
- S/he was going to work a lot
- S/he was not going to work AND S/he was going to work a lot

4) Questionnaire 2 question 1:

Ayimdakanga

- It is not dirty
- It is very dirty
- It is not dirty AND It is very dirty

After the set period, the questionnaire forms were closed and the results taken for analysis.

3.3.2. Audio reading

The audio recordings were conducted between 18 and 19 October 2022. Five participants were chosen to record sentences. These participants were chosen from the first questionnaire. At the end of the first questionnaire, the participants were asked if they would be open to recording some sentences. These sentences were likely to be, but not limited to, their responses to this questionnaire. It was also mentioned that these recordings would be shared with others and that their anonymity would be guaranteed.

The sentences that participants were tasked with recording depended to an extent on their responses to other respondents'. This means that if those who chose to take part in the recording had sentences that they deemed ambiguous while others did not, those sentences would be recorded. Two of the six sentences that were ultimately recorded were outliers in their interpretation. The remaining four sentences were a combination of sentences in questionnaire 1, sentences in questionnaire 2, and two that did not form part of either questionnaire.

The recordings were conducted at the sound lab in the Department of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies. The recordings were made using a Zoom H4n portable digital recorder. Only the researcher and a single participant were in the room during each session. Participants were recorded on different days and at different times. Each participant was given a sheet of paper with the specific sentence they had to read along with its English translation. They were asked to say the specific sentence with each intended meaning. In other words, two recordings were made per single sentence; one had a negative interpretation, and the other had an ironic negative interpretation. Thus, in total, 24 audio recordings were made. These recordings would form part of the listening task.

The audio recordings consisted of the following predicates:

- *ayimnyama* – It is not black / It is very black
- *ebengemhle* – S/he was not good-looking / S/he was very good-looking
- *akalali* – S/he does not sleep / S/he sleeps a lot
- *akavuyi* – S/he is not happy / S/he is very happy
- *wayengazukusebenza* – S/he was not going to work / S/he was going to work a lot
- *yayingemnyama* – It was not black / It was very black
- *ebengelozothe* – S/he was not a nuisance / S/he was such a nuisance
- *akalozothe* – S/he is not a nuisance / S/he was such a nuisance
- *akalogqwirha* – S/he is not a witch / S/he was such a witch
- *akunzima* – It is not difficult / It is very difficult
- *kwakungezima* – It was not difficult / It was very difficult
- *ayizukucaca* – It is not going to be clear / It is going to be very clear

3.3.3. Audio listening

An experiment was conducted using the audio recordings made by the participants. This experiment aimed to see whether isiXhosa speakers could hear the intended meaning of each recording. To do this, speakers would have to listen to the recordings and make a judgement. Participants' responses were independent of knowledge of ironic negatives or the research because care was taken to ensure that those who participated in the experiment had not taken part in the prior questionnaires. Thus, the experiment was conducted with five participants. The experiment was conducted between 24 October and 3 November 2022.

The experiment was conducted entirely online. SurveyMonkey.com was the only survey site that allowed for audio recordings to be uploaded and subsequently viewed by participants. Thus, it was chosen as the platform to conduct this experiment. However, this limited the number of questions to eight; therefore, only 8 out of 24 recordings could be used. Each question contained a link to the audio recording and a text box. Participants had to click on the recording to hear what was said, and the text box prompted them to translate what they had heard into English. The image below shows an example of one of these questions.

2.



How would you translate the sentence in this audio clip into English?

Image 1: *Question 2 of audio experiment*

3.4. DATA COLLECTION

Due to the different nature of each of the data different tools were used to analyse them.

3.4.1. Questionnaires

To see if TAM, predicate type, and the persistent aspect had any significant association with the three interpretations of negation, a Chi-square test of homogeneity was conducted. This test was conducted using the statistical program R. The Chi-square test is an inferential statistical test used to determine whether a relationship exists between categorical variables. Categorical variables are those wherein both dependent and independent variables consist of multiple values. For example, the dependent variables are the three different interpretations speakers can have: (i) unambiguously negative, (ii) unambiguously ironic negative, and (iii) ambiguously negative and ironic negative. The independent variables, TAM and predicate type, have various values; for example, tense alone consists of five different values.

3.4.2. Audio tasks

In the audio reading task, all 24 recordings made were analysed using the speech phonetics software Praat. More specifically, each pair of recordings was compared against each other to see what differences, if any, were present. The differences in intonation that are measured consist of:

- Pitch
- Length of syllables with special reference to the penultimate syllables.
- Vowel length with special reference to the length of the penultimate vowels.
- Areas of high and low tones.

Characteristics of ironic negative constructions were compared with characteristics of different sentence types in isiXhosa

The nature of the audio experiment governed the nature in which the data gathered from it was analysed. This is because participants gave their interpretations rather than choosing from multiple choices, along with the small size of the resulting data. Therefore, descriptive statistics were sufficient to discuss the findings of this experiment.

3.5. LIMITATIONS

The participants in this research were a diverse group of people. However, the fact that they consist primarily of undergraduate students might be seen as a limitation. However, these participants are native speakers of isiXhosa from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, they have been exposed to a wide array of isiXhosa, including urban and rural varieties spoken by young and older people. Thus, they are varied enough to yield reliable interpretations. However, future research could expand on this participant population.

The size of the questionnaires were limited to ensure it would be brief enough to avoid participant fatigue. However, the sentences used were representative enough of the various forms of negative constructions present in isiXhosa that deductions can be made about the nature of ironic negatives in the language.

Only one website, [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com), allowed free use of their software to upload audio recordings and create a questionnaire from it. Therefore, the audio listening task had a very limited set of recordings that speakers could listen to. While this is still enough to make generalisations about the interpretation of grammatically negative constructions in isiXhosa, a larger pool of audio recordings to listen to would be ideal for more robust findings.

This research offers thorough enough insight into ironic negation to serve as a basis for future research. In looking at this research's limitations, an opening is given to fill in these gaps in future research.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents a description and analysis of the data that was obtained through the various instruments of the research. Based on questionnaire responses, the listening task and the reading task, it is apparent that speakers of isiXhosa are aware of ironic negatives. That is, speakers are able to distinguish ironic negation from regular negation. The findings of the study, as will become clear in the following sections, show that the degree to which negative morphology assumes a positive reading is determined by tense/aspect, mood, predicate type as well as the prosodic properties of the utterance. This chapter is divided as follows: 4.1 discusses the effects of tense, aspect, mood, and predicate type on ironic negation. A discussion of these effects is presented in 4.2. Subsection 4.3 discusses the findings of the effect of prosody on ironic negation.

4.1. EFFECTS OF TENSE, ASPECT, MOOD, AND PREDICATE TYPE ON IRONIC NEGATION

As the methodology chapter (chapter 3) mentioned, TAM and predicate type were analysed using statistical tools. The number of sentences in the different moods differed significantly among the three moods within the questionnaires. The difference in the number of sentences was due to the imperative and subjunctive moods not encoding tense and aspect. The indicative mood is the only mood that encodes tense and aspect. As a result of this difference, the findings relating to mood were analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings related to tense and aspect are discussed using inferential statistics. The use of inferential statistics ensures that the findings of this research are analysed as accurately as possible to see if there are any significant correlations between the interpretation of tense and aspect as well as predicate type.

Tense, aspect, and predicate type were analysed to see if they had any statistically significant association with the three interpretations of negation (unambiguously negative, unambiguously ironic negative, and ambiguous). A chi-square test of homogeneity was conducted. This test was performed using the statistical program R, version 4.3.0. The chi-square test is an inferential statistical test used to determine whether a relationship exists between categorical variables. These categorical variables are independent and dependent variables consisting of

multiple variables. The variables in the present study consist of various categories within them. In this research, the dependent variables are the three interpretations of negation. The independent variables are the tenses, aspects, mood, and predicate type. As mentioned, the aim is to see if there is any significant association between the interpretation of negation, particularly unambiguous ironic negation and tense, aspect, and predicate type.

4.1.1. Mood and Ironic Negation

The results found that mood plays a role in the interpretation of negative utterances. For example, it was found that utterances in the imperative mood (example 1 below) are categorically interpreted as conveying a negative meaning.

- 1) *sukusebenza*
su-ku-sebenza
PROH-INF-work
'Do not work.'
* 'Work a lot.'

In the questionnaire, one sentence was in the imperative mood. As mentioned in Chapter 1, imperative and subjunctive moods do not encode tense and aspect. Therefore, the sentences presented to speakers in these moods were minimal compared to the indicative mood. This singular imperative sentence was interpreted as unambiguously negative by all 20 respondents of the questionnaire.

In the subjunctive mood, two sentences were presented (examples 2 and 3). These subjunctive sentences were interpreted as unambiguously negative by 82.5% of the speakers and 17.5% interpreted these as ambiguous. No speakers interpreted the sentences in this mood as unambiguously ironic negative.

- 2) *mayingacaci*
ma-yi-nga-cac-i
HRT-SM.9- NEG-be.clear-NEG
'It must not be clear.'
* 'It must be very clear.'

- 3) *uze ungasebenzi*
 u-z-e u-nga-sebenz-i
 SM.2SG-must-SBJV SM.2SG-NEG-work-NEG
 ‘You must not work.’
 ‘You must work a lot.’

The indicative mood consisted of the most diverse interpretations: 54% of the constructions were interpreted as unambiguously negative, 14% as unambiguously ironic negative, and 32% as ambiguously negative and ironic negative. This is illustrated in Figure 1 below:

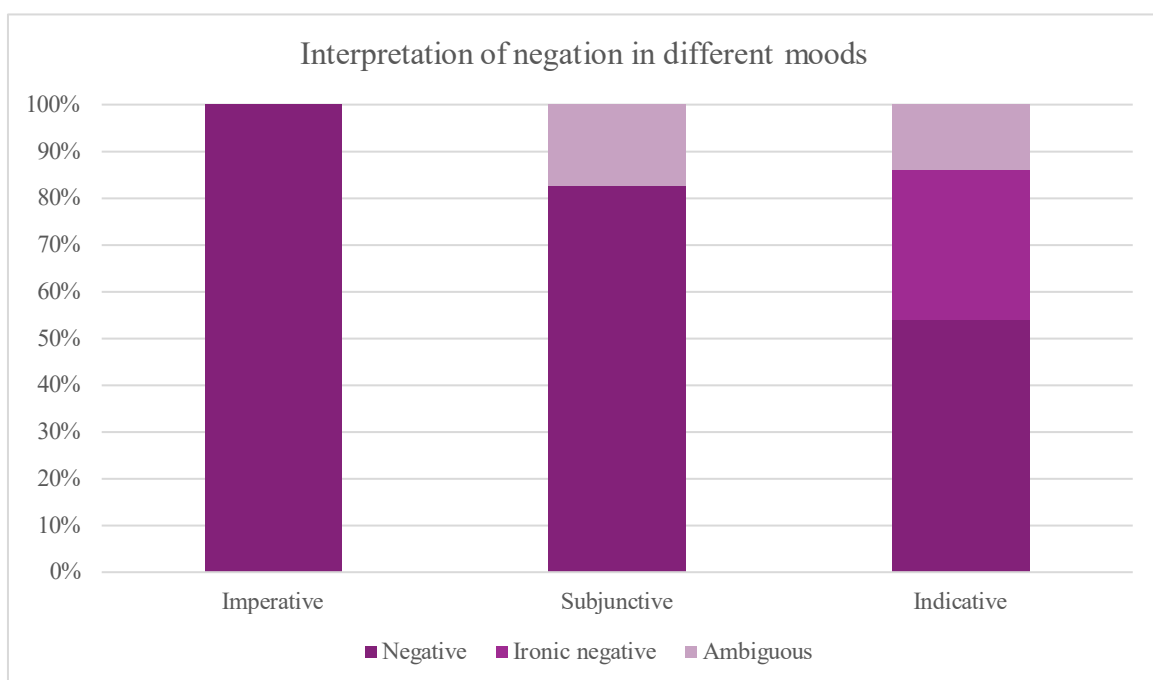


Figure 1: Interpretation of negation in different moods

1) Summary

These findings show that the effects of mood in the interpretation of ironic negation is quite clear. The indicative is the only mood which yields unambiguously ironic negative constructions. The imperative mood can only be used to convey unambiguously negative utterances. While the subjunctive mood primarily had unambiguous negative interpretations, it does also convey some ambiguous negative and ironic negative meaning. The imperative and subjunctive moods have in common the fact that they do not encode tense and aspect. The

indicative mood does convey tense and aspect. Therefore, the key to what governs the diversity of interpretations of the negative may lie in the tense and aspect which is only encoded in this one mood.

4.1.2. Tense and Ironic Negation

Tense plays a significant role in the interpretation of ironic negatives in isiXhosa. This research found that unambiguously ironic negative interpretations are found primarily in the present tense and are least likely to be found in the recent past tense. Unambiguous negative interpretations occur in the remote future tense and are less likely to occur in the present tense. None of the tenses were found to have a clear association with an ambiguous interpretation.

Prior to presenting these findings, it is necessary to give an explanation as to how the statistical results form the evidence of the abovementioned. While this subsection discusses the effect of tense in the interpretation of ironic negation, the overview on the presentation of the tabulated statistical findings is relevant to the findings regarding aspect and predicate type as well. The findings for tense, aspect and predicate type will be presented as follows: Each independent variable will be discussed individually, and a contingency table will show the observed frequencies. For each table, the critical z-value is given. The z-value or the standard score indicates how many standard deviations a particular value is from the mean of a group of values. The standard residuals for each variable are reported in the contingency table; these need to be compared to the critical Z value to determine significance. For these to be significant, each standard residual must be higher than the positive z-value or lower than the negative z-value. If the standard residual is higher than the positive z-value, that variable is highly associated with that interpretation. In other words, sentences in that tense or aspect or predicate type are interpreted significantly more as that particular type of negation. If the standard residual is lower than the negative z-value, that variable is less associated with that interpretation.

Table 7: Interpretation of negation in different tenses contingency table

	Near Fut.	Rem. Fut.	Present	Rec. Past	Rem. Past
Ambiguous	1.1472693	-2.9276060	-1.9475127	1.2293067	1.0948917
Ironic Neg.	-2.4188458	-2.8532094	7.3564074	-3.9540112	-0.1817746
Negative	0.7049089	4.8890187	-3.6050537	1.7646784	-0.9030708
z-value: -2.935199					

For ease of reading, significant standard residuals are presented in red, and those which are not significant are presented in black. In the following discussion of each tense, the tenses are presented beginning with those which produced the most significant interpretations to those which showed the least amount of significance.

1) Present Tense

Sentences with negative morphemes in the present tense are significantly more likely to be interpreted as unambiguously ironic negative if the context calls for such a reading. Whether this assertion is equally true for all predicate types will be discussed in subsection 4.1.4. An example of such a sentence is given in 4. Speakers interpreted *akamdala* as unambiguously ironic negative 75% of the time (meaning it had a positive meaning) and only 5% of the time was this interpreted as unambiguously negative.

- 4) *akamdala*
a-ka-m-dala
NEG-SM.1-1-old
‘S/he is very old.’
*‘S/he is not old.’

In this tense the analysis found that there was a significant correlation between unambiguous negative and ironic negative interpretations. The standard residual of 7.3564074 for the present tense is significantly higher than the z-value -2.935199. This means that there were more unambiguous ironic negative interpretations in the present tense, and the standard residual was considerably more than the positive of the z-value. This makes the present tense quite significant for interpreting the ironic negative. The standard residual for unambiguous negative at -3.6050537 is lower than the z-value. This means that sentences in the present tense were less likely to be interpreted as unambiguously negative. There was no significant correlation with ambiguous interpretations.

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2) Recent Past Tense

Sentences in the recent past tense are less likely to be interpreted as unambiguously ironic negative, instead they are more likely not to be interpreted as ironic negative. However, speakers also do not seem to interpret them as overly unambiguously negative or ambiguous. This can be seen in example 5 wherein the recent past sentence *ebengemhlanga* is not interpreted as ironic negative by any of the 20 speakers. While it is interpreted as ambiguous by 45% of the speakers and negative by the remaining 55%.

- 5) *ebengemhlanga*
 ebe-nge-m-hl-anga
 SM.IPFV.REC.1-NEG-1-good-looking-NEG
 * ‘S/he was very good-looking’
 ‘S/he was not good-looking.’

Sentences in the recent past tense had interpretations which while significant, yielded interpretations which were less significant than those in the present tense. For the unambiguous ironic negative interpretations, the standard residual was -3.9540112, this was less than the critical z-value. This means that the recent past tense sentences were interpreted as significantly less ironic negative. The ambiguous and unambiguous negative did not yield any significant interpretations.

3) Remote Future Tense

Sentences in the remote future tense are highly more likely to be interpreted as unambiguously negative compared to the other two interpretations of negation. In the remote future tense sentence *akayikusebenza* (example 6 below), 90% of speakers interpreted this as unambiguously negative while the remaining 10% interpreted it as ambiguous. None of the participants interpreted this as unambiguously ironic negative.

- 6) *akayikusebenza*
 a-ka-yi-ku-sebenza
 NEG-SM.1-FUT-INF-work
 ‘S/he is not going to work.’
 *‘S/he is going to work a lot.’

The remote future tense is the final tense which exhibits statistically significant results. The remote future had a standard residual of 4.8890187, significantly higher than the z-value -2.935199. This means speakers interpreted sentences in the remote future as substantially more unambiguously negative. There was no significance in the interpretations of ambiguous and unambiguous ironic negative.

4) Near Future Tense

Speakers' interpretations of negation were less clear for sentences in the near future tense. This means that this tense does not have a definitive association with any of the three interpretations of negation in isiXhosa. For example, the two sentences given to speakers in this tense provided markedly different interpretations among the speakers. What is evident is that this tense was not considered to be one associated with the unambiguous ironic negative. Example 7 was not interpreted by any speakers as unambiguously ironic negative. While 35% of speakers interpreted it as unambiguously negative and a further 65% interpreted it as ambiguous.

- 7) *akazukusebenza*
a-ka-zu-ku-sebenza
NEG-SM.1-FUT-INF-work
*‘S/he is going to work a lot.’
‘S/he is not going to work.’

The other sentence in the near future tense was *ayizukucaca*. Similar to the previous sentence, speakers do not seem to interpret this as the ironic negative although 5% did have this interpretation. Contrary to example 7, more speakers interpreted this as unambiguously negative (75% of responses) and a smaller proportion, 20%, regarded it as ambiguous.

- 8) *ayizukucaca*
a-yi-zu-ku-caca
NEG-SM.9-FUT-INF-be.clear
*‘It is going to be very clear.’
‘It is not going to be clear.’

The statistical analysis found that there is no significant association between this tense and any of the three interpretations. Thus, this means that for the purposes of this research the near future tense cannot be said to be aligned with an unambiguous ironic negative interpretation.

5) Remote past tense

The findings of the remote past tense were similar to those of the near future tense although speakers were presented with more sentences in this tense than in the near future. While the near future had two sentences the remote past had 22. Speakers' interpretations of sentences in this tense did not have definitive associations with any of the three negation meanings. Therefore, it can be said that the remote past tense is not associated with an ironic negative meaning. By way of illustration, two sentences are presented below (examples 9 and 10), while both are in the same tense, speakers interpreted them quite differently.

- 9) *wayengemdalanga*
waye-nge-m-dal-anga
SM.PST.IPFV.1-NEG-1-old-NEG
*‘S/he was very old.’
‘S/he was not old.’

- 10) *wayengasebenzanga*
waye-nga-sebenz-anga
SM.PST.IPFV.1-NEG-work-NEG
*‘S/he worked a lot’
‘S/he never worked.’

These two sentences were interpreted quite differently by speakers even though they are in the same tense. 5% of speakers interpreted *wayengemdalanga* as unambiguously ironic negative while 20% interpreted *wayengasebenzanga* as such. These differences were mirrored in the other two negative interpretations. *Wayengemdalanga* was interpreted as unambiguously negative by 25% of the speakers and as ambiguous by 70%. *Wayengasebenzanga* was interpreted as unambiguously negative by 35% of speakers and ambiguous by 45%. The statistical analysis for the remote past tense found no significant association with this tense and any of the three interpretations of negation in isiXhosa.

6) Summary

The findings show that there is a statistically significant association between tense and how native isiXhosa speakers interpret morphologically negative sentences. More specifically, the present tense is more significantly associated with unambiguously ironic negative interpretations. Therefore, it can be said that negative sentences in the present tense are very likely to be interpreted as ironic negative. Sentences which are less likely to be interpreted as unambiguously ironic negative are those in the recent past tense. This tense was found to be significantly less associated with an ironic negative interpretation. The tense which is mostly interpreted as unambiguously negative is the remote future. An ambiguous interpretation was not significantly associated with any tense; therefore, it cannot be said which tense is most likely to be interpreted as ambiguous. These findings show that there are specific tenses which are associated with specific negative meanings in isiXhosa.

4.1.3. Aspect and Ironic Negation

This section discusses the occurrence of ironic negation in the context of anterior, perfective, imperfective, prospective, and persistive aspects. This research finds that aspect plays a role in the interpretation of ironic negation in isiXhosa. The persistive aspect has been found to render a sentence more likely to be interpreted as ironic negative by isiXhosa speakers. As mentioned in the methodology, with the exception of the persistive aspects, the four other aspects are mutually exclusive in a single utterance. Thus, in addition to the persistive aspect being associated with an ironic negative interpretation, the imperfective aspect is also associated with this meaning. The remaining four aspects are less associated with an ironic negative meaning. Speakers interpreted sentences in the prospective and perfective aspects as unambiguously negative. Sentences in the anterior aspect were more likely to be associated with ambiguous meanings.

The following contingency table (8) shows the statistical findings of the various aspects' effect on the interpretation of negation in isiXhosa. As with the previous table, the statistically significant values are presented in red. Since the persistive aspect had its own questionnaire a

separate chi-square test was run on it, thus a different z-value is given for this aspect which is different from the other four.

Table 8: Interpretation of negation in different aspects contingency table

	Anterior	Imperfective	Perfective	Prospective	+Persistent	- Persistent
Ambiguous	3.15855157	-0.05176388	-2.27584163	-1.69770677	1.655801	-1.655801
Ironic Neg.	-6.12509325	11.34399547	-6.03383110	-3.76701674	3.783181	-3.783181
Negative	1.54482598	-8.35660729	6.62803835	4.40040619	-5.236079	5.236079
z-value -2.86526					z value -2.638257	

1) Anterior Aspect

The findings show that the speakers interpreted negative sentences in the anterior aspect as ambiguous. Speakers were less likely to interpret these sentences as ironic negative. They did not interpret these as overwhelmingly negative. Thus, it can be argued that this aspect is associated with ambiguous interpretations of negation in the language. An example of this can be seen in the sentence *ebengasebenzanga* (example 11 below). None of the participants interpreted this as unambiguously ironic negative. The sentence was interpreted as ambiguous by 60% of speakers and unambiguously negative by 40%.

11) *ebengasebenzanga*

ebe-nga-sebenz-anga

SM.IPFV.REC.1-NEG-work-NEG

‘S/he worked a lot.’

‘S/he did not work.’

The anterior aspect only occurs in the recent and remote past tenses. The findings of the statistical analysis showed that this aspect yielded interpretations which were more likely to be ambiguously ironic negative and negative. Furthermore, it was found that this aspect is significantly less likely to be interpreted as solely ironic negative.

2) Imperfective Aspect

The imperfective aspect occurs in more tenses than the other four aspects. It occurs in the present, recent, and remote past tenses. Speakers interpreted sentences in this aspect overwhelmingly as unambiguously ironic negative. Therefore, the imperfective is associated with an ironic negative interpretation. The aspect is less associated with an unambiguous negative meaning. An example of this is illustrated in 12, *akemhle*. This sentence was overwhelmingly interpreted as ironic negative as 75% of speakers preferred this interpretation. Only 5% of them interpreted this as negative and the remaining 20% deemed it to be ambiguous.

12) *akemhle*

a-ke-m-hle

NEG-SM.1-1-good-looking

‘S/he is very good-looking.’

*‘S/he is not good-looking.’

The standard residual for the unambiguous ironic interpretation was significantly higher than the z-value, thus showing that the imperfective aspect is highly associated with an ironic negative meaning. The other significant value is that of the unambiguous negative, showing that the imperfective is less associated with a negative interpretation. No significant findings were found for this aspect and the ambiguous meaning.

3) Perfective Aspect

The findings show that the perfective aspect is highly associated with an unambiguous negative interpretation. At the same time, it is less associated with the ironic negative. Therefore, speakers of isiXhosa are more likely to interpret a grammatically negative construction in the perfective aspect as negative than they are to interpret it as emphasising the affirmative. This is evident in how speakers interpreted the sentence *akamdalanga* (example 13 below). 75% of the respondents considered this to be negative while the remaining 25% interpreted it as ambiguous. None of the speakers viewed this as ironic negative.

- 13) *akamdalanga*
a-ka-m-dal-anga
NEG-SM.1-1-old-NEG
*‘S/he is very old.’
‘S/he is not old.’

The statistical analysis found that the perfective aspect has a significantly low association with an unambiguous ironic negative interpretation. There was a significantly high association with the unambiguous negative and no significant association with an ambiguous meaning. Therefore, the findings show that this aspect is highly associated with an unambiguous negative interpretation.

4) Prospective Aspect

The prospective aspect displays similar interpretations to the perfective aspect. The example in 14, *ibingazukucaca*, provides a microcosm for the prospective aspect and how speakers interpret sentences in this aspect. 90% of speakers interpreted this as unambiguously negative and 10% considered this to be ambiguous. None of the speakers interpreted this sentence as unambiguously negative.

- 14) *ibingazukucaca*
ibi-nga-zuku-caca
SM.IPFV.REC.9-NEG-FUT-be.clear
*‘It was going to be very clear.’
‘It was not going to be clear.’

For the unambiguous ironic negative, the standard residual for the prospective aspect was lower than the z-value. This means that constructions in the prospective aspect are less likely to be interpreted as unambiguously ironic negative. The interpretations for the unambiguous negative were significantly higher than the z-value. Therefore, constructions in the prospective aspect are significantly more likely to be interpreted as unambiguously negative.

5) Persistent Aspect

The findings show that speakers prefer interpreting sentences that contain the persistent aspect as unambiguously ironic negative. Sentences without this aspect are less likely to be interpreted as such. The statistical analysis shows that there is a correlation between the presence of the persistent aspect and an ironic negative interpretation. Sentences with this aspect were found to have a significantly higher standard residual than the z-value and this was in contrast to those without the persistent. Those without this aspect had a significantly lower standard residual. This shows that sentences with the persistent aspect are usually interpreted as ironic negative and those without the aspect are less likely to be interpreted as such.

6) Summary

What has been shown here is that there are specific aspects which are associated with specific types of interpretations of grammatically negative constructions. The imperfective and persistent aspects are mostly associated with an unambiguous ironic negative meaning. The perfective and prospective aspects are mostly associated with unambiguously negative interpretations. The anterior aspect is the only one associated with ambiguous interpretations.

4.1.4. Predicate Type and Ironic Negation

It has been hinted above that there are differences in how verbal predicates are negated compared to non-verbal predicates. Therefore, predicate type in addition to tense, aspect, and mood might offer insights into how negative constructions are interpreted in isiXhosa. This subsection shows that there is indeed a correlation between predicate type and the interpretation of negative expressions in isiXhosa. The findings of this study show that adjectival predicates are mostly associated with ironic negative interpretations, verbal predicates mostly are associated with negative interpretations, and nominal predicates are likely to be interpreted as ambiguous. This is illustrated in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Interpretation of negation in different predicate types contingency table

	Adjective	Noun	Relative	Verb
Ambiguous	-1.9213302	7.2537938	-1.2423562	-1.6251965
Ironic Neg.	6.2457699	0.3352047	2.4161844	-7.9066964
Negative	-2.7290201	-7.0652801	-0.5863580	7.2705901
z-value -2.86526				

1) Adjectival predicates

Speakers interpreted sentences with adjectival predicates as more ironic negatives than those which were verbal. Examples 15 and 16 show expressions in the same tense, aspect, and mood and the only difference is that 15 is an adjective while 16 is a verb. These were interpreted quite differently, and this difference can be attributed to the type of predicate each is. Both examples are in the present tense and imperfective aspect. Note that based on the findings discussed earlier, this combination of tense and aspect is associated with ironic negative interpretations therefore it stands to reason that 15 and 16 should be interpreted similarly. However, they are not, and this difference is due to the different predicate types.

15) *akemhle*

a-ke-m-hle

NEG-SM.NEG.1-1-good-looking

‘S/he is very good-looking.’

*‘S/he is not good-looking.’

16) *ayicaci*

a-yi-cac-i

NEG-SM.9-clear-NEG

*‘It is very clear.’

‘It is not clear.’

The adjectival predicate, *akemhle*, was interpreted as ironic negative by 75% of speakers in this study while none of the speakers interpreted the verbal predicate *ayicaci* as such. 90% of the speakers interpreted the verbal predicate as negative and the adjectival predicate was

deemed negative by 5%. 20% of the speakers interpreted *akemhle* as ambiguous and *ayicaci* was interpreted similarly by 10%. These two examples are reflective of the overall interpretation of adjectival and verbal predicates. The statistical analysis mirrored these results finding that adjectives are significantly more likely to be interpreted as ironic negative.

2) Nominal predicates

Nominal predicates exhibited two significant findings. Speakers associated the nominal predicate with ambiguous interpretation of negation. This predicate type is also associated with a lower likelihood of being interpreted as unambiguously negative. An example of this can be seen in the sentence in 17 below. The percentage of speakers who interpreted this as ambiguous was 70%, while 15% of speakers interpreted it as negative and 17% ironic negative.

- 17) *ebengelozothē*
ebe-nge-lo-zothē
SM.IPFV.REC.1-NEG-COP.5-5.nuisance
'S/he was such a nuisance.'
'S/he was not a nuisance.'

The standard residual associated with the ambiguous interpretation was significantly higher than the z-value. This showed that of all predicate types, nominal predicates were more significantly associated with an ambiguous interpretation. Of note, however, is that the statistics also show that nominal predicates are significantly less likely to be interpreted as unambiguously negative. Therefore, nominal predicates are more likely to be interpreted ambiguously and less likely to be interpreted as unambiguously negative.

3) Verbal predicates

Significant findings were also found with verbal predicates. Speakers interpreted sentences with this predicate as less likely to be ironic negative and more likely to be negative. An example of this can be seen in 15 and 16 where verbal predicates were compared to adjectival predicates. Although the sentences provided were in the tense and aspect associated with ironic

negative interpretation speakers instead viewed verbs as being more negative. This finding is in line with the statistical analysis. The statistical analysis found a significant correlation between verbal predicates and a negative interpretation and a significantly lower correlation between it an ironic negative interpretation.

4) Nominal relative predicates

The nominal relatives contain similar negation strategies to the adjectival predicates. However, the statistical analysis found no significant correlation between this negation strategy and any of the three interpretations of negation in isiXhosa. Therefore, it cannot be said that this predicate type can give insights into the interpretation of ironic negatives in the language.

5) Summary

This section shows that there is a clear distribution in the interpretations of negatives between predicate types. The statistical analyses found no significant association between the nominal relative predicates and any of the three types of interpretations. However, it was conclusively found that the predicate type most associated with an unambiguous ironic negative interpretation is the adjectival predicate while verbs are less associated with this. Rather, verbal predicates are more significantly associated with unambiguous negative interpretations. Nominal predicates are associated with ambiguous interpretations and less likely to be associated with unambiguous negative meanings.

4.2. EFFECTS OF TENSE, ASPECT, MOOD, AND PREDICATE TYPE ON NEGATION DISCUSSION

1) Negative interpretation

The findings so far clearly show that tense, aspect, mood, and predicate type play a role in the interpretation of negation in isiXhosa. For a construction to be interpreted as unambiguously negative it needs to satisfy the following criteria,(although these do not (and in many cases cannot) occur simultaneously in the same predicate):

- Remote future tense
- Perfective aspect
- Prospective aspect
- Imperative mood
- Verbal predicate

This can be exemplified by looking at (18) below.

- 18) *ayiyikucaca*
a-yi-yiku-caca
NEG-SM.9-FUT-clear
*‘It is going to be very clear.’
‘It is not going to be clear.’

The findings revealed that 85% of speakers interpreted *ayiyikucaca* as negative and 15% interpreted it as ambiguous. None of the speakers interpreted it as ironic negative. This sentence satisfies the abovementioned criteria as it is a verbal predicate in the remote future tense and in the perfective aspect.

2) Ironic negative interpretation

The findings show that what is most associated with an unambiguous ironic negative interpretation are constructions in the following TAM and predicate type:

- Present tense
- Imperfective aspect
- Indicative mood
- Adjectival predicate
- Persistive aspect

Example, 19 below, shows a sentence which meets all the abovementioned criteria. This sentence is an adjectival predicate in the indicative mood. It is in the present tense, imperfective aspect and contains the persistive aspect. The findings revealed that 82% of speakers interpreted this sentence as ironic negative. The remaining 18% of speakers interpreted it as ambiguous, and none of the speakers interpreted it as negative.

19) *akasembi*

a-ka-se-m-bi

NEG-SM.NEG.1-PERS-1-unattractive

‘S/he is very unattractive.’

*‘S/he is no longer unattractive.’

There are forms which fit the criteria for what should be interpreted as unambiguously ironic negative, but the presence of *-kho* renders them unambiguously negative. The differences in interpretation along with the percentages pertaining to each interpretation is presented in table 10.

Table 10: Interpretations of adjectival predicates in the indicative mood, present tense, imperfective aspect, and persistive aspect

	Ambiguous	Ironic negative	Negative
<i>Akakho mhle</i>	10%	0%	90%
<i>akemhle</i>	20%	75%	5%
<i>Akakho mdala</i>	16%	0%	84%
<i>akamdala</i>	20%	75%	5%
<i>Akasekho mbi</i>	18%	9%	73%
<i>akasembi</i>	18%	82%	0%

While both forms with and without the existential copula *-kho* fit the criteria to be interpreted as unambiguously ironic negative, only those without the existential copula are interpreted as such by speakers. This difference in interpretation occurs with and without the presence of the persistive aspect, although those with *-kho* are interpreted as more unambiguously ironic negative with the persistive aspect. This can be seen in the construction *akasekho mbi* (S/he is no longer unattractive). The two other constructions (which do not have the persistive aspect) were not considered to have any ironic negative interpretations by speakers. Only 9% of the respondents said, *akasekho mbi* does have an ironic negative meaning. A much higher number of respondents (73%) said the expression had an unambiguous negative interpretation

It seems the presence or absence of this existential copula determines this shift in interpretation between unambiguous negative and unambiguous ironic negative. This might be due to the verbal properties of this morpheme. As the data has shown, verbal predicates are less likely to be interpreted as unambiguously ironic negative and are instead more likely to be interpreted as unambiguously negative.

Bloom Ström (2020) shows that this existential copula *-kho*, and its longer form *-khona*, while not a verb, can be considered a copula verbal element. This is because it has characteristics which make it behave similarly to a verb. Some of these include agreement marking and the

4.3.1. Listening task findings

The audio listening task was the only task in which speakers were free to give their interpretation rather than choosing from given options. The insights received from this task were valuable. Speakers' interpretations of the given audio recordings were mainly in line with the intended meaning of each recording. Some outliers may be explained through the acoustic analysis of the relevant recordings. Table 11 shows the intended meaning of each recording, along with the percentage of responses aligned with that intended meaning. The recordings are presented in negative/ironic negative pairs (each speaker made a pair). However, during the listening task, these were randomised so that the counterparts did not appear after each other.

Table 11: *Audio listening task findings*

	isiXhosa phrase	Translation	Accuracy of Speaker interpretation
Negative	<i>Ayimnyama</i>	It is not black	80%
Ironic negative	<i>Ayimnyama</i>	It is very black	100%
Negative	<i>Wayengemhle</i>	S/he was not beautiful	20%
Ironic negative	<i>Wayengemhle</i>	S/he was very beautiful	80%
Negative	<i>Akalali</i>	S/he does not sleep	100%
Ironic negative	<i>Akalali</i>	S/he sleeps a lot	100%
Negative	<i>Akavuyi</i>	S/he is not happy	80%
Ironic negative	<i>Akavuyi</i>	S/he is very happy	100%

This shows that speakers can distinguish between a grammatically negative utterance intended as unambiguously negative and an unambiguously ironic negative. A noteworthy aberration in the data is in how participants interpreted *wayengemhle* when it was intended to have a negative meaning. Only 20% of participants accurately interpreted the intended negative meaning. The

80% interpreted this as being the ironic negative. The recording of *wayengemhle* with the ironic negative meaning, which was interpreted correctly by 80% of speakers was made by the same person as the negative recording. An analysis of tone patterns between the unambiguous negative and unambiguous ironic negative might give insight into why participants made this error in interpretation.

4.3.2. Reading task findings

This research focused on pitch and vowel length. In these findings, the following is presented: the mean pitch of the recording, positions of the highest and lowest pitch, and the length of each vowel. In each spectrogram, the following tiers are presented: the morpheme tier which breaks down each word into its individual morphemes, the highest and lowest pitch point, and a breakdown of the length of each vowel which can be heard. Each negative/ironic negative pair of recordings is compared to see if there are any differences between them.

1) Pitch

In the recordings, it was found that the overall mean pitch for the unambiguous negatives was 195 Hz whereas the overall mean pitch for their unambiguous ironic negative counterparts was 205 Hz. This means that the unambiguous ironic negative constructions had an overall higher pitch than the negative constructions. The pair of recordings with the highest pitch difference was *akavyi* (“S/he is not happy and S/he is very happy”). The spectrograms for each recording are presented in Figures 2 and 3, respectively.

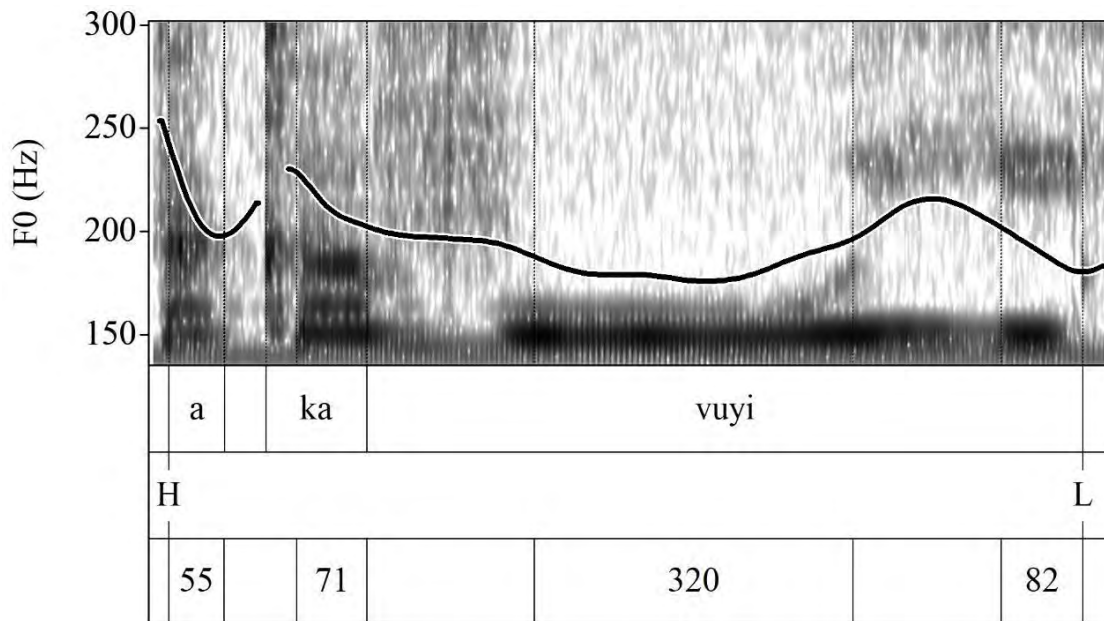


Figure 2: Negative: Akavuyi (S/he is not happy) Speaker B

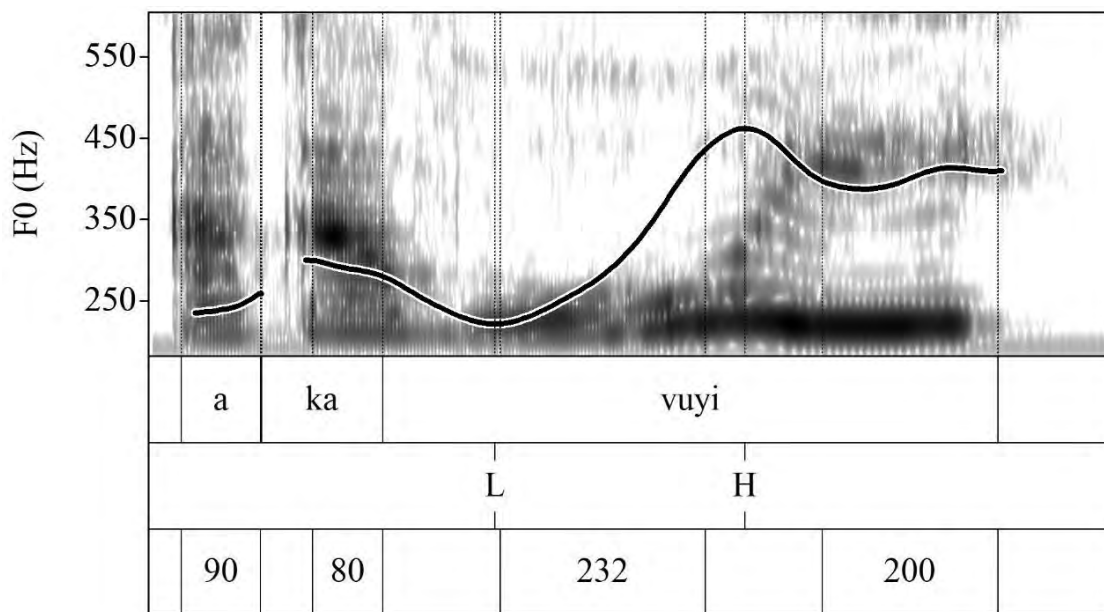


Figure 3 : Ironic negative: Akavuyi (S/he is very happy) Speaker B

The following table (12) shows a breakdown of the pitch of each vowel in the word *akavuyi*. For the two meanings ‘S/he is very happy’ and ‘S/he is not happy’). This table shows that vowels in the ironic negative utterance are consistently produced with a higher pitch when compared to the negative construction.

Table 12: *Vowel pitch for akavuyi*

Akavuyi vowels	Negative (S/he is not happy)	Ironic negative (S/he is very happy)
A	200 Hz	238 Hz
A	208 Hz	289 Hz
U	182 Hz	225 Hz
I	190 Hz	200 Hz

In the eight recordings that the participants had to translate, all followed this pitch pattern: negatives had a high followed by low pitch and ironic negatives had a low followed by high pitch. One construction did not follow this pattern, however: the ironic negative *ebengemhle*, while its negative counterpart did. The ironic negative *ebengemhle* had a HL pattern which is associated with unambiguous negative constructions in these findings. Significantly, as mentioned earlier, the ironic negative *ebengemhle* was incorrectly interpreted as unambiguously negative by a large number of the participants in the listening task. Figures 4 and 5 show the spectrograms of the two recordings of *ebengemhle*.

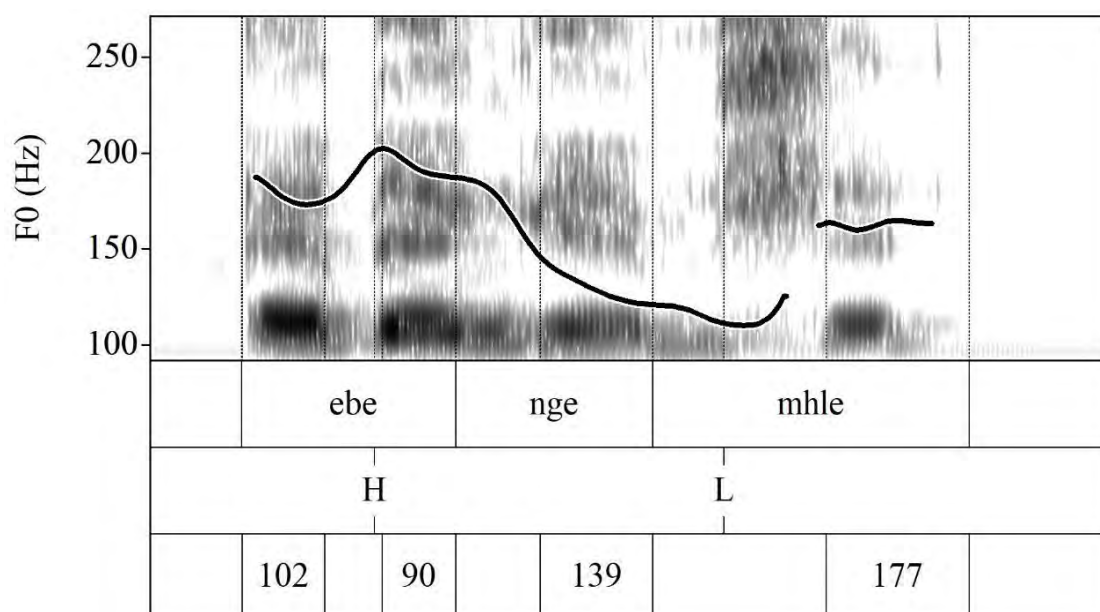


Figure 4: Negative: *Ebengemhle* (S/he was not beautiful) Speaker T

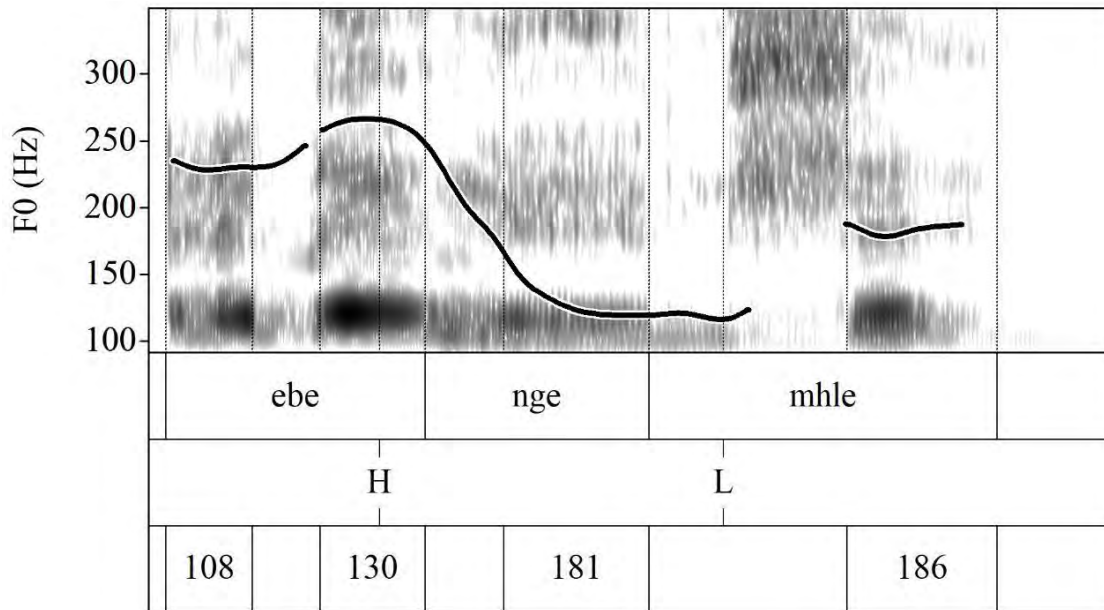


Figure 5: Ironic negative: *Ebengmhle* (S/he was very beautiful) Speaker T

The argument therefore is that the negative and ironic negative can be differentiated through, in part, the pattern of the highest and lowest pitch in the word. The fact that *ebengmhle* was produced with the same pitch pattern even though the meanings were intended to differ, and this resulted in misinterpretation by speakers is a testament to that. The other observation that this research has made is that the unambiguous ironic negative has an overall higher pitch than the unambiguous negative. This is also evidenced in *ebengmhle*. While the pitch patterns are identical, the recording which was meant to be the ironic negative has an overall higher pitch than the negative. The mean vowel pitch for both recordings is presented in table 13.

Table 13: *Vowel pitch for ebengmhle*

Ebengmhle vowels	Negative (S/he was not beautiful)	Ironic negative (S/he was very beautiful)
E	176 Hz	229 Hz
E	193 Hz	265 Hz
E	129 Hz	127 Hz
E	162 Hz	183 Hz

2) Penultimate vowel length

In isiXhosa, like many other Bantu languages, the penultimate vowel in an utterance is lengthened. Working on the assumption that this prosodic feature might provide clues as to whether or not a negative expression has an ironic negative the study went on to compare the lengths of this vowel in the utterances with the two intended meanings. The mean penultimate vowel length in the four recordings was 213.5ms, with a standard deviation of 82ms. The mean penultimate vowel length for the ironic negative construction was 200.75ms with a standard deviation of 28ms.

Table 14: *Penultimate vowel lengths*

	Negative	Ironic negative
<i>ayimnyama</i>	128ms	165ms
<i>ebengemhle</i>	139ms	181ms
<i>akalali</i>	267ms	225ms
<i>akavuyi</i>	320ms	232ms

This section shows that, based solely on the Praat analysis of the recordings used in the listening task, there are characteristics unique to the negative and ironic negative: Ironic negative constructions are produced with an overall higher mean pitch than negative constructions. The construction consists of a low pitch followed by a high pitch, while negative constructions have the opposite pattern. These findings are similar when assessing the rest of the recordings. The recordings used in the listening task as well as the rest of the recordings do not have significant penultimate vowel lengths than can be associated with either of the two meanings. Therefore, this research finds that there are two reliable findings to disambiguate a grammatically negative utterance. An overall higher pitch indicates that a grammatically negative utterance has an ironic negative interpretation. It has also been noted that an ironic negative utterance tends to have a pitch pattern that starts with a low pitch followed by a high pitch. By contrast, an

utterance with a negative meaning tends to have a high pitch followed by a low pitch. These findings were consistent regardless of predicate type, tense, and mood.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This thesis has demonstrated that ironic negatives in isiXhosa is phenomenon in which negative morphology is used for pragmatic effect. Ironic negatives are used by speakers to emphasise the quality of a particular action or entity. While this phenomenon has not received considerable attention in the literature, this thesis has provided valuable insights to bridge this knowledge gap and act as a stepping-stone for future research. The findings show that, apart from the context in which ironic negatives are used, speakers can and do interpret the meanings of negative utterances based on the tense, aspect, mood, predicate type and tone with which they are uttered.

The significant TAM, predicate type and tone relevant for unambiguous ironic negatives are as follows:

- i. The mood of the negative construction needs to be indicative.
- ii. The tense needs to be in the present tense.
- iii. The negative construction needs to be in the imperfective aspect.
- iv. In addition to the imperfective aspect, there needs to be a presence of the perfective aspect.
- v. The type of predicate which undergoes all these TAM conjugations needs to be an adjectival predicate.
- vi. The pitch of the overall utterance must be higher than its negative counterpart and must follow a Low-High pattern.

One example of an ironic negative which frequently occurred on social media, except for the tone patterns which cannot be ascertained from written language since speakers do not usually make use of tone markings, fits this pattern of what marks an ironic negative: *akasemhle* (s/he is very beautiful). Notably, *akasemhle* is the same construction which was mentioned by Oosthuysen 2016 as being a relevant example of an ironic negative.

The research goals and questions set out in the introductory chapter were as follows:

- 1) What makes a grammatically negative construction unambiguously ironic negative?

- i. What role does tense, aspect, and mood play in the interpretation of negatives in isiXhosa?
 - ii. What role does the predicate type play in the interpretation of unambiguous ironic negatives?
- 2) What role, if any, does tone and penultimate lengthening play in interpreting ironic negatives in isiXhosa?

This thesis has satisfactorily reached these goals and answered these questions. The findings give insight into the TAM, predicate type, and phonological factors which govern an ironic negative interpretation in isiXhosa. What may more adequately answer these research questions is a much larger scale study which includes more participants and a larger set of questionnaires. However, for this thesis the participants and questionnaires were sufficient. A larger scale study would be recommended for future research.

Limitations of the study and future research.

Due to the spatial constraints of a master's thesis, a lot could not be looked into that could provide valuable insight into ironic negatives. As mentioned earlier on, compound predicates were not investigated. However, this is merely one aspect of negation that exists in this language. Plenty of other constructions take negative morphology, such as the associative copula and locatives. These might offer insights which could expand our knowledge of ironic negatives or even call into question the findings of this research. The hope is that in the not-too-distant future, more researchers will take up the mantle and fill in the various gaps in our knowledge of ironic negatives in isiXhosa and other Bantu languages.

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APPENDIX A

Sentences used in Questionnaire 1 along with their possible translations. Sentences are presented in the order in which they appeared in the questionnaire.

1. *Ebengazukusebenza*

S/he was not going to work / S/he was going to work a lot.

2. *Akazukusebenza*

S/he is not going to work / S/he is going to work a lot.

3. *Ebengelogwirha*

S/he was not a witch / S/he is such a witch.

4. *Ebengemdala*

S/he was not old / S/he was very old.

5. *Wayengemdalinga*

S/he was not old / S/he was very old.

6. *Akunzimanga*

It is not difficult / It is very difficult.

7. *Ebengasebenzi*

S/he was not working / S/he was working a lot.

8. *Ibingacaci*

It was not clear / It was very clear.

9. *Ibingemnyama*

It was not black / It was very black.

10. *Ibingazukucaca*

It was not going to be clear / It was going to be very clear.

11. *Zange wasebenza*

S/he never worked / S/he worked a lot.

12. *Zange yacaca*

It was never clear / It was very clear.

13. *Wayengasebenzanga*

S/he had not worked / S/he had worked a lot.

14. *Yayingacacanga*

It had not been clear / It had been very clear.

15. *Wayengasebenzi*

S/he had not worked / S/he has worked a lot

16. *Yayingacaci*

It had not been clear / It had been very clear.

17. *Wayengazukusebenza*

S/he was not going to work / S/he was going to work a lot.

18. *Yayingazukucaca*

It was not going to be clear / It was going to be very clear.

19. *Ayicaci*

It is not clear / It is very clear.

20. *Ayizukucaca*

It is not going to be clear / It is going to be very clear.

21. *Akayikusebenza*

S/he is not going to work / S/he is going to work a lot.

22. *Ayiyikucaca*

It is not going to be clear / It is going to be very clear.

23. *Uze ungasebenzi*

You must not work / You must work a lot.

24. *Wayengeloithe*

S/he was not a nuisance / S/he was a great nuisance.

25. *Mayingacaci*

It must not be clear / It must be very clear.

26. *Akalozithe*

S/he is not a nuisance / S/he is a great nuisance.

27. *Ebengeloithe*

S/he as not a nuisance / S/he was a great nuisance.

28. *Bekungenzimanga*

It was not difficult / It was very difficult.

29. *Ebengeloithe*

S/he was not a nuisance / S/he was a great nuisance.

30. Sukusebenza

Do not work / Work a lot

31. Bekungenzima

It was not difficult / It was very difficult.

32. Akakho mhle

S/he is not beautiful / S/he is very beautiful.

33. Akalogqwirha

S/he is not a witch / S/he is such a witch.

34. Akakho mdala

S/he is not old / S/he is very old.

35. Akemhle

S/he is not beautiful / S/he is very beautiful.

36. Akamdala

S/he is not old / S/he is very old.

37. Ebengekho mhle

S/he was not beautiful / S/he was very beautiful.

38. Kwakungenzimanga

It had not been difficult / It had been very difficult.

39. Ebengenmhlanga

S/he was not beautiful / S/he was very beautiful.

40. Ebengekho mdala

S/he was not old / S/he was very old.

41. Ayimnyamanga

It is not black / It is very black.

42. Ayicacanga

It is not clear / it is very clear.

43. Wayengekho mdala

S/he had not been old / S/he had been very old.

44. Akamhlanga

S/he is not beautiful / S/he very beautiful.

45. Wayengemhle

S/he had not been beautiful / S/he had been very beautiful.

46. Akunzima

It is not difficult / It is very difficult.

47. Ebengemdalanga

S/he had not been beautiful / S/he had been very beautiful.

48. Wayengekho mhle

S/he had not been beautiful / S/he had been very beautiful.

49. Ibingemnyamanga

It had been black / It had been very black.

50. Wayengemdala

S/he had not been old / S/he had been very old.

51. Wayengemhlanga

S/he had not been beautiful / S/he had been very beautiful.

52. Ayikho mnyama

It is not black / It is very black.

53. Akukho nzima

It is not difficult / It is very difficult.

54. Ayimnyama

It is not black / It is very black.

55. Wayengelogqwirha

S/he had not been a witch / S/he had been such a witch.

56. Ibingekho mnyama

It was not black / It was very black.

57. Akasebenzi

S/he is not working / S/he is working a lot.

58. Bekungekho nzima

It was not difficult / It was very difficult.

59. Ebengelothe

S/he was not a nuisance / S/he was such a nuisance.

60. Ebengasebenzanga

S/he had not worked / S/he had worked a lot.

61. Akamdalanga

S/he is not old / S/he is very old.

62. Ebengemhle

S/he was not beautiful / S/he was very beautiful.

63. Yayingekho mnyama

It was not black / It was very black.

64. Kwakungekho nzima

It had not been difficult / It had been very difficult.

65. Ibingacacanga

It was not clear / It was very clear.

66. Yayingemnyama

It had not been black / It had been very black.

67. Kwakungenzima

It had not been difficult / It had been very difficult.

68. Ayicace

It is not clear / It is very clear.

69. Yayingemnyamanga

It had not been black / It had been very black.

APPENDIX B

Sentences used in Questionnaire 2 along with their possible translations. Sentences are presented in the order in which they appeared in the questionnaire.

1. *Ayindakanga*
It is not dirty / It is very dirty.
2. *Ubungabalekanga*
You did not run / You ran a lot.
3. *Wayengasembi*
S/he was no longer ugly / S/he had been very ugly.
4. *Wawungasabalekanga*
You had no longer ran / You had run a lot.
5. *Awubaleki*
You are not running / You are running a lot.
6. *Ibingasemdaka*
It was no longer dirty / It was very dirty.
7. *Awubalekanga*
You did not run / You ran a lot.
8. *Akakho mbi*
S/he is not ugly / S/he is very ugly.
9. *Ebengembanga*
S/he was not ugly / S/he was very ugly.
10. *Yayingekho mdaka*
It had not been dirty / It had been very dirty.
11. *Ubungasabalekanga*
You did not run anymore / You ran a lot.
12. *Ibingemdakanga*
It was not dirty / It was very dirty.
13. *Wayengembanga*
S/he had not been ugly / S/he had been very ugly.
14. *Wawungasabaleki*

You had not been running anymore / You had been running a lot.

15. *Yayingasemdaka*

It had not been dirty anymore / It had been very dirty.

16. *Ebengelogwala*

S/he was not a coward / S/he was such a coward.

17. *Ebengasekho mbi*

S/he was not ugly anymore / S/he was very ugly.

18. *Akasekho mbi*

S/he is not ugly anymore / S/he is very ugly.

19. *Wayengasembanga*

S/he had not been ugly anymore / S/he had been very ugly.

20. *Akalogwala*

S/he is not a coward / S/he is such a coward.

21. *Wayengembi*

S/he had not been ugly / S/he had been very ugly.

22. *Akembanga*

S/he is not ugly / S/he is very ugly.

23. *Wawungazukubaleka*

You were not going to run / You were going to run a lot.

24. *Ebengekho mbi*

S/he was not ugly / S/he was very ugly.

25. *Yayingasekho mdaka*

It had not been dirty anymore / It had been very dirty.

26. *Wawungabalekanga*

You had not run / You had run a lot.

27. *Yayingemdaka*

It had not been dirty / It had been very dirty.

28. *Ebengasembi*

S/he was not ugly anymore / S/he was very ugly.

29. *Wayengasekho mbi*

S/he had not been ugly anymore / S/he had been very ugly.

30. *Ayikho mdaka*

It is not dirty / It is very dirty.

31. *Wawungabaleki*

You had not been running / You had been running a lot.

32. Ayimdaka

It is not dirty / It is very dirty.

33. Ebengasekho mbi

S/he was no longer ugly / S/he was very ugly.

34. Wayengelogwala

S/he had not been a coward / S/he had been such a coward.

35. Wayengekho mbi

S/he had not been ugly / S/he had been very ugly.

36. Ubungazukubaleka

You were not going to run / You were going to run a lot.

37. Ibingemdaka

It was not dirty / It was very dirty.

38. Ebengasembanga

S/he was no longer ugly / S/he was very ugly.

39. Awusabaleki

You are not running anymore / You are running a lot.

40. Wayengaselogwala

S/he had no longer been a coward / S/he had been such a coward.

41. Ubungasazukubaleka

You were not going to run anymore / You were going to run a lot.

42. Ebengekho mbi

S/he was not ugly / S/he was very ugly.

43. Ayisemdaka

It is no longer dirty / It is very dirty.

44. Ubungabaleki

You were not running / You were running a lot.

45. Akembi

S/he is not ugly / S/he is very ugly.

46. Ebengaselogwala

S/he was no longer a coward / S/he was such a coward.

47. Akaselogwala

S/he is no longer a coward / S/he is such a coward.

48. Ayisekho mdaka

It is no longer dirty / It is very dirty.

49. *Ibingasemdakanga*

It was no longer dirty / It is very dirty.

50. *Ayicace*

It is not clear / It is very clear.

51. *Yayingemdakanga*

It had not been dirty / It had been very dirty.

52. *Akasembanga*

S/he is no longer ugly / S/he is very ugly.

53. *Ebengembi*

S/he was not ugly / S/he is very ugly.

54. *Wawungasazukubaleka*

You were not going to work / You were going to work a lot.

55. *Akasembi*

S/he is no longer ugly / S/he is very ugly.

56. *Ayisecace*

It is no longer ugly / It is very ugly.

57. *Yayingasemdakanga*

It had no longer been dirty / It had been very dirty.

58. *Ayisemdakanga*

It is no longer dirty / It is very dirty.

59. *Ubungasabaleki*

You were no longer running / You were running a lot.

60. *Awusabalekanga*

You are no longer running / You are running a lot.



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22 August 2022

Onelisa SLATER

Email: g13M1656@campus.ru.ac.za

Review Reference: 2022-5338-6978

Dear Onelisa SLATER

Title: Ironic Negatives in isiXhosa

Researcher: Onelisa SLATER

Supervisor: Prof Ron Simango

This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee (RU-HREC). Your Approval number is: 2022-5338-6978

Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying you when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the ethical standards committee is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on the completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the ethical standards committee should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloguing number allocated.

Sincerely,

Dr Janet Hayward

Chair: Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee, RU-HREC

cc: Ethics Coordinator