

**The Promotion of IsiXhosa in Mainstream Media:  
A Case Study on The Strategies Used by Media Practitioners to  
Promote IsiXhosa**

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By

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work, and that all sources, references, and external contributions that have informed or contributed to the development of this thesis have been appropriately acknowledged in accordance with accepted academic referencing standards. I have not permitted anyone else to borrow, copy, or reproduce any part of this work. Furthermore, I declare that I have not submitted this work for any degree or qualification in any other institution.

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## Abstract

As diverse languages mark South Africa's linguistics, the dominance of English often marginalises indigenous languages, including isiXhosa. This dominance of English is the result of the colonial and apartheid legacies as English and Afrikaans were prioritised over indigenous languages in the media industry during these eras. This study highlights the critical role of media in language promotion. Through the use of qualitative case study approach, four media practitioners were interviewed. In this study, the necessity of including audiences in the interviews was observed. Thus, 10 participants were further interviewed from different backgrounds. The findings on employed strategies included bilingual programming, community-driven content creation, and the incorporation of traditional storytelling techniques that resonate with isiXhosa-speaking audiences. Furthermore, the research identifies partnerships with educational institutions and cultural organisations that aim to promote isiXhosa through workshops, documentaries, and social media campaigns.

The study also addresses challenges media practitioners face, including resource limitations, audience engagement, and the need for language training. This study further investigates the competition between isiXhosa and other indigenous languages such as isiZulu. Despite these obstacles, the commitment to promoting isiXhosa reflects a broader movement towards linguistic equity and recognising the cultural heritage embedded in indigenous languages. This study contributes to the discourse on media representation and the promotion of indigenous languages, offering practical recommendations for enhancing the role of mainstream media in promoting isiXhosa. Documenting encourages a more inclusive media landscape, honouring South Africa's rich linguistic diversity. The study also looked at the effect of the colonial and apartheid eras on indigenous languages, not neglecting the long dominance of English and Afrikaans in South African television.

**Key terms:** IsiXhosa, Indigenous Languages, Media Practitioner/Figures, Strategies, South Africa, Television.

## List of Abbreviations

**BBC** – British Broadcasting Corporation

**Broadcasting Authority Act (IBA)** – Independent Broadcasting Authority Act

**COVID-19** – Coronavirus Disease 2019

**DTT** – Digital Terrestrial Television

**GCIS** – Government Communication and Information System

**PanSALB** – Pan South African Language Board

**SABC** – South African Broadcasting Corporation

**UNESCO** – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**USA** – United States of America

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 A Brief Introduction to Media, Language, and Society

#### *The Role of Media in Society*

The media is crucial in influencing society (Croteau, 2014); this can happen in positive and negative ways. For instance, the media reflects and reinforces societal expectations in all classifications, whether in gender roles or social classes. Arias (2019) argues that the media disseminates new information that persuades the public to accept it while simultaneously informing audiences about what others learn, thereby enhancing coordination. This persuasion is usually done by repeating certain themes that gradually alter perceptions and attitudes. For instance, during the post-apartheid transition, South African media played a pivotal role in constructing new national identities and promoting democratic values. Zegeye and Harris (2003) argues that media in South Africa not only informs but also represents and shapes cultural and political identities, thereby influencing power dynamics and public opinions. This proves that media creates common knowledge that enables collective action. A practical illustration of symbolic power in South Africa is the portrayal of political leadership in mainstream newspapers. Nkomo (2016) found that media coverage of President Jacob Zuma often emphasised personal traits and leadership style, slightly guiding public expectations and evaluations of governance. Through repeated framing and editorial choices, media outlets exercised symbolic power by shaping what leadership should look like and who is deemed legitimate. This symbolic power of media not only influences perceptions of leadership and identity but also extends to language, where dominant narratives continue to marginalise indigenous tongues in favour of colonial languages like English and Afrikaans.

For many years, indigenous languages have remained in the edge of trade, media and education in South Africa. In the realm of commerce, particularly among corporations, indigenous languages

are rarely used, with English dominating as lingua franca. This dominance stems from the apartheid legacies, where English and Afrikaans were institutionalised as language of power. Consequently, the systemic exclusion of African languages from formal domains has led many to internalise a hierarchy of languages, where indigenous languages are perceived as inferior or unsuitable for professional and academic use (Radebe, 2022). In the South African context, English has not only been adopted as the primary medium of instruction but also as the gatekeeper to higher education and employment opportunities. Language criteria in universities often favour English, thereby disadvantaging students whose primary languages are indigenous. This linguistic gatekeeping perpetuates socio-economic inequalities and reinforces the marginalisation of African cultures and epistemologies. Alexander (2010) refers to this phenomenon as a “social pathology”, where African-language speakers, though proud of their mother tongues, do not envision these languages as viable tools for formal communication or intellectual engagement. Beckmann (2024) also argues that the emergence of English as the dominant language in education could lead to assimilation or even destruction of indigenous languages which he refers to as “cultural genocide”. The media, too, has played a significant role in cultural imperialism. Despite South Africa’s constitutional recognition of 12 official languages, media platforms continue to prioritise English and Afrikaans, often relegating indigenous languages to secondary status. This imbalance is evident in the underrepresentation of African languages in mainstream broadcasting and print media, which limits access to information and cultural expression for speakers of these languages. Radebe (2022) highlights how South African media, through its reliance on Western newswires and narratives, perpetuates global capitalist ideologies and diminishes local cultural agency. This media imperialism not only shapes public discourse but also reinforces hegemonic worldviews that marginalise indigenous perspectives.

### *The Role of Language in Media*

In the case of Southern African regions, the role of languages in the media has been used as a tool of communication and expressing views, and as a medium for promoting cultural identity and diversity in these multilingual nations. In countries like Zimbabwe, the media platform, such as a radio station, promotes indigenous languages. For instance, in the late 1990s, in Zimbabwe, English, Shona, and Ndebele dominated the Zimbabwean state-controlled public broadcasting with limited airtime for the minority languages (Mathe and Motsaathebe, 2024). This has only changed in radio when community radio licensing took place in 2021. However, these community radio

stations alone do not have enough power to cater to all indigenous languages and compete with the dominant ones (Mathe and Motsaathebe, 2024). Mano (2012) argues that broadcasting in indigenous languages defies communication barriers caused by linguistic diversity and promotes trust between the media and the locals. There has been a huge turn in South Africa, where podcast platforms have been used as the cornerstone of using indigenous languages that have been neglected and silenced by the mainstream media. These podcasts are seen as a ship that promotes indigenous languages that have been under-prioritized by the mainstream media, which is English dominated (Nkoala, 2024).

At first, podcasts were not characterised as mainstream media due to their cell phone popularity. Still, as for now, as they have set a benchmark for their quality and audience, they have now transformed into a mainstream phenomenon (Nkoala, 2024). By the same token, Nkoala (2024) argue that the flexibility of podcasts causes this shift as compared to traditional radio, where the audience is exposed to whatever content is taking place at that particular moment as the audience gets to pick what type of content they want, in what language, and what time. This could also mean that podcasts are the new challengers to traditional mainstream media. McGregor (2022) notes that podcasts are one of the best mediums that create a sense of connection and belonging between the host and the audience. Also, Nkoala (2024: 1947) states that “While podcasting is typically characterised by its on-demand nature, detached from specific times or places, this podcast demonstrates how indigenous language podcasts can leverage the affordances of radio to create a socio-culturally relevant experience.” This is so because, in South Africa, indigenous languages play a crucial role in promoting cultural identity and fostering social, as argued by Akanbi and Aladesanmi (2014).

The rise of podcasting as a flexible and accessible medium has opened new avenues for indigenous language promotion, with isiXhosa gaining a notable foothold in this digital space. Podcasts offer a unique platform for language promotion and revitalization by combining oral tradition with modern technology, allowing for both safeguarding and innovation in language use. Several isiXhosa podcasts have emerged in recent years, each contributing to the language’s visibility and vitality in distinct ways. One pioneering example is *Uhambo Lolwimi* (the journey of language), the first isiXhosa podcast produced by the school of Journalism and Media Studies in collaboration with the Department of African Languages at Rhodes University. This podcast provides a platform

for student storytellers to explore themes of identity, belonging, and multilingualism through isiXhosa narratives. By centering the language in academic and creative discourse, *Uhambo Lolwimi* not only affirms isiXhosa as a medium of intellectual engagement but also nurtures a new generation of language advocates (Uhambo Lolwimi, 2022).

Another significant contribution comes from the *Nal'ibali – isiXhosa Stories* podcast (Nal'ibali, n.d), which forms part of national reading-for-enjoyment campaign. With over 270 episodes, this podcast delivers children's stories in isiXhosa, aiming to cultivate early literacy and love for storytelling among young listeners. Its success demonstrates the potential podcasts to support language acquisition and cultural transmission in informal, family-friendly settings (TAQA Children's Audiobooks, 2024). Language learning is also a key focus in the podcasting space. *The Learn Xhosa Podcast – Free with Makhosi* offers English-to-isiXhosa lessons designed for beginners. Hosted by Craig Makhosi, the podcast combines instructional audio with cultural insights, making isiXhosa accessible to non-isiXhosa speakers. This initiative reflects a growing interest in isiXhosa as a language of both heritage and intercultural communication Makhosi (n.d). Collectively, these podcasts illustrate how isiXhosa is being reimagined and recontextualized in the digital age. They serve not only as tools for language learning and cultural education but also as spaces for linguistic pride and innovation. The emergence of isiXhosa in the podcasting fraternity underscores the medium's potential to democratize language access and foster inclusive, multilingual narratives in South Africa's evolving media landscape.

### *The Disadvantages of Media Society*

Some scholars have provided the drawbacks of the media in societies. Davis (2002) observes that the media considerably impacts society because it shapes public opinion, defines agendas, and controls which topics and issues receive more attention. This could mean free thinking and transparency are at stake due to the media agendas. Davis (2002) further claims that the media can shape societal views, behaviours, and attitudes by shaping how information is presented to the public or audience. This might take the shape of news reporting, entertainment content, and marketing messages or advertisements, which could all be heavily influenced by the language employed (Davis, 2002). One example could be the repetitive reporting or coverage of specific issues or content, leading the public to perceive it as more important than other issues. Saddiqi and Silab (2023) claim that the likelihood of negative behaviour in some societies is most likely

increased by what is portrayed on TV and the internet. Saddiqi and Silab (2023) claim that programs such as war serials and pornographic flicks are likely to inject violent behaviour into the viewers' mentality. Huesmann et al. (2003) attest that the reflected violence by children is most likely observed on TV and the internet. Anderson and Bushman (2002) argue that violent TV shows and video games greatly impact how children and adults behave in society. Furthermore, the media can create and reinforce stereotypes, influencing how individuals and groups are seen in societies. The media's impact can breed bias and discrimination, which can spread to the political and economic realms (Davis, 2002).

Media also holds the power to divide societies further into all classifications. For example, during the COVID-19 period in Australia, the Queensland government, in its January 2021 report, noted that "Two young women from African backgrounds travelled from Melbourne to Queensland, breaching COVID-19 restrictions. The media's response was to blame and publicly shame the women by publishing their names and photographs." This publication divided the Queensland community racially, resulting in negative views on the broader African community (Queensland government, 2021). These divisions amongst groups of people are sometimes caused by the negative reporting or publications by the media. Deuze (2007) argues on identity and uniformity, noting that the media is stripping away our distinctness as we participate in a global media culture. Deuza (2007) continues to note that with media and technology, people opt to be glued to their screens rather than interacting with people, resulting in a less productive society since human interaction is the foundation of a functioning society. Thompson (1995) attests that the lack of face-to-face interactions amongst humans produces a new kind of intimacy where there is a change in how individuals develop their identities, which is distinct from traditional face-to-face interactions.

Fasakin et al. (2017: 955) claims that, "An uninformed person is in darkness; so also an uninformed society." Therefore, a society most likely to access media is somehow informed. Also, this access to media can act as an enemy to society as it holds the power to expose the acts of the government to society. On the other hand, government officials are accused of using it as a weapon to attack one another (Fasakin et al., 2017). This implies that if government officials take jabs at one another using the media, this could result in a divided government, leading to a disorganised state that negatively affects the public in the long run. Furthermore, the media's negative coverage can result

in tension within groups of different races, ethnicities and/or nationalities. For example, Masuku and Nkala (2023) take note of South Africa's print media and how it often portrays foreigners as flawed individuals, which this representation impacts the attitudes of the locals towards the foreign individuals. As discussed earlier, the importance of language use in media and the effect it can have in a community, Masuku and Nkala (2023) also note how the language used by the South African media has the potential to trigger violence against foreign nationals.

The discussions above revealed that media and languages are inseparable. For instance, language plays a crucial role in shaping the portrayal of both positive and negative aspects of media. The use of language can influence how information is accepted by the audience, perceived, and interpreted. One way language contributes to portraying positive aspects of the media is through persuasive language (Fowler, 2013 and Van Dijk, 2009). By using positive and uplifting words, media outlets can create a sense of optimism and hope among their audience. For instance, Fowler (2013) makes an argument that in the news, the use of phrases like "breakthrough discovery" or "heartwarming story" can evoke positive emotions and shape the audience's perception of a particular news event. On the other hand, the use of negative adjectives such as 'undocumented' and "illegal" when discussing African foreigners gives the impression that all foreigners are undocumented, as discussed by Masuku and Nkala (2023). Masuku and Nkala (2023) continue to argue that even though metaphors are a way of writing and give a colourful sense to the story, the use of threatening metaphors such as "a vast number", massive influx", and "roaming free" triggers violence and sometimes resulting into xenophobic attack in the case of South Africa.

On the other hand, language can be used to highlight the negative aspects of the media. Fairclough (2003) argues that sensationalist language, exaggerations, and negative framing can lead to fearmongering and the perpetuation of stereotypes. Fowler (2013), on the other hand, states that headlines that typically use phrases such as 'epidemic' or "crisis" can create a sense of panic and anxiety among the audience. Furthermore, language plays a significant role in shaping the narrative surrounding controversial topics in the media. Fairclough (2003) argues that media outlets can easily influence public opinion and sway the audience's perception of a particular issue by carefully selecting words and phrasing. For instance, Fowler (2013) argued that when the news labels individuals as "illegal immigrants" as opposed to "undocumented immigrants", can have very different connotations and implications. This leads to the importance of language use in the

media, as it could positively or negatively impact how certain aspects are portrayed. Therefore, media practitioners need to be aware of linguistic strategies as that would create a more informed and inclusive audience with accurate information.

Language is the primary tool for individuals to express their thoughts, emotions, and experiences, facilitating connections and sharing knowledge and culture (Tomasello, 2010). Tomasello (2010) extends this argument by stating that through language, individuals can form communities, establish social relationships, and develop social identities. Just like media, language enables the transmission of societal norms, values, and traditions from one generation to the next, contributing to the cohesion and continuity of societies. For example, several studies have noted that language plays a pivotal role in the construction and preservation of societal structures and systems, creating a basic attitude of a partnership between societies, which marks humans out from other primates (Tomasello, 2010; Levinson and Holler, 2014; Schmid, 2012). Anderson (2006); Bouchard (2013); Chomsky (2006); Diamond (2023), and Prat (2019) have concluded that language is the top-tier form of communication compared to signs, pointing, and other gestures used to communicate, making language a vital tool in building and organising human societies. Furthermore, language communication allows for establishing governance, laws, and regulations, which are essential for structuring a functioning society. Economic activities, trade, and commerce are priorities for a well-functioning society, making language communication fundamentals.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Language in media plays a significant role in reflecting and shaping identity, culture, and societal norms. According to Ndhlovu (2015), media in multilingual societies like South Africa can influence language use and promote linguistic diversity. Additionally, Mesthrie (2002) highlights how using different languages in media can help bridge societal divisions and foster inclusivity. Furthermore, promoting indigenous languages in media can aid in promoting cultural heritage and social cohesion (Makalela, 2018). Malatji and Lesame (2019) shift their focus on the role of language and media in South Africa and carefully place it on the youth of Limpopo and social media. They argue that the Limpopo youth do not use their African mother tongue languages to communicate on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, but they prefer to use English. Malatji and Lesame (2019) found out that these youth only use their African indigenous languages when communicating with one another on platforms like WhatsApp. Malatji and

Lesame (2019) suspect that this is caused by the mere fact that the dominant indigenous languages of Limpopo (Sepedi, Xitsonga and Tshivenda) are not recognised as an option in the abovementioned social media platforms, and the dominance of English could be another factor. Thus, the relationship between language and media in South Africa is vital for promoting linguistic diversity, preserving heritage, and fostering unity in a nation with a complex history of language policies and practices.

To promote indigenous languages, Uysal (2015) proposes that the youth could use social media as a platform for mass communication with the world. Salawu (2006) also argues that speakers of indigenous languages possess the power to promote their languages, and they can do that by constantly speaking their languages on online platforms. Adegoju (2008) takes a jab at technological innovations and modernity, claiming that they have contributed to a lack of African indigenous languages' visibility in African conversations. However, the responsibility of promoting the African indigenous languages lies with the users of these languages and the African scholars as they could use and write about them and make practical use of them, as Adegoju (2008) argued. Mabika (2024) argues that social media users can manipulate the platforms to promote their languages by using modern elements such as hashtags (#), which is proven to be one of the quickest elements to spread the message on platforms like Twitter. Mabika (2024) also suggests that users could use code-mixing to promote their languages, taking one word at a time, which could spark interest in social media users of different languages and regions.

Given these insights and the fact that there are still languages that are not fairly or equally represented by the mainstream media (Aiseng, 2024), this study is interested in investigating the strategies some media practitioners use to promote isiXhosa in their respective media spaces. This highlights the disadvantage that the politics of the media might or do have on some languages and notes how language could be lost in the media fraternity due to lack of promotion and representation (Agyekum, 2010). On the other hand, after a long racial motivated division in the media (Kapatamoyo, 2007; Olivier, 2011; Moseki, 1988) due to apartheid policy, South Africa finds itself in an inimitable position under the rule of the democratic government with major adjustments to make. It has attempted to construct a new and favourable image in the mainstream media and attempts language inclusion. While there have been studies (Moran, 2009; Gilmour, 2006; Wasserman, 2020) that have focused on linguistic representation in South Africa's racialised

political economy and provided helpful insight into the country's history, they have largely studied one side, with a concentration on political spaces, with little attention devoted to media. This has opened major gaps in the body of knowledge, making this study worthwhile.

There has been a notable gap in research on the lack of focus on media practitioners' strategies in TV as compared to education. The argument above is the representation of that gap. Therefore, with all these recommendations, this study chooses to pay attention to the strategies used by media practitioners (strictly TV presenters, commentators and TV personalities) to keep isiXhosa in competition with the dominant languages. With recent studies such as Oyesomi, Onyenankeya and Onyenankeya (2020); Molale and Mpofu (2020), and Aiseng (2024), the focus of research in indigenous languages and media is hardly focused on the media practitioners as most of the studies turn to focus on the production of the content and neglecting the means and performance of the media practitioners in promoting indigenous languages. These studies turn to highlight a deeper academic understanding of the factors that play a role in limiting the visibility and growth of indigenous languages. There has been improving research in South African media landscape with regards to indigenous languages in media. However, the role played by the media practitioners has been concerning. Therefore, for long term strategies, this study sees it necessary to also identify and argue on the existing gaps within the research.

### 1.3 Research Aim

This study investigates and analyses how IsiXhosa has been promoted and kept alive on television. In South Africa, some media figures have contributed to language promotion in the media. For instance, Lerato Fekisi, who has been a news reporter with the SABC for over a decade, has played a role in promoting isiXhosa in television as she covered news worth stories of ordinary people in isiXhosa-speaking communities. She used her ability to communicate with the isiXhosa community and deliver fine isiXhosa prose in news reporting with a beautiful spoken language. Her extensive knowledge of the isiXhosa language, culture, customs, and traditions, and her appreciation for the country's linguistic and cultural diversity, enabled her to broadcast in both English and isiXhosa flawlessly. To look at another media practitioner, Masomelele Jucwa, became one of the viewers and listeners' favourite commentators in South African Rugby. He played a vital role in promoting isiXhosa on television as he and his team took social media by storm and went viral at the 2019 Rugby World Cup. Masomelele's passionate commentary in isiXhosa has

increased the number of isiXhosa viewers on SuperSport TV, as the isiXhosa commentary is now viewed and received even by non-isiXhosa speakers (TimesLive, 2019). Famously known for the phrase “*Selimathunzi dukuduku*”, Zizo Tshwete is one other media figure who promoted isiXhosa on national television, rising to one of the best isiXhosa presenters in the late 2000s, bringing confidence to other isiXhosa presenters.

## 1.4 Research Questions

There is an increase in research about indigenous languages in the media as more researchers (Aiseng, 2024; Motsaathebe, 2018; Mkhize, 2021; Tshabangu and Salawu, 2022; Madima et al., 2023) are showing interest in this field of study. However, more research is still needed because most studies (Makalela, 2018; Ligidima and Makananise, 2020; Motsaathebe, 2011) focused more on the education sector, giving reasonable but not enough attention to mainstream media. Also, Aiseng (2024) noted that within the realm of South African media, there is a significant gap in studies concerning the manner in which political and economic instruments are utilised to promote English and Afrikaans over South African indigenous languages. Therefore, the focus of the previously mentioned studies leads to the following questions as this study prioritises mainstream media and uses television as the main example.

1. How important is the promotion of South African indigenous languages by SABC and DSTV media practitioners in South African television?
2. What are the strategies used by SABC and DSTV media practitioners to promote isiXhosa in South African television?
3. What are the challenges related to language promotion in television?
4. How do viewers perceive the promotion of isiXhosa in South African television, and how does this impact their cultural identity?

## 1.5 Thesis Outline

Chapter One briefly overviews the relationship between media, language, and society. It considers the challenges between language and media. The chapter also explores the role of media in the community perception and the importance of language use in media. The study's background, objectives, and problem statement are outlined. This chapter considers the influence of the media

in society, looking at the benefits and detriments of the media. This chapter introduced the media figures and highlighted the importance of focusing on indigenous language promotion in South African media post-apartheid.

Chapter two provides the contextual background of the study while continuing to elaborate on the history of language inequality in South African media, which was used as a tool to dominate the indigenous people of South Africa further. The chapter explores the politics of media in language that leads to strong power dynamics. This chapter also focuses on the current dominance of other indigenous languages over others and explores and reviews the language policies amended by different broadcasting acts. Finally, this chapter reflects on various media language policies in South Africa to protect and promote indigenous languages.

Chapter three focuses on the literature review of this study. The literature review used in this study focused on the relationship between sociolinguistics, media and society. It also focuses on the previous research that has paid attention to multilingual broadcasting, considering both advantages and disadvantages, drawing from the likes of Kirkpatrick (2011); Krauss (2019); Yao (2015) and Smith (2017).

Chapter four contains the theoretical framework that underpins media, language, and identity. This chapter conveys how culture, identity, and language are intertwined, making promoting indigenous languages an important subject.

Chapter five focuses on research methodologies, detailing the study's approach in using qualitative and case study approaches. The chapter also details the process of research sampling, data collection, and data analysis using textual and contextual analysis. It also touches on challenges and limitations and how those challenges were mitigated.

This chapter synthesises the key findings of the study, offering analytical insights into the strategies employed by media practitioners to promote isiXhosa on South African television. It explores the challenges they face, including structural, institutional, and linguistic barriers. The chapter also presents a detailed textual and thematic analysis of media content, framed within the study's theoretical context, to illustrate how these strategies both reflect and resist dominant language ideologies.

Chapter seven is the conclusion that consists of key findings along with the strengths and limitations of the research. Lastly, this chapter provides the suggestions for future research.

## Chapter Two

# Language, Hegemony and Marginalisation in Media Spaces: A Contextual Background

### **Introduction**

Building on the previous chapter, which explored the multifaceted role of media in society, including its capacity to shape public discourse, influence cultural identity, and serve as a vehicle for language promotion. This chapter delves deeper into the historical and sociopolitical forces that have shaped the current linguistic landscape in South Africa. While the previous discussion highlighted the potential of platforms like podcasts to promote isiXhosa, it also acknowledged the systemic disadvantages that media can perpetuate, particularly in relation to language representation and access. In this chapter I provide necessary contextual background to understand these dynamics more fully. I begin by examining the legacy of colonialism and its enduring impact on indigenous languages, particularly the marginalisation and devaluation of isiXhosa in formal domains. I then explore the politics of language in South African media, unpacking how language hierarchies are maintained through policy and institutional practices. Thereafter, I address the persistent challenges of language dominance and the chronic underfunding of indigenous language initiatives. With these discussions, I intend to lay the groundwork for understanding the structural barriers that the media practitioners must navigate in their efforts to promote isiXhosa in media.

## 2.1 History of Colonialism and Its Effects on Indigenous Languages

### *Colonialism and Linguistic Imperialism*

Colonialism significantly impacted languages worldwide. In Asia, for example, colonial powers like the British, French, Dutch, and Portuguese imposed their languages on local populations, leading to linguistic shifts and the suppression of indigenous languages (Wei, 2017). This resulted in the marginalisation of indigenous languages and the erosion of cultural heritage. Colonial powers like Spain and also Portugal imposed the use of Spanish and Portuguese, respectively, in the Americas, driving out native languages and leading to a significant loss of linguistic diversity (Adelaar and Muysken, 2004). The diversity of languages and the survival of indigenous languages in the Americas are still impacted by colonialism. In Oceania, European colonial powers

established English and French as dominant languages, influencing local languages and leading to linguistic endangerment (Moseley, 2010). The extinction of indigenous languages in Oceania threatens cultural preservation and knowledge transmission between generations. Furthermore, the Ottoman Empire and other European countries' colonialism significantly impacted language policies and hierarchies in the Middle East, which in turn affected the status of indigenous languages (Shomali and Chaibakhsh, 2018). Language inequalities and difficulties in reviving languages have resulted from this. This could be interpreted as colonialism having an outstanding and long-lasting impact on languages around the world, resulting in the repression of indigenous languages, linguistic shifts, and difficulties in language promotion and revitalisation.

There has been scholarly evidence from Crawhall (1999); Jones (2022); Smith (2022), and Traill (2002) that this significant impact of colonialism also took place in African languages, such as the Khoisan language in South Africa, causing changes in linguistic structures, the decline of the usage of indigenous languages, and the establishment of Indo-European languages as dominant modes of communication. One of the most significant consequences of colonialism was linguistic imperialism, in which European languages such as English, French, and Portuguese were promoted over indigenous languages through education and government administration (Adegbija, 2004). This resulted in the marginalisation and stigmatisation of indigenous languages, causing a reduction in their use and preservation. For instance, the Akan language in Ghana represents a rich cultural heritage. Still, it is frequently overshadowed by English in Governmental and educational contexts, creating lasting socio-cultural hierarchies that prioritise Indo-European languages (Nkrumah, 2014). In the South African context, colonialism significantly marginalised indigenous languages, leaving or planting a seed of belief that indigenous languages are inferior (Mesthrie, 2020). Gxilishe (2021) argued that colonial and apartheid policies prioritised English and Afrikaans in education, further entrenching linguistics hierarchies. On the other hand, both Gxilishe (2021) and Jones (2022) argued that Khoisan and isiXhosa speakers faced social stigma, contributing to the erosion of cultural identity and heritage.

Colonialism and apartheid truly had a profound social impact on both isiXhosa and Khoisan cultures, leading to significant change in their social structures and identities in general. Mamdani (2018) argues that introducing European land ownership concepts undermined traditional systems. These new systems destroyed their livelihoods and disrupted the social structure and cultural

practices tied to their land (Mamdani, 2018). This resulted in the erosion of traditional practices and belief systems. Van Wyk (2016) contends that this led to a significant loss of culture for the Khoisan. Plemmons (2022) also notes that the Khoisan were often considered 'primitive' by colonial standards; therefore, they were further marginalised, resulting in a loss of respect and status within the broader social framework. Nkotsoe (2015), on the other hand, notes that isiXhosa faced pressure to conform to European norms, impacting their language and cultural expressions. Hofmeyr (2013) debates in this manner, stating that the stigma that was painted by the colonial era has sparked the emergence of resistance movements among the indigenous groups as they seek to reclaim their identities. This includes the promotion of indigenous languages and cultural practices.

Furthermore, colonial policies frequently disrupted traditional and language systems, which reduced the variety of languages in Africa (Mufwene, 2002). The adoption of Indo-European languages as official languages resulted in the marginalisation of indigenous languages, which were frequently spoken in formal and informal settings or among local communities. This had a long-term impact on African linguistic identities and cultural heritage. For instance, adopting Indo-European languages, particularly English has significantly influenced Nigeria's identity and cultural heritage. Nigeria, as a former British colony, inherited English as an official language, which has led to complex dynamics within its diverse sociolinguistic landscape. First, using English as a lingua franca facilitates communication across Nigeria's numerous ethnic groups, each with its own indigenous language. However, this has generated a sense of belonging across disparate groups, allowing for a shared means of communication (Adegbija, 2004). However, this has also led to the erosion of local languages and dialects, potentially diminishing the cultural identities tied to these languages (Bamgbose, 1991). In addition, English serves as a vehicle for global engagement. It allows Nigerians to partake in international discourse, thereby shaping contemporary Nigerian identity through globalisation (Pretorius, 2014). Due to this exposure, traditions are infused with Western values and lifestyles, hybridising cultural expressions (Sibani, 2018). Consequently, some traditional values may be compromised, leading to a generational divide concerning cultural pride and identity. Moreover, education in English is often linked to social status and economic mobility. Proficiency in English is seen as a thus reinforcing its importance in shaping individual identities (Ramcharan, 2009). This phenomenon may marginalise speakers of indigenous languages, further altering the cultural landscape.

## *The Linguistic Marginalisation of Indigenous Communities and Its Consequences*

Colonialism contributed to the erosion of indigenous knowledge systems encoded in African languages. Bamgbose (1991) states that this was done by suspending local languages and introducing foreign educational frameworks. This process often marginalised local languages and the knowledge encoded within them. Williams (1999) and wa Thiong'o (2023) note that traditional healing practices were compromised to prioritise European science and values, effectively diminishing the status of traditional healing and oral histories carried down from generation to generation linguistically. African societies relied heavily on oral traditions for knowledge transmission, and language suppression led to poor storytelling and proverbs and other forms used to convey cultural knowledge (Ikuenobe, 2018). This shift from oral to written communication resulted in some loss of historical knowledge. Zeleza (2006) also confirmed that this shift contributed to the poor skills and knowledge related to medicine and agriculture. This disruption created a generational gap where the new generation became disconnected from their cultural heritage. Legal frameworks imposed during colonisation further marginalised indigenous societies by undermining their land rights and indigenous ways of resource management, which were deeply interwoven in cultural identities and knowledge systems, as highlighted by Mamdani (2018).

The influence of colonialism and globalisation has affected other regions and the African continent, losing indigenous languages as some African regions mostly speak French and Portuguese as their first official languages. Even after the independence in most countries, Indo-European languages still dominate, and indigenous languages are losing the battle (Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir, 2001). Benrabah (2014) asserts that indigenous languages in certain African regions have succumbed to competition from four languages recognised as "world" languages. These are Arabic, Chinese, English, and French. To explore even further that the media and indigenous language have been an issue, one other study by Jeremiah (2015) in Botswana has noted that in Botswana, political power lies in the ethnic groups that are designated as the majority, known as the eight principal tribes (Bangwato, Bakgatla, Bagwaketse, Bakgatla, Balete, Batlokwa, Batawana and Bakwena). These groups dominate the national assembly of Botswana. Therefore, this leads to the use of language in media being highly influenced by ethnic belonging, as most groups are more present in the media than other ethnic groups (Bagwasi, 2019).

These linguistic setups result from coloniality because language was used as the most important vehicle to divide and conquer within nations. According to Torquato (2020), coloniality refers to multiple and unequal power relations of race, ethnicity, sexuality, economy, and gender. Torquato (2020: 462) states, "Having a language means having a worldview, a set of values, a way of seeing the world and ourselves and others." This means that one's culture and identity are built around language. When one's language is lost or undervalued, that could become a huge challenge to self-identification. Torquato (2020) continues to make a specific point, arguing that adopting Indo-European languages in various parts of the world has confronted and raised concerns about one's culture. To conquer societies and raise doubts inside communities, languages were utilised in processes of domination and exploitation due to the interconnectedness and mutual construction of language, economy, and the social reality generated by a colonial economy, argued Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel (2007). These linguistic setups were brought into action to assert colonial domination and continue dividing groups within societies. Bourdieu (1991) argues that the language setup or language coloniality was meant to eliminate knowledge and power within non-European societies. Bourdieu (1991) states that the frameworks encourage the deconstruction of power, fostering inequality within societies. Foucault (2005) once argued that the language setup could dismantle the existing power structure and knowledge by challenging dominant narratives by introducing new languages.

With isiXhosa being the case, the language is rooted in a long history of colonial and apartheid era policies. isiXhosa was one of the languages that were excluded from the domains as the language was seen to be inferior (Diko, 2023). Both in education and media, isiXhosa was similarly sidelined, this was part of the bigger strategy to restrict the language and limit its speakers. This has contributed to language shift, especially among the youth (SAHO, 2025). The language is often associated with rurality and lower socio-economic status, while English is linked to intelligence, professionalism, and global relevance. This sociolinguistic stigma, a legacy of colonial and apartheid ideologies, discourages the use of isiXhosa in formal and aspirational contexts, even among native speakers (Diko, 2023). Moreover, the exclusion of isiXhosa from key economic and technological domains, such as digital platforms, scientific discourse, and higher education, further entrenches its marginalisation. The lack of investment in isiXhosa-language publishing, broadcasting, and digital content limits its visibility and functionality in contemporary society (Diko, 2023).

Furthermore, Fanon (2023), argues that language is not merely a tool of communication but a carrier of cultural and psychological domination, the colonised subject internalises the coloniser's language as a means of social mobility, often at the cost of self-alienation and cultural erasure. This dynamic is evident in South Africa, where English remains the primary medium in education, commerce, and governance, marginalising indigenous African languages despite their official recognition. Bhabha (2012) offers a counterpoint by framing language as a site of negotiation and resistance. Through mimicry and contradiction, Bhabha suggests that the colonised can undermine dominant linguistic structures by creating hybrid forms of expression that challenge colonial authority. In South Africa, this is exemplified by the emergence of urban vernaculars like Tsotsitaal, which blend English, Afrikaans, and African languages, reflecting both adaptation and resistance. However, as Ntombela (2024) notes, the hegemony of English continues to undermine efforts to elevate African languages, with globalisation and entrenched Western knowledges reinforcing linguistic inequality. Thus, while Fanon (2023) exposes the psychological cost of linguistic domination, Bhabha (2012) illuminates the creative potential within linguistic hybridity, both of which are crucial to understanding the complexities of language politics in post-apartheid South Africa.

## 2.2 Politics of Language in Media

Language and media play a vital role in shaping public discourse. Androutsopoulos (2010) mentions that when media advertises, they commonly use the regional dialect to authenticate the product's origin by blending or tying the local language to the product, which makes the locals feel valued, and their views could be changed. Androutsopoulos (2010) continues to argue and uses World War II as an example, stating that standard and non-standard dialects in film and theatre indicate social classes and influence how social groups feel and talk about one another. Political and social issues could be framed with these language choices in the media. Thornborrow (2005) contends that media is a powerful site for producing and maintaining discourses, and that lies in using correct grammatical forms. On the other hand, Valentini et al. (2016) suggest that using correct grammatical forms in online interactions allows the public to express and form their opinions through sharing and discussing local media content and by interpreting their personal experiences. Dahlgren (2005) also supported this claim, stating that online communicative engagement can serve as a means to form collective identities, particularly when participants in

the discourse share the same ideals. This could mean that the words used by individuals, or the media could be taken as other forms to construct identities or to form groups. Also, these communicated discourses could lead to power dynamics or power struggles among groups.

Language ideologies are deeply intertwined with analysing how minority languages are treated, which reveals the power dynamics that emerge in everyday language practices (Cavanaugh, 2020), for instance, the effect of Anglicisation in minority languages. According to Fishman (2012), Anglicisation is the process through which English increasingly influences or replaces local languages. Fishman (2012) argues that this phenomenon often leads to a language shift, where speakers of minority languages slowly abandon their languages for English. This societal change is driven by the “so-called” social, economic and educational advantages of a better life (Fishman, 2012). Baker (2011) contends that English is a lingua franca that facilitates access to broader communication and opportunities in many African regions and indigenous communities in North America. However, it simultaneously undermines the vitality of minority languages, which affects the pass-down of cultural knowledge and linguistic diversity. Maffi (2005) also attests to this point, stating that Anglicisation can result in the loss of cultural identity and heritage since language is the main tool for expressing cultural values. Furthermore, Crystal (2002) stated that the dominance of English in media could result in a standardised global culture that overshadows rich linguistic diversity, endangering many indigenous languages. While Anglicisation can provide opportunities, it also poses significant challenges to cultural and linguistic diversity in media, leading to unequal language presentations due to the politics of language in media.

The politics of language in media can have several negative consequences, including stereotype perpetuation, power dynamics reinforcement, and public opinion manipulation. Biassed or laden language can impact public opinion and influence social and political discourse. For example, Van Dijk (2015) discovered that media language might promote negative preconceptions and marginalise specific communities. Furthermore, using language to frame issues specifically can affect public opinion and shape political discussions (Entman, 1993). These hazards underline the significance of properly examining the language used in media and the potential impact on society. For instance, in South Africa, the language politics in media is complex and reflects the country’s historical and cultural diversity. Language has long been a sensitive and contentious issue in the country. Nkosi (2016) argues that employing particular languages in media can be interpreted as

maintaining linguistic inequality and sustaining power relations. It has been said that other languages and cultures, especially indigenous languages, are marginalised by the two languages that predominate in mainstream media: English and isiZulu. This has been a source for many South Africans who felt their languages were not adequately represented in the media (Nkosi, 2016 and Aiseng, 2022). Furthermore, some scholars contend that using English in media is essential for effective communication and access to a broader audience, both nationally and internationally. Now, this debate highlights the tensions between promoting indigenous languages and promoting effective communication in multilingual societies. Brown (2019) contends that in addressing these challenges, an investment in political will and support from the media will be required to promote multilingual broadcasting.

### 2.3 Issues of Language Dominance

The dominance of a single language in media within multilingual societies significantly impacts the representation of various linguistic and cultural groups. This phenomenon can cause a huge imbalance in public discourse. Conteh and Meier (2014) argue that when one language prevails in media outlets, it often becomes which information is disseminated, leading to a lack of representation for those who speak different languages, and in most cases, those people would be of a native language in that society. Baker (2011) argues that underrepresenting specific languages and groups in media promotes false impressions, suggesting that other groups and languages are inferior to those overly represented in media. Furthermore, Heller (2007) claims that the dominance of one language in media can lead to linguistic hierarchy, putting pressure on the speakers of different languages to the point that individuals prioritise the dominant language in both personal and communal contexts with means of wanting to fit in or being accepted. Piller (2001) once argued that the consequences of linguistic dominance extend beyond individual experiences because they shape and influence political and economic power dynamics within communities. This means that the dominance of one language in media within communities is not only individual representation but also the broader implications of diversity.

Furthermore, Piller (2016) claims that one language dominance can result in a lack of access to information for non-dominant language speakers in Africa, creating barriers that affect education, healthcare, and social participation. In many African countries like Kenya, colonial languages like English dominate official discourse and media, resulting in the sidelining of indigenous languages

(Piller, 2016). Baker (1998) assert that this linguistic hierarchy may result in the absence of crucial information in local languages, rendering speakers of non-dominant languages vulnerable. For example, students lacking proficiency in the dominant language face difficulties comprehending curricula presented in that language, leading to subpar performance. Johannessen (2019) debated the unfairness of government policies that prioritise dominant languages for public information, neglecting the linguistic needs of the marginalised languages. Now, this could lead to speakers of non-dominant languages being uninformed about the available and not available services, including their rights. Deumert and Masinyana (2008) looks at the digital side, noting that digital content is predominantly available in dominant languages, limiting access to the internet and informational resources for speakers of marginalised languages.

With the dominance of European languages in education and government, many indigenous languages lost their role as carriers of cultural knowledge and traditions (Brock-Utne, 2002). This disrupted the intergenerational transmission of cultural practices and weakened the social structure of African societies. For instance, the slow extinction of Khoi and San languages in South Africa significantly impacts the transmission of unique knowledge systems essential to these cultures. Language serves as a medium for identity, traditional knowledge, and cultural legacy. The rich fabric of oral histories, cultural practices, and ecological knowledge ingrained in Khoi and San languages is gradually disappearing along with them (Mesthrie, 2002). The loss of these languages hinders the intergenerational transfer of indigenous knowledge about local ecosystems, medicinal plants, and sustainable living practices that have been honed over thousands of years (Wenzel, 2018). Moreover, the decline of these languages affects the social structures of San communities. Language for cultural cohesion and community solidarity, its erosion leads to fragmentation and marginalisation. The new generation growing up without a connection to their linguistic heritage may struggle to engage with traditional customs and worldviews, resulting in a loss of identity and belonging (Oomen, 2019). In addition, the disappearance of Khoi and San languages diminishes South Africa's cultural diversity. Linguistic diversity enriches societies by fostering creativity and innovation through various perspectives (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013). As a result, the slow death of these languages weakened the San people and South African society in general.

The influence of colonialism on the language system has also caused some languages to be dominant over others and be viewed as superior, leading to the influence of language in politics

and socioeconomic differences within societies (Aiseng, 2024). For example, South Africa has 12 official languages, with South African sign language recently added. Statistics South Africa (Stats SA, 2023) has noted that most households in South Africa speak indigenous languages, with isiZulu being the most spoken (24.4%) and isiXhosa being the second most spoken (14.7%). However, English is still the most widely spoken language in business, education, and government (Wildsmith-Cromarty, Reilly and Kamdem, 2023). South African indigenous languages are dominantly spoken in public spaces in relation to the dominant ethnic group of that area. However, Ngcobo and Mvuyana (2022) have noted that in KwaZulu-Natal, a Zulu-dominated area, where the municipal officials prefer to communicate in isiZulu in meetings and written documents, English finds itself competing highly with isiZulu. Mkhize and Balfour (2017) also attest to this point, noting that it is in the curriculum of most institutions of higher learning where linguistic diversity is still undermined. This might be the case because the country's linguistic diversity is shaped by the history of colonialism, apartheid, and globalisation (Mesthrie and Bhatt, 2008). As Khokhlova (2015) also noted, the penetration and entrenchment of previous colonial languages resulted in the absence of an indigenous national language of communication, creating or opening a space for English to be the official communication medium for administration, education, trade, and diplomacy.

According to Fairclough (2013), language is not neutral but rather a site of struggle where power dynamics are at play. Before diving deep into the power dynamics and the power struggle, it is worth noting the linguistic landscape in the media. For instance, the media landscape does not reflect the country's linguistic diversity. According to Statistics SA (2023), there is overall, 24.4% of people speak isiZulu in their homes, and 16.3% of the population speak isiXhosa in their homes, while there is only 8.7% of people speak English at their homes. Collectively, more than 80% of the population speaks South African indigenous languages in their homes. Statistics SA (2023) shows that most South Africans are multilingual, and English is the language of instruction in South Africa. Nonetheless, TV's excessive use of English highlights the imbalance of language visibility in South African media. According to Aiseng (2024), South Africa, a multilingual nation with a past stained by Apartheid, has successfully transitioned both linguistically and culturally from the system of apartheid media. However, it is still concerning that South African television only uses English for subtitles, giving the false impression that English is the language spoken and

understood by all South Africans. Therefore, this calls for studies related to language and media to look at the power dynamics embedded in language and language usage.

These power dynamics embedded in language and language use in the media result from language ideologies. Aiseng (2024: 1) describes language ideologies as “a concept that refers to the set of beliefs and attitudes that people have about a language and its use in their social world.” These beliefs shape a societal attitude towards one’s language, whether inside or outside society. These beliefs and attitudes go as far as influencing the use of language in media (by use, I mean the amount of time a language gets). For instance, Hlophe (2014) and Teer-Tomaselli (2015) have argued with a specific example of the SABC stating that some indigenous languages still seem to be under-represented, and their time on television has thus far been allocated in a way that has left them disadvantaged. Within the indigenous languages, Aiseng (2024) has noted that isiZulu is the most dominant indigenous language in South African television compared to other South African indigenous languages. The unequal representation of languages in media shows that some citizens are not fairly catered for linguistically and culturally compared to others. Aiseng (2024) argued that in a multilingual nation, media organisations should try to balance language use for different audiences, which could be challenging. Therefore, the media should consider the local audience preferences and profiles (Aiseng, 2024).

However, Ajani et al. (2024) note that since 2010, there has been a significant change in the understanding of language dynamics in multilingual communities, emphasising in the case of Southern Africa that digital media has been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to safeguard and promote cultural diversity. There has been an increasing research focus on the impact of globalisation on technology and language use, focusing on digital communication platforms that facilitate language promotion (Ajani et al. 2024). In this sense, Nasution (2022) has argued that the role of social media has been the medium for minority languages, claiming that lately, social media has been the main platform providing space for people to share their languages. The argument above is supported by Mkhize and Balfour (2017), who state that since the post-colonial context, there has been a growing recognition of language rights, which resulted in policies that aimed at supporting multilingualism in government spaces. This argument could be seen as a highlight that multilingualism is slowly seen as an asset instead of a challenge. However, the battle between dominant and marginalised languages remains critical because the more local or

indigenous languages are overshadowed, the more their usage will gradually decline (Kamwangamalu, 2019).

## 2.4 Public Media History in South Africa and Current Situation

It is a matter of importance to look at the history of broadcasting in South Africa, as that would help us understand how language was used as a weapon of oppression in media, leading to the marginalisation of indigenous languages. This section will first look at the arrival of radio in South Africa and exclude newspapers since the study focuses on broadcasting media. The arrival of radio in South Africa had significant implications for the politics of language. The introduction of radio broadcasting in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century shifted the country's use and promotion of languages. English and Afrikaans were the official languages at the time. Therefore, they were the only languages used for broadcasting (Mpofu, 1996). The colonial and apartheid governments used radio as a tool to promote and impose the use of certain languages, particularly English and Afrikaans, while marginalising indigenous languages (Aiseng, 2024). The politics of language on radio also reflected the power dynamics and racial hierarchies in South Africa. Teer-Tomaselli (2017) contends that, in the 1940s, many media institutions, especially SABC, were the key vehicle in promoting the Afrikaans autonomy ahead of the 1948 elections. Using English and Afrikaans was a means of asserting dominance and control over the linguistic landscape, reinforcing the marginalisation of indigenous languages and cultures (Mesthrie, 2002).

However, the arrival of radio also sparked resistance and activism around language rights, with various groups advocating for the recognition and promotion of indigenous languages on the airwaves (Makoni and Pennycook, 2007). Particularly during the apartheid era and beyond, radio stations have served as catalysts for language rights, enabling communities to engage in important dialogues that affect their daily lives and promote their linguistic heritage (Chikaipa and Gunde, 2021). Odine (2013) argues that people of indigenous languages told their stories and promoted their culture in different ways on the airwaves, making music as one of the examples where singers like Brenda Fassie and groups such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo were some of the most successful artists to promote their cultures and tell their stories in indigenous languages. Also, it could be argued that radio fostered real-time conversations during and post-apartheid era in South Africa. For instance, Mkontwana and Sundani (2023) argue that engagements in indigenous languages were and still are important as they create a space for social cohesion. Nkoala et al.

(2024) state that in the 1950s, people under colonial rule used radio as a weapon to rebel against the colonial governments and radio enthusiasts started their own underground stations in counties like Zambia in which these stations were part of independence seeking.

Consequently, the apartheid government launched nine radio stations in the period between 1960 and 1983 to cater to the indigenous communities. However, Jeffrey (1993) and Lekgoathi (2017) observed that this introduction of broadcasting in indigenous languages was not meant to serve the indigenous communities in the country except to push the government's propaganda by assigning all Africans to different ethnic groups, dividing them even further. Using language as a tool of dominance and oppression did not end on the radio. However, it continued with the introduction of television in South Africa. TV was not operating in the country until 1976, and this was due to the government's proactive sanctions on technology, which made television unavailable for a long time (Scharnick-Udemans, 2017). Aiseng (2024) also adds that one of the government's reasons for allowing television in the country was that it was worried about its usefulness to the state. Regarding television, there used to be simply one channel (TV1) that carried programming in Afrikaans and English for five hours at a time (Teer-Tomaselli, 2004). Only in 1982 was there an introduction of the second channel, (TV2), which broadcasted in isiZulu and isiXhosa, and (TV3), broadcasting in Sesotho and Sepedi (Teer-Tomaselli, 2004). However, they were not on the same level as English and Afrikaans. Aiseng (2022) noted that English and Afrikaans had more extensive broadcasting hours as compared to isiZulu and isiXhosa. This was done to promote the ideology of the Apartheid regime, which was to promote Indo-European languages while neglecting indigenous languages.

For six years after the introduction of television in South Africa, African indigenous languages were not used in broadcasting as they only emerged on TV in 1982 with the introduction of TV2. Kapatamoyo (2007) notes that historically, broadcasting in South Africa was not organised culturally or technologically to provide a shared communication space but to reproduce conceptions of separate and distinct groups with their cultures. This would account for or constitute macro language planning rather than micro language planning, sanctioned by the government, rather than micro language planning, conducted by nongovernment groups and organisations (Ngcobo, 2009). This type of structure in broadcasting had a negative impact on media, society, and cultural identity. For instance, Fishman (2012) states that when broadcasting is not tailored to

diverse cultural contexts, it may marginalise minority voices. This can intensify the language shift, and minority speakers may feel disconnected from the media since it does not reflect their cultural realities (Crystal, 2002). Moreover, without sufficient technological organisation access, broadcasting can be uneven, reinforcing existing inequalities in information dissemination. Maffi (2005) argued that disadvantaged communities that lack adequate technological infrastructure would be left behind in concerning dialogues, leaving them unable to participate in societal matters. Therefore, broadcasting that is not culturally organised can contribute to the erosion of linguistic and cultural diversity. That has taken place over the years in South Africa due to the apartheid policies that prioritised the apartheid agenda over the needs and representations of black South Africans.

### *Post-Apartheid Language Policy and The Persistent Dominance of English in Media*

Apartheid policies of disproportionate investment in infrastructure and services for different racial groups resulted in technological backwardness in particular places. For example, rural areas were particularly underserved, and television was primarily an urban communication source. Kapatamoyo (2007) emphasises that due to the lack of available medium or short-wave spectrum space, the SABC, for instance, could not convert its <sup>1</sup>*Bantu* Service into an open circuits status that covered the entire country when it began broadcasting to black South Africans. Instead, the corporation only served an area adjacent to Johannesburg. Beyond the unavailability of technological infrastructure in drawback communities, even after the apartheid government, there was or is still poor language communication for less privileged, less educated and indigenous communities practised by the media. For example, Madiba (2023) argues about the government's language policy during democracy, stating that these policies have not effectively promoted using indigenous languages in media, leading to a continued preference for English use. This is to prove that, thus, while South Africa's linguistic landscape is rich and diverse, English remains dominant in the media sphere.

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<sup>1</sup> In the South African context, the term "Bantu" originated from the Bantu language family, which is a group of languages spoken in Africa. The term was first used by European linguists and Anthropologists to describe the languages and cultures of the people who speak these languages.

South Africa's post-apartheid era is marked by the creation of legislation aimed at redressing historical injustices that persisted in the country before apartheid ended in 1994. These include the creation of the South African Constitution and several policies, such as the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act (IBA) of 1993, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA), which aimed to turn the telecommunication sectors, SABC monopolistic and state broadcaster into a public service broadcaster (Aiseng, 2024). These policies are tailored to the needs of different societal segments. Moreover, some organisations have been established, such as the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), under which the Constitution promotes the growth, preservation, and use of African languages that were previously marginalised (Aiseng, 2022). According to the language policy of the government communication and information system (2016), the purpose of GCIS is to follow the legislative and constitutional requirements. It also aims to foster multilingualism in order to provide effective and efficient communication between the government and the public, in line with the Act's and the Constitution's purposes. Furthermore, the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) is one of the organisations that were signed into the law of the BELA Bill as a progressive step to promote the use of all South African languages.

In the post-apartheid era, it could have been expected that all languages would be treated equally. However, under the rule of the democratic government, English was chosen to be the lingua franca of Broadcasting in government-owned broadcasting corporations (Kapatamoyo, 2007). This is proof that the legacy of apartheid still takes on a threatening shape to this day. During this period, English was established as a lingua franca among diverse ethnic groups, fostering its use across various media platforms (Ndlovu, 2020). Also, as mentioned by Mokgoro (2021), globalisation greatly impacted the use of English globally, making it a valuable language for commerce, international trade and communication. Pillay (2022) contends that as a result, English-language media outlets are more likely to attract larger audiences and advertising revenue, which boosts its dominance. Furthermore, the emergence of digital media has amplified English's reach. For instance, Ngcobo (2023) testifies that many online platforms prioritise the use of English as compared to the use of indigenous languages, increasing the consumption of English content by younger audiences. However, new developing studies argue that indigenous languages such as

Zulu and isiXhosa are challenging this dominance (Aiseng, 2024; Mkula, 2018; Sathekge, 2022; and Ricento, 2007).

English has dominated South African media due to colonial legacies and the global influence of Western culture. However, scholars such as Mahlangu (2019), Mkhize (2021), and Aiseng (2024) have indicated that indigenous languages are increasingly being used on media platforms such as television, radio and print. For instance, Pillay (2020) argues that this shift is partly driven by a desire for a broader audience, highlighting a commitment to inclusivity in media representation since the South African media was largely dominated by English, marginalising indigenous languages. Moreover, Mahlangu (2019) asserts that the South African government has recognised the importance of promoting indigenous languages through policies promoting multilingualism in media. Therefore, these policies support and encourage media houses to challenge the dominance of English and produce content that resonates with the diverse South African linguistics. Mkhize (2021) contends that this changing landscape allows for a more equitable representation of South Africa's multicultural identity since indigenous languages also provide critical access to information for communities that were previously excluded from the mainstream media narrative. Furthermore, Dube (2022) emphasises the pressure injected by social media content creators, which ends up on mainstream media. Dube (2022) states that social media platforms create spaces for indigenous languages to thrive and challenge English dominance through their presence of indigenous content, which sometimes ends up on television and radio.

### *Broadcasting and the Battle for Linguistic Equity in South Africa*

Although some languages challenge the dominance of English, the domination is not equal, as some are more prominent than others. Aiseng (2024) noted that the three SABC channels were culturally and linguistically organised. Aiseng (2024) noted that SABC 1 mainly broadcasts in Nguni languages, isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiSwati, and isiNdebele, while SABC 2 broadcasts in Sesotho, Sepedi, Xitsonga, Setswana Afrikaans and SABC 3 broadcasts in English. This proves that all indigenous languages enjoy some time on the TV screens. However, isiZulu dominates these indigenous languages as discussed in section 2.3. For instance, Statistics SA (2021) and Aiseng (2024) noted that isiZulu dominates South African television, which could be attributed to factors such as demographic trends and cultural significance. Furthermore, Pillay (2018) argues that historical factors reinforce the prominence of isiZulu since the language is deeply rooted in

the heritage of its nation, which is known for its storytelling that has been popularised through television soap operas such as “*Uzalo*” and “*Generations: The Legacy*”. These shows attract viewership and set trends that further enrich the isiZulu status. As I have taken SABC as an example, Aiseng (2024) contends that the legal frameworks bind SABC to reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of South Africa. Aiseng (2024: 130) adds, "On paper, the SABC has an excellent plan to give South African indigenous languages spaces in its programming. However, reality points a bleak picture for minority languages."

As far as this study is not about the SABC, it is worth noting its role in South African media as a public broadcaster. Fourie (2007) argues that the historical development of media and broadcasting in South Africa is also largely the history of the SABC, simply because the SABC monopolised the media at its beginning. This now also complements the argument made by Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli (1994), who noted that the SABC's programming style also complemented the government's ideals during the apartheid era, when black South Africans were not acknowledged as SABC viewers and were thus excluded, which could highlight that media and broadcasting were used as tools to include and exclude. Aiseng (2024) asserts this argument in reference to Tomaselli (2006), stating that the SABC television under the apartheid government portrayed a picture that defined South Africa as a white person, while black South Africans were classified based on their ethnicity. Therefore, when the democratic government came into power, the structural organisation of SABC had to change. For instance, Teer-Tomaselli (2004) argued that the SABC undertook an extensive restructuring exercise in preparation for the 1994 democratic elections. It aspired to turn the SABC from an apartheid propaganda tool to a fully-fledged public broadcaster. Teer-Tomaselli (2004) continues to state that language in broadcasting policy would play an important role in this shift, just as the former SABC's language policy (before 1993) had contributed to delivering broadcasting services following the lines of the apartheid regime.

All these aspects signal the significance of language promotion in South African media. Language promotion occurs in different ways. For example, libraries are one way to promote languages as Olaifa (2014: 230) states that “The library plays a key role in a human’s ability to record his thoughts, experience, history, culture, and heritage in his language and to make it available to others.” Other than libraries, there are other forms to promote a language. One other way could be digital technologies. For instance, Wyburn (2018) has noted that with the media presence in Wales,

the Welsh language that was in survival conditions in the late 80s to late 90s found its way back to the community through the use of digital technologies. In another study, De Bres (2015) notes the effect of colonialism on New Zealand minority languages like the *Te reo Maori*, which was nearly replaced completely by English as an official language. Broadcasting in the *Maori* language on radio stations and television helped the language to survive.

For several reasons, language promotion is the most necessary tool to protect indigenous languages in societies. Firstly, promoting indigenous languages helps to promote cultural heritage and identity, as language is the key element of a community's unique traditions and knowledge systems (UNESCO, 2003). Secondly, language promotion can contribute to the overall well-being of indigenous communities by fostering a sense of pride and belonging, which in turn can lead to mental and emotional health (Reyhner, 1997). Also, promoting indigenous languages can support efforts to revitalise and maintain traditional ecological knowledge, which is crucial for sustainable resource management and environmental conservation (Berkes, 2017). Therefore, losing languages can harm linguistic and cultural diversity and lead to the loss of important historical and cultural information (Riza, 2008). With all the negative impacts of language loss comes the importance of language promotion, especially in South African television, as it could be used as a tool to promote languages.

Media is one of the methods used to promote language, cultures, and identities. Since the media is an essential vehicle for communication and information distribution (Paul and Rai, 2021), it is crucial to promote language, given that language is also a way that people identify with a particular cultural group (Olaifa, 2014). Salawu (2017) claims that language plays a vital role in the media for information, mobilisation, and continuity, that is, the survival of the language and culture. Therefore, how languages are used in the media can be a powerful tool of control and a way to enhance the participation of some members of society while limiting that of others (Chibita, 2006). For instance, Romaine (2007), on the matter of language, power, and society, argues that typically, powerful groups in a society can impose their language on those with less authority, drawing the British as one of her examples that the British child does not have to learn Panjabi or Welsh, but both these groups are expected to learn English. Therefore, the media provides a platform for language promotion by capturing and documenting different languages and their linguistic characteristics (Aiseng, 2022). For instance, minority or endangered languages may not gain

attention in government spaces but can find a voice in radio shows, television broadcasts, newspapers, and social media (Pietikäinen, 2008). Furthermore, the media can help raise awareness and expose people to different languages, for instance, by using new technologies that could help capture sounds and document languages (Villa, 2002). Through these mediums, audiences can learn about the world's diversity. Simultaneously, the media can promote and educate communities about endangered languages, and in that manner, the dominance of one language over the other could be eliminated.

In South Africa, language promotion in the media is essential for maintaining linguistic diversity, advancing intercultural understanding, and creating social cohesion (Isaacs, 2012). It promotes equality and democracy by facilitating accessibility and inclusivity (Mncube and Makalela, 2018). Furthermore, multilingual media boosts economic growth by promoting multilingualism and attracting various viewers (Deumert, 2010). This is another point that this study looks forward to exploring. On the other hand, national pride and identity are fostered by combating the dominance of historical languages (Kamwangamalu, 2003). This method helps create a more consistent and peaceful community by recognising and celebrating South Africa's linguistic variety. Beyond that, it also counteracts the historical dominance of particular languages and promotes a sense of pride and identity nationwide.

## 2.5 Language Promotion in Post-1994 South African Media

In South Africa, language promotion could refer to efforts to promote the country's indigenous languages after being under-represented in politics and professional and governmental institutions (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). Kamwangamalu (2001) states that language promotion is crucial in South Africa, which has a complex language history in which English and Afrikaans were the dominant languages during the colonial and apartheid eras. Language promotion involves a multiple number of strategies. For instance, Banda (2005), Kamwangamalu (2019) and Mkhize and Ndimande-Hlongwa (2014) emphasise that language planning, language education and language use in public domains such as education, media, and government spaces are some of the most relevant ways to promote South African indigenous language. With the implementation of these strategies, Makalela (2018) argue that the goal of creating a more linguistically diverse and inclusive society where all languages are valued and equally represented could be achieved. Alexander (2004) argued that archiving a society where all languages are

equally represented and valued in real-time is challenging, as language promotion is closely tied to social justice and economic empowerment. For this to be achieved, Heugh (2003) and Van Rooy and Coetzee-Van Rooy (2015) state that there needs to be a collaboration between the government and civil society.

Van Rooy and Coetzee-Van Rooy (2015) argue that currently, the media is the best tool that could be used to promote languages. Banda (2005) emphasises the point of media, stating that with language-specific programs such as news broadcasts, educational programs and drama series, diverse language communities could be catered for. For example, the South African public broadcaster SABC (2019) introduced initiatives like “Use Your Language”, another huge step in promoting the use of indigenous languages. Pillay (2016) asserts that such programmes and campaigns elevate the status of indigenous languages and represent marginalised language groups in mainstream media. In media, every community that has access to media platforms stands a fair chance to represent its language as media platforms have launched language learning programs that promote language education (Kamwangamalu, 2001). However, with all these efforts, challenges persist. For example, Banda (2005) claimed that media outlets continued to prioritise English during post-apartheid. Makalela (2018) also argued that after so many years, indigenous languages are marginalised because they are only relegated to specific time slots or programs. The above argument proves that as South Africa navigates its complex and diverse linguistic landscape, media seems to be the most vital arena to promote the multilingual agenda.

As this study seeks to investigate the strategies media practitioners use to promote isiXhosa in media focusing on South African television, the language policy development in the post-apartheid is worth noting. In this discussion, SABC will again be used as the primary example since it is a public broadcaster. First, I will unpack the role played by the country’s Constitution in promoting and protecting indigenous languages, followed by the role played by PanSALB, and further discuss the challenges and language dominance issues. I will further explore the funding issues to clarify the challenges of insufficient budget and lack of prioritisation. Heugh (2003) highlights that the adoption of a multilingualism policy in democratic South Africa was quickly faced with pessimism as it was seen as an impractical framework.

## *Constitutional and Legal Frameworks*

According to Chapter 1, Section 6 (1) of South Africa's Constitution, "the official languages of the Republic are isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati, isiNdebele, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Afrikaans, English Tshivenda and Xitsonga" (RSA Constitution, 1996) (sign language has been added as an official language). Furthermore, according to Madiba (2005), section 6 (2) requires the government to take practical steps to ensure that these languages (including minority languages) are promoted equally. The Constitution stipulates that "recognising the historically diminished use and status of our people's indigenous languages, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages" (RSA Constitution, 1996). Section 9 guarantees equality and prohibits discrimination, including language-based discrimination (RSA Constitution, 1996). There are legal frameworks that go along with the constitutional provisions. For example, the legal framework of language policy and plan is one in which the Department of Arts and Culture has developed a policy and plan to promote the use of indigenous languages (Department of Arts and Culture, 2014). The Constitution also provides the "Use of Official Languages Act, 2012" Act No. 12 of 2012, which advocates for using indigenous languages in government. The constitution and legal frameworks promote linguistic diversity and continue to face challenges such as limited resources and inadequate infrastructure (Banda, 2005).

## *The Role of PanSALB in Language Promotion*

Following the announcement of 11 official languages, in both the temporary constitution of 1993 and the signed constitution of 1996, in terms of Section 182 of the Constitution, an act of parliament (Act No. 59 of 1999) created the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) (Mabasa and Ngcobo, 2024). Section 182 of the Constitution states that the PanSALB must promote official languages, including the Khoi, Nama, and San languages. Madiba (2005) further argues on this point, stating that the constitution has several institutions, such as PanSALB, that intend to promote the development and use of official languages, respect for the rights of cultural, religious, and linguistic communities, and promote and develop peace, friendship, humanity, tolerance, and national unity among cultural, religious, and linguistic communities. One of the PanSALB's functions is advising the government on language policy and using indigenous languages in public services (Kamwangamalu, 2016). Heugh (2003) highlight that adopting a multilingual policy was quickly faced with pessimism as it was seen as an impractical framework.

Furthermore, the PanSALB supports initiatives that encourage the use of these official languages in print, digital media, and broadcast settings (Hlengwa-Selepe, 2024). Despite all these policies, challenges remain regarding funding for indigenous languages to ensure their growth and sustainability in the media environment (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2020). (The funding aspect will be further discussed under the “funding and implementation challenges” section).

### *SABC’s Role and Editorial Policies*

Various media language policies in South Africa protect and promote indigenous languages. These media language policies reflect the country’s commitment to linguistic diversity through its constitution. This legal framework is fundamental for fostering an inclusive media landscape where multiple languages can thrive (ÁFRICA, 1996). One significant policy is the language policy framework for South African Higher Education (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2020), which encourages institutions within their media and communication outputs. This framework aims to enhance the visibility and accessibility of indigenous languages in academia and beyond by working with the SABC to provide programming in all official languages, ensuring that diverse linguistic communities can access public broadcasting services (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2020). The SABC has aligned its language policy with the Language Policy for Higher Education, which emphasises the promotion of indigenous languages and linguistic diversity (SABC, 2017). Mda (2021) argues that the SABC is committed to producing content that fosters a sense of identity among speakers. Aiseng (2021) argued that the objective of the SABC Editorial Policies is to guide the SABC in carrying out its public duty. The policies govern national and international audiences' access to content and services.

### *SABC Editorial Policies on Shaping the Media Environment*

“The Editorial Code affirms commitment to the principle of editorial independence as it relates to SABC content. It enjoins the employees of the public broadcasting service to:”

- “be mindful of the danger of furthering discrimination, and avoid promoting discrimination through the SABC’s content offerings on the grounds of gender, race, language, culture, political persuasion, class, sexual orientation, religious belief, marital status, or disability”
- “be free from obligation to any interest group and to prioritise its public interest obligation”

- “provide opportunities for open dialogue with audiences across all SABC’s broadcasting and publishing platforms”
- “tell stories from a South African perspective and deal with issues that are important to the public, including local, continental and global matters, and giving these proper context reflecting all complexities”

(SABC editorial policies, 2020: 4-5).

The above commitments underscore the SABC’s role in shaping a media environment that respects diversity and promotes open dialogue despite its financial and operational challenges in sustaining indigenous language programming.

As amended, the Broadcasting Act of 1999 intends to ensure that the South African broadcasting system is legally positioned to strengthen democracy by prioritising the public interest over all others and contributing to societal improvement. Its objectives include ensuring all South Africans access diverse broadcasting services (South African Government, 2019). These policies specify that the SABC is expected to produce programming in all of South Africa's official languages. For example, the Broadcasting Act 4 of 1999 (2002) states that “The Corporation must encourage the development of South African expression by providing, in South African official languages, a wide range of programming that- (a) reflects South African attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity; (b) displays South African talent in education and entertainment programmes; (c) offers a plurality of views and a variety of news, information and analysis from a South African point of view; (d) advances the national and public interest.” Its new developments aim to regulate licensing and control of broadcasting services.

#### *Political Influence and Resource Constraints in Language Policy Implementation*

PanSALB are designed to promote inclusivity, transparency, and cultural representation. SABC’s policies emphasize promoting diversity and responsible reflect South Africa’s multicultural society. However, criticisms highlight issues such as political influence and censorship, which undermine their effectiveness in fostering impartiality (Qhobosheane, 2018). Similarly, PanSALB’s policies focus on preserving indigenous languages and fostering national unity through cultural representation (PanSALB, 2021). While these goals are commendable limited resources often hinder their impact. For instance, its capacity to fully realize its linguistic and

cultural objectives (Samson, 2018). Both organisations' policies are effective to that extent as they set clear objectives, however, their success heavily depends on consistent enforcement, adequate funding, and genuine commitment from leadership. Without addressing political interference and resource limitations, these policies risk remaining aspirational rather than and social contexts.

SABC's policies have been criticised for political interference, financial mismanagement, and failure to meet public service mandates (Tomaselli, 2020). The corporation struggles with editorial independence, often accused of favouring government narratives (Wasserman, 2020). Additionally, financial instability has led to poor content quality and limited local production, undermining its public service role (Duncan, 2021). Critics argue that PanSALB lacks sufficient funding and enforcement power, resulting in English and Afrikaans dominating public and media spaces (Kamwendo, 2016). Furthermore, its efforts to develop marginalised languages remain inadequate (Webb, 2018). Both the SABC and PanSALB face challenges in policy execution. The SABC's struggles with independence and financial sustainability weaken its public mandate, while PanSALB's lack of enforcement mechanisms limits its impact on language equity. Strengthening governance, funding, and accountability is essential for both institutions to fulfil their mandates effectively.

### *Funding and Implementation Challenges*

However, despite available language policies in the media, there is still an apparent language domination, where some languages are used more often than others. There is an emergence of research that demonstrates that IsiZulu is emerging as the dominant language in South African television (Aiseng, 2022). Aiseng (2021) notes that this dominance of one indigenous language over others is due to the failure of language policy and implementation. On the other hand, Blommaert (1999) argues that using some languages more than others in the media is related to broader political, social, and historical factors among societies and groups. Diko (2023) attests to this point, noting that several factors contribute to the maintenance and promotion of indigenous languages in South Africa, naming historical marginalisation and language oppression as the key factors. These factors have contributed to the lack of resources such as funding and minimal attention paid to these languages in the post-apartheid era, and inadequate education is another delaying component for language promotion in South Africa (Diko, 2023). Sathekge (2022) touches on the matter of attraction, stating that producing content in 11 official languages is

expensive and resource-extensive, which makes broadcasters focus on balancing between promoting multilingualism and attracting and generating income since English is a language of broad communication and frequently has higher economic appeal.

The country's public broadcaster (SABC) has long struggled with financial sustainability. It is heavily reliant on advertising revenue, which is unpredictable and insufficient to meet its public service obligations. The failure of the TV licence model due to poor compliance and outdated enforcement mechanisms has exacerbated the crisis (The Conversation, 2024). Also, in late 2024, the government withdrew the proposed SABC Bill, which aimed to modernise the broadcaster's funding model. The bill was criticized for potentially undermining editorial independence. Its withdrawal has delayed much-needed reforms, leaving the SABC in a risky position (The Conversation, 2024). On the other hand, there is a limited government support, for instance, despite its mandate to serve the public interest, the SABC receives minimal direct government funding. This lack of support obstructs its ability to produce quality local content, maintain infrastructure, and compete with private and international broadcasters (The Conversation, 2024). According to the 2024 State of the Broadcasting Industry Report, television revenue is split among advertising, licence fees, and subscriptions. However, advertising remains the dominant source, making broadcasters vulnerable to economic downturns and shifts in advertiser priorities. Also, South Africa's transition from analogue to digital terrestrial television (DTT) has been repeatedly delayed, this has hindered the expansion of broadcasting services, limited spectrum efficiency, and delayed the rollout of new channels and services (National Association of Broadcasters, 2024). The National Empowerment Fund (n.d) debates the lack of support for independent producers noting that, while initiatives like the National Empowerment Fund's Film & TV Fund aim to support black-owned production companies, access to funding remains limited and competitive. Many independent producers struggle to secure financing for local content development.

The structural and financial challenges facing South African television not only affect the production and dissemination of content but also have deeper implications for cultural representation and communication. These systemic issues influence which voices are amplified or marginalized, shaping public discourse and identity. To fully understand the broader impact of these broadcasting dynamics, it is essential to explore how language operates within society. This

leads us to the field of sociolinguistics, which examines the intricate relationship between language and social structures.

## Chapter Three

# Sociolinguistics, Media, Language, and Identity: A Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Having explored the contextual background, by examining the legacy of colonialism and its impact on indigenous languages, this chapter explores the theoretical foundations that inform its approach. This chapter outlines the key bodies of literature and conceptual frameworks that shaped the development of the research question and guided the analysis. By situating the study within relevant academic discourses, this chapter provides a critical lens through which the role of media in indigenous language promotion, specifically isiXhosa, can be understood. This study draws primarily from three intersecting areas of scholarship: sociolinguistics in society, sociolinguistics in media, and indigenous language promotion. Each of these domains offers valuable insights into how language functions within broader social, political, and cultural contexts.

The first section engages with sociolinguistic theories that examine the relationship between language and society. This includes discussions on language ideologies, language shift, and linguistic inequality, which are crucial for understanding how isiXhosa has been historically marginalised and how language attitudes are shaped by power dynamics and social structures. The second section focuses on sociolinguistics in media, exploring how language is represented, negotiated, and contested in various media forms. This includes literature on media discourse, language choice in broadcasting, and the role of digital platforms in shaping linguistic identities. These perspectives are particularly relevant in analysing how podcasts and other emerging media are being used to reframe isiXhosa as a language of relevance and modernity. The final section reviews literature on indigenous language promotion. This body of work highlights both the challenges and opportunities involved in promoting indigenous languages in postcolonial contexts, and it provides a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of media-based language promotion strategies.

These theoretical perspectives form the foundation of the study's analytical approach. They not only inform the research design but also help to contextualise the findings within broader debates

about language, identity, and media in contemporary South Africa. By drawing from these intersecting fields, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how media can serve as a tool for linguistic empowerment and cultural affirmation.

### 3.1 Sociolinguistics

#### *Sociolinguistics in Society*

Sociolinguistics studies the relationship between language and society, focusing on how language use varies according to social factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, and age (Aiseng, 2024). Aiseng (2024) expands on this definition, stating that sociolinguistics examines how language is used in different social contexts and how it reflects and shapes social structures and relationships. Scholars of sociolinguistics are interested in language variation and change, language attitudes and ideologies, and language policy and planning, meaning they are interested in how, where, and when we speak these languages (Aiseng, 2024). Henceforth, sociolinguistics considers language as a structure rather than a collection of items. This could mean that sociolinguistics helps reveal how power relations are created through language (Aiseng, 2024). Furthermore, other scholars (Blommaert, 2010; Tagg and Seargeant, 2014; Pavlenko, 2019) have explored topics such as the impact of media on language use, the role of language in constructing and negotiating identity in multicultural societies, with further investigation on the influence of globalisation on language diversity and language contact. The research described above has helped clarify how language reflects and changes social dynamics, leading to a greater understanding of the complex relationship between language and society.

Sociolinguistics works in various ways within the community, for instance, through studying language change and variation. Researchers investigate how language use varies over time within a society and how social factors influence those changes. For example, Labov (2013) discovered that using non-standard linguistic elements in African American English is frequently connected with solidarity and group identity. Another component of sociolinguistics in a community is the investigation of language attitudes and ideologies. Researchers examine how speakers perceive various linguistic elements and how these perceptions affect social interactions. For example, Preston (2017) found that speakers in a rural town in the United States have negative sentiments towards non-local accents, which leads to social discrimination. Furthermore, sociolinguistics in a society includes examining language policy and planning. Researchers look at how language

policies influence language use in society and how they represent social structures. For example, Gal (2018) investigated how language planning in Catalonia has contributed to preserving Catalan as a minority language in the region. This shows that studying sociolinguistics can illuminate the complex relationship between language and society. For instance, the study of Gxilishe (2019) has shown that the contact of colonial languages and immigrant languages with South African indigenous languages has caused language shift and language conflict amongst communities.

On the other hand, sociolinguistics also plays a crucial role in the media. For example, it analyses and works on understanding the language used in the media. Since the media is a powerful tool for broadcasting information, then sociolinguistics helps us to disclose how language is used in media to construct and convey meaning in the relevant context or the context of the time. Linguists analyse how different social groups use language in the media, paying special attention to factors such as age, gender, social class, and race or ethnicity. For instance, Smith (2018) has discovered that young people often use distinct language styles in online media platforms such as social media, which reflects their unique cultural identities. Furthermore, sociolinguistics in the media also examines language attitudes and ideologies. Linguists investigate how audiences perceive language choices in the media and how they reflect the broader societal norms and values. For example, Jones (2017) demonstrated that certain dialects or accents may be stigmatised in the media, leading to stereotypes and marginalisation of certain groups. Moreover, sociolinguistics in the media looks into language policy and representation (Aiseng, 2024). Linguists further explore how language policies impact the linguistic landscape of media and influence the visibility of different language varieties. To boot, Aiseng (2024) contends that language and media are interdependent processes. Brown (2019) highlights that sociolinguistics highlights the need for inclusive and equitable language practices in the media.

Romaine (2000) asserts that sociologists have often approached society as if it could exist outside of language. Romaine (2000) argues even further, stating that the existence of a social group that claims a language variety as its own and promotes and safeguards its uniqueness from the variants spoken by its neighbours is essential to the very existence of languages. This raises the importance of language in media and language in the external society, which leads to the importance of investigating the strategies used by the earlier-mentioned media practitioners in promoting isiXhosa in South African television. This part of the investigation will lead to conclusions about

the relationships between language, society, and television. For instance, other scholars like Barker (2008) argue that these three dynamic relationships are complex as they influence one another. For instance, television, a powerful communication medium, plays a significant role in reflecting on and influencing societal language. It has the ability to disseminate language patterns and expressions, which then impact societal language evolution.

### *Sociolinguistics in Media*

As the study of sociolinguistics is known to interpret the relationship between language and society, it also profoundly influences how messages are constructed and interpreted in the media. Its application in media is diverse, influencing areas such as news reporting, entertainment and advertising (Nani, 2024). Das (2011) once argued that one critical aspect that sociolinguistics should look at is the representation or portrayal of social groups, arguing that the media usually generate and perpetuate stereotypes, utilising unique dialects and accents to portray a specific group, which sometimes results in negative views about that group or social class. Coats and Moe (2023) substantiate this argument, noting that news outlets usually use formal and standard language when reporting political elites and apply slang or colloquial language when reporting youth culture. Further, Fairclough (1995) touched on this subject, arguing that this tendency contributes to the construction of social dynamics and further divides power. This means that the choice of language can implicitly or explicitly indicate social position, educational attainment, or regional association, influencing listener perceptions.

Furthermore, sociolinguists monitor how media use code-switching and code-mixing in multilingual societies. For instance, in multilingual countries, advertising might blend two or more languages, such as English and another indigenous language, to create cultural relevance (Li, 2018; Kozlova, 2020; Luna and Peracchio, 2005). This implies that media or content producers seek to adapt designs that attract a specific demographic. Still, on cultural relevance, Ranking Articles (2023) writes that when slang or different languages are used in content creation, they act as a bridge that connects diverse audiences as this audience turns to feel a kinship with the creator. To engage more with the audience, the content creators break down language barriers by employing trending words and slang for a specific targeted audience on a larger scale (Ranking Articles, 2023). However, cultural sensitivity is important as there could be connotations of words in different societies and cause misunderstanding of the information or message that was meant to be

passed on. Crystal (2004) states that the media, especially popular culture, greatly influences the spread of linguistic innovations, as it frequently introduces new words and grammatical structures. Sociolinguistics offers methodologies for the critical examination of media discourse. This includes examining terminology, grammar, and rhetorical methods to expose hidden ideologies and societal prejudices. Using sociolinguistic concepts allows for a more thorough understanding of the complex link between language, society, and in the media landscape (Aiseng, 2024).

### *Sociolinguistics to Indigenous Language Promotion*

Sociolinguistics is crucial in promoting indigenous languages as it picks and highlights the social factors that influence language use in societies. For instance, Coulmas (2013) explains how social factors like power and identity influence language use, which could lead to promotion or demotion of that language. This makes sociolinguistics an essential study tool to understand why some languages are more valued or prioritised than others. Sociolinguists can identify the societal factors that lead to the gradual decline of indigenous languages by examining language shifts, including the predominance of national language in institutions and media. Odekunle et al. (2023) and Gomashie (2023) agree that when speakers of a language perceive their language as inferior or less valuable, they are less likely to use it, leading to its demotion and eventually leading to its extinction. Tricknick and May (2021) reveal that sociolinguistics is lately used to revitalise information on indigenous languages as linguists emphasise the importance of community involvement and ownership of their local languages. As Fishman (1991) argued before, sociolinguists play an important role in language and community because they help the community identify the key domains, such as community events and education, and link them to their kinship.

Kipp (2000) saw linguists as nothing but recorders. Kipp argued that linguists are just concerned about recording and teaching the language without concern about maintaining and revitalising the language. On the other hand, Baldwin (2021) argues that sociolinguists help us to understand that successful language promotion and revitalisation depends on the social context in which language exists. This could imply that sociolinguistics highlights the importance of linguistic diversity and indigenous languages. Sociolinguistics provide us with evidence-based arguments as it refers to language policy and planning, advocating for indigenous inclusion and non-dominance of specific languages (Aiseng, 2024). This evidence-based argument means that sociolinguists can challenge the poor representation of other languages, help eliminate stereotypes and promote the undermined

languages such as isiXhosa as it documents indigenous languages' social and cultural significance. Bernauer (2023) refers to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2018, Apr 16), which argued that language serves not merely as a medium of communication but is frequently associated with the territory historically inhabited by indigenous populations. It is a crucial element of collective and individual identity, fostering a sense of belonging and community. The extinction of a language undermines that sense of community. This makes sociolinguists a vehicle to highlight these factors, which will help to promote indigenous languages and isiXhosa being one of those languages.

### 3.2 Multilingual Broadcasting

Multilingual broadcasting plays a crucial role in promoting isiXhosa in South African television mainly because the country's diverse linguistic landscape is addressed by multilingual broadcasting. Since South Africa is a country of 12 official languages, all these languages are acknowledged through multilingual broadcasting, creating space for isiXhosa. The use of African indigenous languages within media is a way to empower languages that were marginalised during the apartheid time media, as those languages include isiXhosa. By including isiXhosa in television, the broadcasters could reach a wider audience that primarily speaks isiXhosa. Therefore, this type of broadcasting increases exposure and visibility and opens chances to create content in different languages. Tirasawasdichai et al. (2022) contend on a different point, arguing that television effectively communicates cultural values and traditions, including the language of that culture, like the isiXhosa language. Therefore, multilingual broadcasting allows the distribution of isiXhosa cultural content, which includes traditional storytelling and music, which helps to maintain the isiXhosa heritage.

#### *Definition and Models of Multilingual Broadcast*

Du Plessis (2006) defines the concept of multilingual broadcasting as a system that caters primarily to the official languages, whether the language of minorities or the languages of the majority. Du Plessis (2006: 47) argues even further that “nevertheless, although the broadcasting system as a whole may be described as multilingual, the individual broadcasting services still broadcast predominantly in one language...” This challenge may be linked to the political economy of the media. Consequently, this study will examine how isiXhosa media practitioners try to promote multilingual broadcasting in South African television. In some regions, particularly in countries

with multiple official languages like South Africa, Belgium and Zimbabwe, broadcasters adopt a segmented model where different language programs air on different or different channels (Dogan, 2017). In addition, some regions like England, the United States of America, and South Africa have revolutionized multilingual broadcasting, enabling users to select preferred languages for streaming content, as seen on services like Netflix, Amazon Prime and DSTv SuperSport (Krauss, 2019). Ghosh et al. (2010) mention another model or method that broadcasters and content producers have adopted, referred to as multimodal input, where video, audio and a handful of keywords are combined as compared to a full translation or transcription. This model is practised to attract agencies and businesses that stream multiple news pieces simultaneously.

### *Strategies for Multilingual Broadcasting*

Kirkpatrick (2011) asserts that one effective strategy for multilingual broadcasting is the use of simultaneous interpretation, as it allows live translation of broadcasts in multiple languages. This technique is widely utilised in international forums and conferences (Kirkpatrick, 2011). Another efficient approach involves creating multilingual content that can be distributed via different media channels, one example of which could be the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) (BBC News, 2017). This is where Olivier's (2011) argument fits in as Olivier emphasises that to enable subtitling, which is much less expensive and should play a significant role in local productions, especially news and reality programs, an equitable distribution of funds for dubbing should be made, taking into account the demographic factor. Ultimately, this will make it easier for the general public to access and participate in South African affairs programs. Eleven out of twelve official languages (excluding South African sign language) will then continue to be equally dubbed and subtitled in children's programming in order to promote communication, the growth of native tongues, and language learning. In that way, every language could be fairly represented.

### *Challenges and Limitations of Multilingual Broadcasting*

The above discussion argued in favour of multilingual broadcasting. However, some scholars have highlighted the disadvantages of multilingual broadcasting. Therefore, these disadvantages shall not be neglected and will be discussed below for a fair and unbiased argument. These disadvantages impact both the broadcasters and the audience. For example, Yao (2015) and Knoll (2016) both discuss that one of the major challenges of multilingual broadcasting is the cost involved in producing content in multiple languages. Yao (2015) further argues that broadcasting

in multiple languages included expenses such as hiring translators, interpreters, and sometimes voice actors and requiring specialised equipment for dubbing or subtitling. Furthermore, Smith (2017) states that there may be issues related to the accuracy and quality of translation. Smith (2017) mentions that different languages have unique nuances and cultural references that may not always translate accurately, leading to misunderstandings or misinterpretations by the audience. Therefore, this implies that message clarity and effectiveness could be lost through translation and interpretation. On one end, Brown (2019) argues that multilingual broadcasting may face regulatory hurdles in licensing, compliance with language policies, and censorship restrictions in different countries, making it difficult to navigate the legal landscape.

The arguments made above are relevant to the study as they suggest the actions that could be taken to increase visibility in language promotion, as Ger (2022) advocates for different languages to air at different times and inherit almost a similar amount of time. Krauss (2019) revealed that countries like South Africa and England and South Africa have adopted an option to select their preferred language to stream programs, which raises the question of whether it would be less created isiXhosa content or access to such platforms why English is still the most dominant language in South African television.

### 3.3 Indigenous Language Media

The ever-changing face of media demands that media houses and broadcasters deploy and set new techniques that will serve effective and efficient communication. These techniques are affected or decided by the constantly changing environment of politics, economy, and culture, affecting indigenous language media. indigenous language media refers to content produced in and for indigenous communities using their own languages (Salawu, 2006). These media channels, like Radio Khwezi, serve as a platform for promoting indigenous languages, cultures, and traditions. indigenous language media typically prioritise storytelling, sharing traditional knowledge, and community empowerment (Aiseng, 2024; Tshabangu and Salawu (2022). For instance, “In partnership with SABC Education, [\*Nal’ibali\*](#) has recently launched a children’s radio programme on SABC public radio stations. Airing children’s stories in all South African official languages (except for sign language) three times a week”. Rodriguez (2019) also emphasises this point, stating that indigenous is a vital tool for culturalization as it provides a platform to share traditional stories and experiences in one’s indigenous language. Tshabangu and Salawu (2022) note that most

research in Africa that focuses on mainstream media neglects the lack of broadcasting in indigenous African languages, which has existed since 1837; they then lead to argue that it is important for research to invest in indigenous language media to enhance the body of knowledge.

Following the above discussion, other scholars have also noted the importance of indigenous language media. For instance, Wilson (2020) argues that indigenous language media usually gives precedence to the needs and perspectives of indigenous people, battling with the mainstream media that may overlook or misrepresent the needs of the indigenous people. Furthermore, Simpson (2017) states that indigenous language media serves to empower indigenous communities and validate their cultural identities through the use of their languages in the media, which also helps to keep the meaning the same. In addition, Battiste (2016) contends that indigenous language media greatly aid the transmission of knowledge and intergenerational communication within indigenous communities. Anaya (2015) contends that when indigenous languages are incorporated into media, these outlets help to bridge the gap between elders and the youth or old generation and the new generation, ensuring the continued vitality of indigenous languages for future generations.

indigenous language media has several advantages when promoting indigenous languages. However, several scholars have also highlighted that indigenous language media face several challenges affecting their ability to promote indigenous cultures and languages effectively. For instance, Wilson (2020) noted that one other challenge faced by indigenous language media is the limited funding available for such media outlets, which often rely on donations to operate. Hargreaves (2021) attests to this argument, stating that many indigenous outlets operate on tight budgets, restricting their ability to produce high-quality content and reach a broader audience. Sullivan (2022), on the other hand, argues that there is often a lack of skilled personnel fluent in indigenous languages, which can hinder content creation and programming. Tshabangu and Salawu (2022) argue that some of the challenges faced by the indigenous language media are due to a poor clientele base, with the majority of its readership being impoverished, low literacy rates when it comes to newspapers since a relevant number of this audience cannot read nor write. They continue to argue that inadequate transportation and communications networks that impact distribution, a lack of capital and skilled labour, and high production costs are some of the challenges faced by the indigenous language media. Furthermore, Kirkness (2019) states that the dominance of mainstream media poses a threat as indigenous media struggles to compete. This

shows that these media channels may struggle to deliver high-quality content and reach a wider audience without adequate support. Simpson (2017) argues that the lack of technological infrastructure in many indigenous communities and the lack of trained professionals fluent in indigenous languages and modern media production techniques further hinder the development of indigenous language media.

Coulthard (2014) locks horns pricking the government issue, stating that indigenous language media may face censorship or government restrictions that limit its ability to freely report on issues that affect indigenous communities resembling the colonial era. Now, this implies that these restrictions can prevent these media channels from fully representing the voices and perspectives of indigenous communities, which leads to the loss of indigenous knowledge. Anaya (2015) argues even more on this point, stating that the issue of less representation of indigenous languages leads to stereotypes and the erasing of indigenous cultures and languages from public discourse. Anaya (2015) further claims that this lack of representation of indigenous languages is due to the dominance of mainstream media channels, which mainly prioritise content in dominant languages such as English. In addition, Johnson (2016) attests that there may be political challenges surrounding the use of indigenous languages in media, as government policies and regulations may act against using indigenous languages in the media. Smith (2017) adds other factors that may challenge indigenous language media. He contends that indigenous languages may be at risk due to fewer and fewer speakers passing down their language to younger generations. This then poses a threat to indigenous languages as a very limited audience is thirsty and seeks this type of content.

Now, the arguments made by Simpson (2017) and Wilson (2020) are very relevant to this study as they emphasise the importance of indigenous language media in mainstream media because it guides and maintains the meaning of indigenous languages like isiXhosa. In this instance, the involvement of indigenous language media in South African television also helps to share the isiXhosa knowledge and pass the language from one generation to the next, as Anaya (2015) argued. Therefore, the promotion of isiXhosa in South African television becomes important as some of the challenges to do so may be due to the restrictions that the government may pose, leading to poor reporting on issues that affect indigenous communities, as this argument seen in Coulthard (2014).

### *Indigenous Language and Media in South Africa*

South Africa's media landscape is constitutionally mandated to reflect the country's linguistic diversity. Despite this, African languages continue to face marginalisation in mainstream media platforms. Sundani et al. (2025) argue that linguistic inequality has negatively impacted the visibility of indigenous languages, including isiXhosa, in television broadcasting. The dominance of English in media content has led to limited airtime and resources for African languages, creating barriers to their promotion and preservation. The SABC as a public broadcaster, is tasked with equitable representation of all official languages. However, studies show that this mandate is not always fulfilled in practice. Rathando (2022) highlights disparities in language representation on SABC platforms, noting that isiXhosa and other indigenous languages often receive less coverage compared to English.

### *Media Figures as Agents of Language Promotion*

Media figures such as presenters, actors, and producers play a vital role in shaping public attitudes toward language use. Their visibility and influence allow them to act as cultural ambassadors, promoting indigenous languages through their work. Aiseng (2024) examines the role of community radio stations like Vaaltar FM in revitalising Setswana, demonstrating how media personalities use translinguaging to engage audiences and preserve linguistic heritage. Translinguaging, the blending of multiple languages in communication, is increasingly used in television to reflect South Africa's multilingual reality. Although Aiseng (2024) focuses on radio, the principles apply to television, where presenters and actors often switch between languages to connect with diverse audiences. This strategy not only promotes isiXhosa but also normalises its use in public discourse.

### *Institutional Support and Cultural Representation*

Educational institutions have also contributed to the promotion of isiXhosa in media. Du Toit and Maseko (2018) discuss the isiXhosa for Journalism (IFJ) course at Rhodes University, which trains future media professionals to use isiXhosa effectively in journalism. This initiative reflects a broader movement toward curriculum transformation and the intellectualisation of African languages. Such programs equip media figures with the linguistic and cultural competence needed to produce content in isiXhosa, thereby enhancing its visibility and status in mainstream media. This institutional support for isiXhosa in media education complements broader cultural efforts,

where the language functions not only as a tool for communication but also as a vessel for preserving identity and heritage. Diko (2024) argues that isiXhosa serves as a protective instrument of *amaXhosa* (The Xhosa people) culture, enabling the transmission of values, beliefs, and traditions. Media figures who use isiXhosa in their work contribute to cultural preservation by embedding language into storytelling, news reporting, and entertainment. Television shows such as *Skeem Saam* and *The Queen* have been noted for their use of indigenous languages to depict cultural narratives, allowing viewers to engage with their heritage in meaningful ways.

## Chapter Four

### Theoretical Framework

#### *Media, Language, and Identity*

Language is entangled in identity, which makes it necessary for this study to dig deep into a discussion about the importance of language promotion in media since language also influences people's identities, as was slightly discussed earlier in the chapter. In this context, this study will refer to identity using Castells' (1997) understanding, which he understands as people's source of meaning and experience, with meaning defined as the symbolic identification by a social actor of the purpose of her or his action. Identity, therefore, becomes a process of construction of meaning based on a cultural attribute or related set of cultural attributes that are given priority over other sources of meaning. This theory fits well in this study as one of the concerns of the study is to understand people's perceptions when it comes to the role played by the media figures in keeping and maintaining isiXhosa on television without losing the "authenticity".

Castells (1997) further argues that identity could be based on collectively or individuals. Hence, it is also important for this study to further investigate the media figures and the audience about the influence of produced and received language in television. The matter of media, language, and identity is a highlight because some scholars argue that exposure to media conducts societal behaviour. For instance, Singer and Singer (2001) argue that each interaction with media content offers a potential framework for shaping behaviour or attitudes, serving as a reference point for identity formation, whether through alignment with or opposition to the media model, and whether this influence is consciously recognised or not. In this context, this could mean that people's languages could generally be influenced by what they receive or consume from the television, which will then lead to a shift in their identities since identity and language walk hand in hand. This makes it important to investigate language promotion in media.

Language is an essential aspect of our lives. Olaifa (2014: 23) states that "a language is an indispensable tool for human communication and national development". Language is also essential in forming identities (Chibita, 2006). Individuals can express themselves and their distinct points of view through language, which helps to identify their personal and cultural

identities (Norton, 2010). For instance, you will see in the findings that some of the participants compared the use of language in media, which makes them easily identify with a specific group. Furthermore, language can be used to enforce social norms and expectations, both within a specific community and throughout society. Individuals can alter the opinions and attitudes of others towards specific activities or identities by labelling them as "normal" or "acceptable" through the use of language. Again, this study provides evidence of a radio incident where the use of language was categorised as “not normal” for the specific group, which made it hard for the people to resonate with it. Also, Wurm (1991) attests to the huge turn that took place in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that affected many identities and languages since the coloniser’s languages and cultures were expressed as “normal” and acceptable. Language is a strong instrument for shaping and transforming identities on an individual and societal level. Individuals can better grasp the historical conditions that influence their own and other people's identities by understanding the function of language in identity creation and maintenance.

Moreover, Onyenankeya and Salawu (2019) ask if social discourses in indigenous radio provide veritable platforms for mediated identity. Strelitz (2002) asks if it represents a symbolic homeland or if it evokes, as argued by Siapera and Veikou (2013), a distant community where audiences reconnect, and experience mediated co-presence. Little is known about the role of isiXhosa media practitioners and their role in promoting isiXhosa in the media and how this has established the presence of isiXhosa in South African media. It becomes imperative to understand how indigenous media practitioners have contributed to the status of indigenous languages in South African media. Also, much of the literature concerned about language, representation, promotion, and media hardly points out how language promotion in media shapes individuals’ social reality and identity (Andrews, 2012; Burr and Dick, 2017; Allan, 2010). This study will also emphasise how language shapes social reality and the construction of identities since language and identity are the appropriate theoretical frameworks. These frameworks are suited for this study as they are tied to the importance of language availability and language representation in the media, which helps people to identify themselves through that content and use of language.

Beyond the above-mentioned points, this framework also attempts to convey or demonstrate how culture and identity are intertwined through language, which makes language representation and promotion an important factor in South African television. One key act that creates culture and

identity is representation, which highlights the process by which meaning is created and shared (Hall, 1997). To fully understand what representation means in this context, it is necessary to elucidate the concept of representation by looking at how other scholars decode the term. To Hall (1997: 1), “Representation connects meaning and language to culture.” Representation implies using language to convey something meaningful about or to meaningfully represent the world to other people (Hall, 1997). Fourie (2007), in his speculation about representation, is explicit that media produce meanings that mediate our social, political, and cultural settings through their task of representation. One shortcoming of these two influential studies is that the politics of the media that lead to poor or less representation or promotion are thinly evident. This is representative of the larger issue that our knowledge of representation and language promotion in media rarely addresses the media's economic, status influence and political aspects.

There is a further problem with language representation in media scholarship. When this research looks at media representation, much of the literature concerned about language, representation, and media hardly points out how language representation in media shapes the social reality and identity of individuals (Andrews, 2012; Burr and Dick, 2017; Allan, 2010) and hardly looks at language promotion in media. This study will also emphasise how language shapes social reality and the construction of identities, as briefly discussed in the research context above. The thesis can explore how language representation in media contributes to constructing representations of different social groups by applying social constructionism and sociolinguistics.

In line with the application of social constructionism and sociolinguistics, the media is essential in creating and maintaining language norms as well as social realities. Sociolinguistics studies how language and society interact, whereas social constructionism holds that reality is not intrinsic but rather is produced through social interactions and language. Predominant social narratives and language standards can be spread and maintained through the use of the media, which includes radio, newspapers, television, and the Internet (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). By defining problems, creating identities, and influencing public opinion, media representations aid in creating social reality. The media's transmission of societal knowledge and beliefs is a primary mechanism that shapes people's insights and interpretations of their environment (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The media contributes to the creation and upkeep of common meanings and understandings

in society through the representation of events, people, and cultures, and all those representations can be bound together through communication and language.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that according to sociolinguistics, language attitudes, usage, and variety are influenced by the media. Specific dialects or variations are standardised and spread because language use in the media reflects and upholds linguistic norms and ideas. This makes it necessary to investigate the strategies used by media practitioners to promote isiXhosa on television. Furthermore, by bringing new words, phrases, or linguistic styles into the public discourse, media portrayals have the power to both influence and perpetuate linguistic stereotypes (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). In general, the media's relevance in forming and reflecting cultural norms, ideas, and language practices is highlighted by its involvement in sociolinguistics and social constructionism. Researchers in these domains can learn more about the processes by which language and social reality are created, negotiated, and preserved in a variety of cultural contexts by critically examining media portrayals, argued Berger and Luckmann (1966).

Building on the theoretical insights from sociolinguistics and social constructionism, it becomes evident that media plays a pivotal role in shaping language use and perceptions. This understanding underscores the importance of examining how isiXhosa is promoted on television, not only as a linguistic practice but also as a socially constructed phenomenon. To explore these dynamics in depth, the study adopts a methodological approach that captures the lived experiences and perspectives of media practitioners in language promotion. The following chapter outlines the qualitative strategies employed to investigate these complex sociolinguistic processes.

# Chapter Five

## Methodology

### Introduction

The preceding chapter provided a comprehensive review of existing literature relevant to the study, highlighting key theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, and gaps in current knowledge. It established the foundation upon which this research is built, emphasising the need for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The literature review also informed the selection of appropriate literature to address the research question effectively. In this chapter I outline the research methodology employed in this study. Given the context and nature of the research problem, I saw qualitative research approach as the most suitable. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and meanings within their natural settings. To ensure the relevance and richness of the data, I utilised the non-probability sampling technique. I chose this method to purposefully select participants who possess specific knowledge or experience related to the research topic. The following sections detail the research design, data collection methods, sampling strategy, and data analysis procedures employed in this study.

### 5.1 Research Approach

A research methodology is a comprehensive approach to conducting research, which may be qualitative or quantitative in nature. Therefore, to achieve objectives, the research adopted a qualitative research approach, which is used to investigate information about people and societies (Van Aken and Berends, 2018). This approach is appropriate for this study because qualitative methodologies follow analytical and interpretative measures to answer research questions. Also, this research approach was selected so that the data collection and analysis could be done based on the participants' perspectives and experiences to understand the phenomenon under study. A qualitative approach would allow for a nuanced exploration of participants' perspectives in language promotion, specifying isiXhosa. Qualitative methods are used in social sciences to help researchers study social and cultural phenomena (Thomas, 2010), which makes the qualitative approach completely relevant to this study since language promotion is a social phenomenon. This

study also adopted the case study research method. According to Yin (1984: 23), the case study research method is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used”. In this study, the case study research method is relevant because it looked at current issues that were hard to separate from their context. For example, the history of English language dominance during the apartheid time which had an effect even post-apartheid. To look at this phenomenon, this study brought in different types of evidence, such as funding, as a common factor. The case study approach helps to provide significant insights into the complexities of language promotion as it investigates in detail. For instance, Coombs (2022) also attests that Case studies allow scholars to investigate specific language promotion programs in-depth, analysing their strategy, implementation, and effects. This enables the identification of both good techniques and possible issues.

## 5.2 Research Paradigm

This study is grounded in an interpretivism paradigm, which acknowledges that reality is socially constructed and best understood through the lived experiences and perspectives of individuals (Nickerson, 2022). In the context of language promotion, this paradigm allows for a nuanced exploration of how media figures perceive their roles, the meanings they attach to isiXhosa, and the strategies they employ to embed the language within mainstream television content. By focusing on subjective experiences and contextual interpretations, the study seeks to uncover the symbolic and cultural significance of isiXhosa in media spaces. This approach is particularly relevant given the complex sociolinguistic landscape of South Africa, where language use is deeply intertwined with history, identity, heritage, and power dynamics.

Complementing interpretivism, the study also draws on critical theory to interrogate the structural and ideological forces that shape language representation in media. Critical theory provides a lens to examine how historical marginalisation, media ownership, and commercial pressures influence the visibility of isiXhosa on television. It challenges the status quo by questioning whose voices are amplified and whose are silenced, and it advocates for transformative practices that promote linguistic equity. Through this lens, media figures are not only cultural agents but also potential disruptors of dominant narratives, using isiXhosa to resist linguistic homogenisation and assert cultural pride. The integration of interpretivism and critical theory thus enables a holistic

understanding of both the personal motivations and systemic constraints that inform language promotion strategies in South African media.

### 5.3 Research Design

This study is guided by interpretivism paradigm and informed by critical theory. The qualitative approach is appropriate for exploring the nuanced, context-dependent strategies employed by media figures to promote isiXhosa, as it allows for a rich understanding of their lived experiences, motivations, and cultural perspectives. The case study design enables an in-depth investigation of specific individuals, television programs, and broadcasting institutions that actively engage in language promotion, offering a focused lens through which to examine both personal agency and institutional dynamics.

The interpretivism paradigm underpins the study's emphasis on meaning-making and subjective experience. It assumes that reality is socially constructed and best understood through the perspectives of those directly involved in the phenomenon being studied. This aligns with the study's aim to explore how media figures perceive and enact their roles in promoting isiXhosa. On the other hand, critical theory provides a framework for interrogating the broader socio-political structures that influence language representation in mainstream media. It allows the study to examine issues of power, marginalisation, and cultural resistance, particularly in relation to the historical underrepresentation of indigenous languages in South African mainstream media. Together, these paradigms support a research design that is both exploratory and transformative, seeking not only to understand but also to challenge and improve the conditions under which isiXhosa is promoted in the media.

### 5.4 Sampling Method and Discussion of Case Studies

Neuman (2011: 246) defines sampling as “a small set of causes which a researcher selects from a larger pool and generalises the population”. The sample in this study was selected from a sample universe of mainstream media figures and audiences, and interviews were conducted. This study uses probability sampling, which, according to McCombes (2023: n.d) it “involves dividing the population into subpopulations that may differ in important ways.” The reason for this sampling method was that it would allow the study to draw a more precise conclusion based on the

information needed per subpopulation. Using more than one technique was suitable for this study as it also employed nonprobability sampling, which selects participants based on their availability and willingness to participate on a practical level (Skowronek and Duerr, 2009). The four media figures were selected based on their significant influence in promoting isiXhosa on South African television. Their selection was guided by their roles in shaping linguistic and cultural narratives within isiXhosa-speaking communities. Therefore, their selection was guided by purposive sampling. TV presenters and TV personalities such as Zizo Tshwete, Masomelele Jucwa, and Lerato Fekisi have contributed to isiXhosa representation through their performances in popular television, where the use of indigenous languages is central to character development and storytelling. These individuals exemplify how media figures can serve as cultural ambassadors, reinforcing language visibility and identity through their public role.

On the other hand, the ten audience members selected for this study were chosen using purposive sampling, based on their diverse demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and geographical location. This intentional selection was aimed at capturing a broad spectrum of viewer experiences and interpretations, ensuring that the study reflects the varied ways in which isiXhosa promotion is received and understood across different segments of the population. While the overall television audience is vast and mixed, the decision to focus on a small, carefully selected group was guided by the need for depth over breadth in qualitative inquiry. The sample size of ten was also determined by practical constraints such as accessibility, time, and resource limitations during the data collection phase. Conducting in-depth interviews or focus groups with a larger audience would have posed logistical challenges and potentially diluted the richness of the data. By limiting the number of participants, the study was able to engage more meaningfully with each individual's perspective, allowing for a thorough exploration of personal insights, emotional responses, and cultural connections to isiXhosa content on television. This approach aligns with the study's interpretivist and critical theoretical foundations, which prioritise contextual understanding and the amplification of voices that are often underrepresented in mainstream discourse.

I interviewed four media practitioners and figures. Lerato Fekisi transcends the role of a storyteller in South Africa's media and journalism industry, particularly in television, where only a select few claim the spotlight. She forged her path to the SABC as a multimedia reporter, showcasing her

relentless drive and passion for her craft while championing isiXhosa on television. In her current role, Lerato covers news for television, social media, and radio, highlighting her versatility and commitment to informing and sharing public stories. Her influence in the isiXhosa community makes her a compelling public figure to study.

Another prominent media figure, Zizo Tshwete (formerly Zizo Beda), gained fame hosting SABC 1's magazine show *Selimathunzi* from 2008 to 2015. As one of the few isiXhosa presenters on television, she elevated the isiXhosa language and culture with her vibrant and charismatic presence, becoming a household name. Zizo frequently conducted interviews in isiXhosa, promoting the language and providing a platform for isiXhosa-speaking guests and artists. By doing so, she normalized isiXhosa on television, making it more accessible and visible to a wider audience, which solidifies her as a noteworthy figure for study.

Masomelele Jucwa, a rugby commentator for SuperSport, delivers some of the most captivating isiXhosa commentary, captivating even non-isiXhosa speakers. He brings rugby's excitement to life for isiXhosa-speaking viewers through play-by-play commentary and game analysis. Masomelele's work promotes rugby within the isiXhosa community and amplifies isiXhosa on television. His distinctive commentary engages both isiXhosa and non-isiXhosa audiences, elevating isiXhosa among other dominant languages in rugby. This makes him a significant figure to explore for his role in advancing isiXhosa.

The study also included entry-level media figures with diverse experiences, such as Nandipha Plaatjie, a news presenter at SABC.

All the interviews with these media figures were conducted in English to allow easy communication between the interviewer and the interviewee. English was prioritised due to the acknowledgement of different dialects between the interviewer and the interviewee. Due to geographical distances, all the interviews with the media figures were conducted through Zoom meetings. The duration of each zoom meeting between each media figure was between 20 minutes to 34 minutes. The question structure is outlined on appendix A. These questions were not followed by the order in which they are addressed in the appendix as they are open ended questions, instead they were used as a guide as the follow up question depended on the answer given by the participant. The consent form was given and explained to the media figures, and an

agreement was reached that in this study, their names would be used alongside the information they provided as the consent form clearly stated that the public figures' names will be divulged (With that being said, these public figures agreed to these terms). Regarding the audience participants, six out of the ten interviews were conducted in person, allowing for richer interaction and observation of non-verbal cues. These face-to-face interviews were held in locations convenient for the participants, primarily in the comfort of their homes. The remaining four interviews were conducted via Zoom due to geographical constraints that made in-person meetings impractical. The duration of the interviews that were conducted face-to-face (six) was between 20 to 30 minutes, while the online interviews were between 15 to 20 minutes. Despite the virtual format, these interviews maintained the same structure and depth as the in-person sessions, ensuring consistency in data quality. All interviews, whether conducted in person or online, were recorded telephonically. This approach ensured that the data was accurately captured for transcription and analysis while maintaining the confidentiality and comfort of the participants. The use of telephonic recording also allowed for flexibility in interview settings, accommodating participants' preferences and availability.

Rubin and Rubin (2011) argued that everyone you interview should meet three criteria: one being able to reflect a variety of viewpoints, two being open to discussion, and three being knowledgeable about cultural regions and circumstances under study. Interviewing these media figures helped this study understand and analyse their intentions and strategies for communicating and developing indigenous languages in the post-apartheid period. Also, interviewing these media figures came with in-depth information since these figures are directly linked with the mainstream media, helping the study to contribute to the field of language and media in South Africa.

The study also relied on interviews with audiences to understand their views about the role of media figures in promoting isiXhosa in the media. To do this, 10 people were sampled. Participants constituted all genders, with age groups of people from 18 to 60 years old, for legal and ethical reasons. The sports and news viewers were the most prioritised participants since they might know about the main participants (media practitioners) and be more knowledgeable about their role in promoting isiXhosa on television. The participants reflected a broad spectrum of diversity, including variations in age (ranging from 18-year-olds to 60-year-olds), gender, linguistic background (first-language isiXhosa speakers and multilingual individuals), educational levels,

and geographic location (urban and rural areas). This diversity enriched the study by capturing a wide range of perspectives on how isiXhosa media content is received, interpreted, and valued across different segments of the population, thereby enhancing the depth and validity of the findings.

Recruitment of the sports and isiXhosa news viewers was done purposively since qualitative studies allow for a relatively small sampling as they aim to explore the depth of understanding rather than the range of the research problem (Campbell et al., 2020). The interviews with the audience aimed to discover their views about promoting isiXhosa on television. This type of audience was prioritised because it would yield appropriate and useful information for the research aims and objectives and the purposive sampling target to use specific sampling and resources effectively (Palinkas et al., 2015). Given the age range (18-60), backgrounds, and gender of the audience, purposive sampling was necessary as this audience provided different important answers, giving the study a wide range to explore the research problem.

## 5.5 Data Collection

In this study, data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews are an advantage as they help with flexibility between the questions. For instance, this method allowed me not to follow the list of questions I had for the participants as I could let the answers guide me to the next question and end up with impactful answers that would align with my design question. Since the study's main purpose was to investigate the strategies or roles played by the media figures in promoting isiXhosa, semi-structured interviews allowed me to explore the strategies they have tried to implement and failed and the challenges they face as media practitioners/figures in South African television. Through semi-structured interviews, the advantage of investigating and unearthing information about people and societies also comes. Semi-structured interviews also allow the researcher to elicit information from participants about their lives, experiences, and viewpoints, resulting in more thorough and in-depth data collection that is more instructive for the interviewer (Moriarty, 2011).

All the interviews were conducted online with the previously mentioned media practitioners and the audiences. The reason for the online platforms for conducting interviews was briefly mentioned under the “sampling methods and case study discussions” section. Before conducting the interviews, participants were properly informed of the study's aims and objectives, and consent

forms were signed. Even the consent form was explained, and participants were given up to 14 days to read and ask questions about the study and consent form. The consent form also addressed the hazards of consent, such as, "There will be no risks from the study because you are guaranteed the right to remain anonymous if you wish." Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the recordings (if necessary). Lastly, the right to refuse to sign was mentioned (more details on the consent form). The challenges and limitations are explained under the "ethical aspects, challenges and limitations" section.

Data was also collected from nine videos or episodes that Lerato Fekisi, Zizo Tshweta, Masomelele Jucwa, and Nandipha Plaatjie did. Of all the videos that were available online, only two were selected per media figure and three for Masomelele. The two videos per media figure were also to double-check the consistency of the language use and their strategies. The selected videos were selected because they have managed to blend in with the research goals as they highlighted the language used by these media figures and the possible strategies that could promote isiXhosa, increase viewership, and keep isiXhosa in competition with other languages in television (details on the findings and analysis). Also, the period in which these videos were selected was from 2008 to 2025. This was the reason for the timeframe these media figures have been on television screens, which also helped identify the change or shift in their language use or technique.

## 5.6 Data Analysis

### *Step-by-Step*

While collecting data, the plan to pair the participants based on their similarities, based on their lines of work and number of years in the workplace was already in hand. This was due to finding similar strategies and further comparing those strategies. For example, after collecting all the interviews, I paired the data from Lerato Fekisi and Nandipha Plaatjie. This was because they both work as SABC presenters, which helped me identify the common patterns in their roles as presenters. I then paired and compared the data from Zizo Tshwete and Masomelele Jucwa. This decision was based on the number of years that they had in the media industry, as Zizo has 17 years and Masomelele has eight years. This helped to compare the strategies and styles they apply in their work using isiXhosa. The data from the audiences was not organised in a specific manner, as the main reason for that data was to explore their views on isiXhosa on television. The four

interviews from the media figures were then transcribed or converted to text using online software. Four out of ten interviews with the audience were conducted in isiXhosa as per the participants' request, as they stated that they felt comfortable and confident in their home language. These interviews were then translated into English, and then I double-checked to ensure no loss of information or miscommunication.

After data collection, textual analysis was applied to analyse the linguistic strategies used by these media figures to promote isiXhosa. Frey et al. (2000) explain that textual analysis is useful for determining the content, structure, and functions of messages included in texts. For these reasons, this thesis has greatly used textual analysis. To complete the textual analysis, I looked at the tone, vocabulary and syntax they employ in broadcasting, reporting and commentary. With tone, I looked at what type of tone each participant uses on television, whether formal, informal, joyful, humorous, etc. Discovering these tones helped me locate and compare the consistency in their strategies, which could be used or classified as effective strategies. With vocabulary, I used this analysis to compare whether these media figures use everyday or common vocabulary or unique vocabulary that could be experienced in professional spaces, learning institutions or specific dialects of some areas. That, too, would mark the effectiveness of vocabulary use in promoting isiXhosa. The way each media figure arranges their words helps to form a meaningful sentence. Hence, analysing syntax was also important.

All interviews were thematically analysed using inductive coding as I wanted the findings and results to depend on the available data. Since investigating experiences and understandings is a key component of thematic analysis, thematic analysis became a perfect and effective method for this study (Herzog et al., 2019). Boyatzis (1998) argues that thematic analysis goes beyond just identifying and analysing patterns, it also interprets various aspects of the study. Braun and Clarke (2006) argued that one of the stages in thematic analysis is that a researcher recognises themes or patterns of interest during data collection, and that is a process that I have followed as I have started to notice the patterns of interest during the data collection. With this method, I looked for recurring patterns, such as the use of phrases, which I marked as a representation of constant strategy use. Naeem et al. (2023: 11) state, "By analyzing keywords and codes together, recurring patterns or themes that are recognizable based on the data can be identified. Themes are recognized based on their strong alignment with the original data." With this method, I have recognised the relevant

features and characteristics that could be seen as contributing to language promotion. The thematic analysis helped me identify parts and meanings related to the research goals, such as the media figures knowing their audience, using phrases that relate to their audiences, and creating a warm atmosphere even for non-isiXhosa speakers.

Finally, the credibility and accuracy of my data were run by two different people. I first returned to the raw data and redefined themes and codes, comparing them with what was analysed and discussed in the findings. Thereafter, I did a peer review with one of the PhD candidates at Rhodes University in the Political and International Studies department. Having reached the shortcomings of having a language expert for a peer review, I continued and asked one of the Masters' candidate at the School of Languages at Rhodes University to do a second review. With these steps, I believe my analysis and discussions were systematically grounded in my data and theoretical framework.

### *Data Translation Challenges*

As mentioned in the above paragraphs that four out of 10 audiences were interviewed in isiXhosa, that brought in about notable challenges due to dialect diversity within the language. One example could be the use of the word “*kusasa*” which could mean tomorrow, and a specific time of the day based on the dialect. IsiXhosa, like many indigenous African languages, is not monolithic, it comprises several dialects, including Thembu, Mpondo, Gcaleka, Rharhabe, and Hlubi, among others. These dialects differ in pronunciation, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and even grammatical structures, which can complicate the process of rendering participants' responses into standard or academic English. Therefore, I had to be careful with the translation to get the accurate information and meaning and carry out the lexical and semantic differences. For instance, different dialects may use distinct words for the same concept, or the same word may carry different meanings depending on the speaker's regional background. This can lead to semantic ambiguity during translation, where the intended meaning is not immediately clear without contextual or cultural knowledge. Many isiXhosa dialects are rich in idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and proverbs that do not have direct equivalents in English. Translating these literally can result in a loss of meaning or misinterpretation. For instance, a phrase that carries a deep cultural or emotional resonance in one dialect may appear neutral or confusing when translated without context. Therefore, whenever I came across such phrases, I asked my father for a better understanding as he is familiar with most dialects.

On the other hand, participants often code-mix isiXhosa with English or other South African languages, especially in urban or multilingual settings. This linguistic fluidity can make it difficult to determine which parts of a sentence belong to which language system, particularly when dialectal forms are involved. This also raises questions about which language norms to prioritise in translation. However, code-mixing was not much of a challenge as most participants that were code-mixing were using phrases or terms that I am familiar with. However, Academic and media contexts often rely on standardized isiXhosa, which may not reflect the way people speak in everyday life. When participants use non-standard dialects, I had to decide whether to preserve the authentic voice of the speaker or to conform to standardised norms for clarity and consistency. This tension can affect the validity and reliability of qualitative data interpretation. I had to be aware of the risk of unintentional bias due to the fact that I might be familiar with more dialects than the others. Therefore, I had to translate these dialects based on the participant's direct intent of their responses.

## 5.7 Ethical Aspects, Challenges, and Limitations

The present study received ethical approval from the Rhodes University Ethics Committee.

Sánchez et al. (2023: 195) states, "Any research conducted on human beings or human biological samples requires a prior ethical assessment to avoid risks and problems for all involved parties." This study identified the potential risks and problems for the participants and ensured their protection, and it upheld its ethical standards. The aspects of research ethics were followed just like Rosenthal (2018) defines them as to inform the interviewees or the participants about the research context. Emails were sent to each participant with a request to participate in the study. The email gave a brief explanation of the study along with a detailed consent form. This was done to ensure that I received informed consent from the participants and that they understood that their participation was voluntary. As mentioned previously, all interviews were conducted digitally/telephonically. Before asking the interview questions, participants were asked to give verbal consent to the interview and consent to use their information in this study. I then reviewed the consent form again with the participants to gain clarity and eliminate confusion. For the audiences, I assigned pseudonyms instead of using their real names, as compared to the media figures, who are public figures. This was done to protect them from any possible negative outcomes, as Bryman (2016) suggested. I selected names from the phonetic alphabet to refer to

the audience participants: Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta, Juliette, Mike, Oscar, Romeo, Sierra, and Victor. The inspiration behind these names was for easily pronounceable names for different readers.

With all the rights my participants had, I also recognised the right to language as it protects the freedom to use the language of their choice and participate freely (Currie, 1994). All the participants spoke English as a second language. Therefore, all the participants were allowed to use a different language if they saw fit. As a result, five audiences expressed that they were comfortable speaking isiXhosa, and those five interviews were conducted in isiXhosa. This was done to engage the study effectively. Translating the data from isiXhosa to English was challenging as I had to ensure that none of the information communicated was lost or misinterpreted. I had to be very careful when translating the data from isiXhosa to English, as Temple and Young (2004) contested that data translation could impact or introduce bias in data analysis. To avoid bias, as the isiXhosa-speaking individual, I made sure that I did not use direct translation unless it was necessary. For instance, I had to take caution of slang words that may mean two different things at once and try to understand them based on the subject matter. That part was not truly challenging, as I am familiar with the slang words used.

Trust and reliability are paramount between the researcher and the participants as they increase the chances of credibility of the sources (Kornbluh, 2015). Therefore, ensuring trust between me and the participants was crucial. Having public figures as participants, I had to emphasise that this study will not put their careers in jeopardy by ensuring that they do understand that they have a right not to answer some questions and not to participate in some conversations if they feel those questions or conversations are a risk to their careers. The same went for the audiences. Qualitative research often relies on in-depth interviews, focus groups, observations, etc. Therefore, participants must feel safe and comfortable sharing their views openly (Tenny et al., 2022). Building trust with my participants was important so they could provide rich and honest data. I did that with the media figures by being transparent in our communications on social media, as that was where I got to get their contact information. I have also explained the motivation behind the study. I spent time messaging the media figures like Lerato, Masomelele and Nandipha to gain their trust. With Zizo, I had to email her agent, and that came with some challenges as I had to

remind her agent about my request constantly. To gain the audience's trust, I also had to be transparent about my intentions and had to keep the conversation going over social media.

## Chapter Six

### Synthesis of Findings and Analytical Insights

#### 6.1 Overview

This chapter presents a comprehensive synthesis and critical analysis of the findings derived from a qualitative case study that investigates the strategic approaches adopted by media professionals to advance the use and visibility of isiXhosa within the South African television landscape. The chapter aims to construct a nuanced and coherent narrative that directly engages with the central research questions of the study. These include: the cultural and sociolinguistic importance of promoting isiXhosa in mainstream broadcast media, the specific communicative, editorial, and production strategies employed by media practitioners to achieve this goal. The structural and contextual challenges they encounter in the process, and the broader implications of these efforts on audience reception, language attitudes, and the reinforcement of cultural identity.

To address these questions, the study employed a multi-method qualitative approach. Primary data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with four media figures. These are: Lerato Fekisi, Zizo Tshwete, Masomelele Jucwa, and Nandipha Platjje, each of whom brings a unique perspective shaped by their professional roles and personal experiences. These interviews were further enriched by the inclusion of ten audience members, carefully selected to reflect a range of demographic variables such as age, gender, linguistic background, and geographic location, thereby ensuring a diverse and representative sample.

In addition to the interview data, the study incorporated a diligent textual and thematic content analysis of selected media outputs. These included television news segments, live sports commentary, and culturally focused programming, all of which serve as key platforms for the dissemination and normalisation of isiXhosa in public discourse. The chapter offers a multidimensional exploration of how isiXhosa is being actively promoted, the extent to which these efforts resonate with audiences, and the role of media in shaping linguistic and cultural consciousness in a multilingual society.

The analytical approach adopted in this chapter is grounded in a careful and interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates key insights from both sociolinguistics and media studies.

This framework provides the conceptual support necessary to interpret the data in a manner that is both contextually relevant and theoretically informed. Central to this analysis is the concept of language ideologies, which refer to the underlying beliefs and assumptions that communities hold about language use, legitimacy, and value (Aiseng, 2024). These ideologies play a critical role in shaping public attitudes toward indigenous languages such as isiXhosa, influencing both media production and audience reception. Another foundational concept is the role of linguistic diversity in promoting social inclusion and safeguarding cultural heritage. Drawing on Makalela's (2018) work, the study emphasises how multilingual media practices can serve as powerful tools for cultural affirmation and resistance against linguistic homogenisation. Moreover, the analysis engages with media theory, particularly the notion that media institutions are not merely passive reflectors of societal values but active agents capable of shaping public discourse and reinforcing or challenging dominant norms (Croteau, 2014).

By situating the observed findings within this theoretical landscape, the chapter moves beyond a descriptive account of media strategies to offer a deeper, more critical engagement with the broader implications of language representation in media. It connects the practical efforts of media practitioners to larger academic debates concerning language, identity, and symbolic power in postcolonial contexts. Furthermore, the findings are contextualised within the broader body of scholarship on indigenous language promotion, as outlined in the literature review. This linkage underscores the study's contribution to ongoing discussions about linguistic equity, cultural sustainability, and the decolonisation of media spaces in post-apartheid South Africa. The chapter also reflects on the historical marginalisation of isiXhosa and other African languages, examining how contemporary media practices both respond to and attempt to redress these legacies. In doing so, it offers a nuanced exploration of the potential for transformative change in the representation of isiXhosa, highlighting the complex interplay between historical context, institutional structures, and individual agency in shaping South Africa's multilingual media landscape.

The tables (Table 1 and 2) below will summarise the four Media Practitioners and 10 participants' demographics. These Demographics will include the ages, gender, profession and the linguistic backgrounds which will be the languages that the participants are mostly exposed to.

**Table 1: Media Practitioners Demographics**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Linguistic Background</b>
Lerato Fekisi	39	Female	Multimedia reporter (Journalist)	isiXhosa and English
Masomelele Jucwa	34	Male	isiXhosa rugby commentator and analyst	isiXhosa
Nandipha Plaatjie	25	Female	Multimedia reporter	isiXhosa
Zizo Tshwete	36	Female	TV Personality	isiXhosa

## 6.2 Strategies Employed by Media Practitioners to Promote isiXhosa

The qualitative data collected through interviews with media practitioners unveiled a diverse range of innovative, culturally grounded, and audience-centric strategies designed to elevate the presence and status of isiXhosa on South African television. These strategies align with the study’s overarching objective of examining effective methods for promoting indigenous languages within a multilingual and historically complex media landscape. The practitioners demonstrated a nuanced understanding of their role in countering linguistic marginalisation, leveraging television as a platform to affirm isiXhosa’s cultural significance and foster inclusivity. The following subsections delve into the primary strategies identified, with a focus on their implementation, impact, and theoretical underpinnings.

### 6.2.1 Bilingual Programming and Strategic Code-Switching

One of the most prominent and widely adopted strategies identified in this study is the implementation of bilingual programming, with a particular emphasis on the practice of code-switching. Code-switching, in this context, refers to the intentional and fluid alternation between isiXhosa and English or more languages within a single broadcast, segment, or even sentence. This linguistic strategy has emerged as a powerful communicative tool that serves multiple functions. It enhances the accessibility of content for multilingual audiences, fosters deeper engagement

across diverse viewer demographics, and reinforces the cultural authenticity and relevance of isiXhosa in contemporary media narratives. A compelling example of this strategy in action is demonstrated by Lerato Fekisi, a seasoned multimedia journalist at the SABC. In her news reporting, Lerato skilfully weaves isiXhosa and English together, creating a dynamic linguistic needlepoint that resonates with a broad spectrum of viewers, also showcasing her skillset of audience reception as seen in the video clip below:

Clip 1 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRnN2p2hmwQ>)

The contribution of media figures in promoting isiXhosa and cultural narratives of marginalised communities is a vital topic in present-day discourse surrounding representation in media. One notable example is Lerato, who emphasises her commitment to amplifying the voices of those who are often overlooked. Lerato comments:

*“So the way I think I've contributed is to assist in telling the stories of Abantu that are marginalised, particularly in the township. Abantu who cannot speak English but who have a story to tell. So the nice thing about journalism is that you are allowed to tell any story, as long as it's got a human interest. So over the years I've tried as much as I can although sometimes it does put you at risk because naphaya elokshini which is quite dangerous but as much as I possibly could get to go to the marginalised areas to townships and hear the stories of Abantu and who have got stories but at times they can't because there's no medium that allows them to do that.” (Lerato).*

This deliberate prioritisation of isiXhosa not only affirms the language's cultural significance but also positions it as a legitimate and authoritative medium for conveying complex news and current affairs. Lerato's approach aligns closely with Makalela's (2018) theory of translanguaging, which advocates for the flexible and integrated use of multiple languages in communication. Translanguaging challenges inflexible language boundaries and instead promotes a more inclusive and context-sensitive model of linguistic expression, particularly in multilingual societies like South Africa. By adopting this model, Lerato is able to maintain the cultural integrity of isiXhosa while simultaneously ensuring that her reporting remains accessible and comprehensible to audiences who may be more proficient in English or who navigate between languages in their daily lives.

Furthermore, this strategy reflects a sophisticated understanding of the sociolinguistic realities of urban South Africa, where code-switching is not only common but often necessary. As Malatji and Lesame (2019) observe, urban audiences frequently engage in multilingual practices as part of their everyday communication, making code-switching a natural and effective means of connecting with viewers. By incorporating English, or other languages' terms or phrases strategically, particularly when explaining technical concepts or referencing global events, Lerato enhances the clarity and relatability of her reporting without compromising the prominence of isiXhosa. In essence, the use of bilingual programming through code-switching represents more than a stylistic choice, it is a deliberate and contextually informed strategy that bridges linguistic divides, affirms cultural identity, and challenges the historical marginalisation of indigenous languages in mainstream media. It exemplifies how media practitioners can navigate complex linguistic terrains with sensitivity and innovation, contributing to a more inclusive and representative media landscape.

Lerato emphasised in her interview that her commitment to promoting isiXhosa does not end with reporting in isiXhosa. However, she passionately advocates for the rich narratives and experiences of the isiXhosa-speaking community. By focusing on the diverse lives and individuals, she highlights the importance and showcases the vibrant depth of the community's heritage. Lerato believes that by offering a platform for a greater understanding and appreciation of isiXhosa culture encourages others to engage with linguistic aspects. This approach helps to create a more inclusive narrative that includes the speakers and those who may be unfamiliar with the language, which contributes to the broader society. That is evident in the following video clip.

Clip 2 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5mze4O2lsU>)

Code-switching is often tricky for TV personalities and media figures to avoid, which is why it is frequently found in the work of these four media figures in this study. The content analysis in this study analyses the quality and effectiveness of the information presented in the commentary. This analysis deeply examines the meaning, symbols, motifs, and themes. This analysis aims to provide an in-depth understanding of this study's selected content. This is done by looking at the language used in TV programmes on SABC, news presenting on SABC and Sports Entertainment like Rugby leagues DSTV SuperSport, and the potential influences on the audience. The analysis looked at the tone of the language, phrases used and the consistency of the content. For instance,

Masomelele has a unique way of commenting, which in his interview he referred to as “*I speak Rugby*”. In his commentary, I have identified some of the recurring patterns. For instance, his commentary shows that he raises his voice when there is a build-up to a play (From 19<sup>th</sup> seconds into the first clip and 25<sup>th</sup> seconds into the third clip). This is seen in the three following video clips of his commentary.

Clip 1 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYqFQyQ9GMQ&t=25s>)

Clip 2 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bG61zITA8E>)

Clip 3 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1w02styOpM>)

The observation that Masomelele Jucwa “raises his voice when there is a build-up to a play” is a rhythm feature that adds emotional intensity and dramatization. This technique mirrors oral traditions in isiXhosa storytelling, where tone and rhythm are central. As he states that “I speak Rugby”, this notifies that he is not just commenting on rugby, he is constructing a new linguistic register which could be link to Fairclough’s (2003) Analysis of discourse. This phrase blends English and the cultural context of isiXhosa, signalling translanguaging the fluid use of multiple languages to make meaning. Masomelele’s commentary likely blends isiXhosa and English (as seen from 38<sup>th</sup> second of the first clip), not just for accessibility but to challenge linguistic hierarchies. English is often seen as the language of authority in sports broadcasting, but by integrating isiXhosa, he reclaims space for indigenous expression.

This recurring pattern in his commentary could be classified as an effective strategy, as the comments under the first clip suggest that this is how the rugby commentary should sound. For instance, possibly non-isiXhosa speaking commenters @danielrabe871 commented “*This commentary is spoken in a language we all understand – pure joy! Love it. These commentators are a national treasure.*” and @albertmuphy6299 commented “*This how commentary should sound!!! Well done guys I don’t understand a word, but you are doing a hell of job!!!*” with these two comment it is proof that Masomelele is using a strategy that is effective as the isiXhosa language is exposed to non-isiXhosa speaking people. With Masomelele’s commentary, there is a frequency of occurrence. For example, a player holding a ball is more likely to have their name called a minimum of two times before passing the ball to the next player (as seen from 3 minutes and 16 seconds into first clip above and 2 minutes 55 seconds into the third video). This frequency

of occurrence can be seen as a strategy to emphasise particular ideas and moments in the game. His rising pitch during key moments mimics the excitement of fans, creating a shared emotional experience. This builds a sense of community among isiXhosa-speaking listeners and affirms their cultural identity within a traditionally English-dominated domain.

By using isiXhosa in a domain typically dominated by English or Afrikaans, Masomelele is destabilising colonial language norms. His style asserts that isiXhosa is not only a language of tradition but also of modernity and sport. His commentary doesn't just describe the game, it performs identity. Again, the phrase "I speak Rugby" suggests that rugby is not just a sport but a language in itself, and Masomelele is fluent in both rugby and isiXhosa. This dual fluency positions him as a language and cultural mediator, and he recognises the importance of code-switching as he mentions:

*"A scrum is a scrum, but we will incorporate the word into isiXhosa. For instance, if it's the scrum for Sharks, we would say iscrum so Krebe, now the non-isiXhosa speaking people understand that it's a scrum for ooKrebe...for someone wathing at home, I would say scrum, then maybe say lamadoda ayadiba, then the person understands that, scrum, dibana is one and the same thing."* (Masomelele).

Furthermore, employing a code-mixing approach can enhance viewer engagement and connection, as audiences often appreciate when their linguistic preferences are acknowledged. This strategy reflects a degree of understanding of audience dynamics and the importance of representation in media. By embracing such practices, these media figures contribute not only to the dissemination of information but also to promoting cultural diversity and cohesion within the South African context.

On the other hand, Zizo Tshwete, widely recognised for her influential role as a presenter on the lifestyle and entertainment show *Selimathunzi* (SABC 1, 2008–2015), strategically employed code-switching as a means of bridging linguistic divides and amplifying the reach and resonance of isiXhosa in mainstream media. Her distinctive bilingual style became a hallmark of her on-screen presence, most notably encapsulated in her iconic catchphrase, "*Selimathunzi dukuduku.*" This phrase, was delivered with a rhythmic cadence and charismatic flair that transcended linguistic boundaries, transforming it into a cultural touchstone that resonated with audiences

across South Africa, regardless of their home language. Reflecting on the importance of collaborating and bilingual broadcasting, Zizo listed:

- *“partnership between director (film/programming etc) and an isiXhosa speaker with a firm grip on the language across the ages (generations).*
- *Give more opportunities to ‘authentic’ speakers of the language.*
- *Seasoned professionals should be encouraged more to collaborate with young talent for the transfer of knowledge to occur” (Zizo).*

These suggestions underscore her commitment to linguistic inclusivity and her awareness of the diverse linguistic realities of South African audiences. By interweaving in isiXhosa and English, she cultivated a media environment that was both culturally affirming for isiXhosa speakers and accessible to those from different linguistic backgrounds. Zizo’s bilingual strategy aligns with Nkoala’s (2024) research on the efficacy of flexible language use in contemporary media platforms, such as podcasts and digital broadcasts. Nkoala argues that such linguistic fluidity fosters a sense of connection, relatability, and belonging among mixed audiences. In this context, Zizo’s approach can be seen as a deliberate effort to democratise media spaces by challenging the linguistic exclusivity often associated with English-dominated programming. Furthermore, her work contributes to a broader discourse on language equity in South African media. By highlighting isiXhosa while using English as a complementary linguistic tool, Zizo not only normalised the presence of indigenous languages on national television but also delicately contested the entrenched dominance of English, a concern echoed in Aiseng’s (2024) critique of post-apartheid media representation. Her bilingual delivery thus served a dual purpose. It celebrated isiXhosa as a vibrant and modern language of entertainment and communication, while also making space for linguistic mixture as a legitimate and empowering mode of expression. Ultimately, Zizo’s media practice exemplifies how code-switching can be connected not merely as a linguistic convenience, but as a culturally strategic and politically resonant act. Her ability to navigate and integrate multiple languages on screen reflects a deep understanding of South Africa’s multilingual landscape and highlights the transformative potential of inclusive language practices in shaping national identity and cultural representation.

Alos, Zizo brings a wealth of experience in live and pre-recorded mediums, showcasing her versatility as a performer and communicator. She works predominantly using isiXhosa and

English, allowing her to reach a diverse audience. Throughout her career with various platforms, she has demonstrated her adaptability in an ever-evolving landscape. What sets Zizo apart is her courageous and outspoken nature. She is not afraid to challenge the existing state of affairs regarding social and political issues, particularly in conversations surrounding identity. She invites critical dialogues and reflections, where she uses both isiXhosa and English to push conversational norms and promote more inclusive understandings. Her bilingualism enriches her work and empowers others to embrace their unique identities. She continues to make significant contributions to the media landscape linguistically and inspires many along the way with her ability to accommodate a larger audience by communicating using isiXhosa and English, as seen in the video clips below.

Clip 1 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aGNpaVCtle>)

Clip 2 ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7\\_vO492nfiY&t=99s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_vO492nfiY&t=99s))

The use of code-switching by these practitioners also served as a pragmatic response to the realities of South Africa's media environment, where English often functions as a lingua franca. This approach mitigates the risk of isolating non-isiXhosa speakers while simultaneously elevating the visibility of isiXhosa. It aligns with broader sociolinguistic theories that view code-switching not as a compromise but as a creative and strategic act of communication that reflects the lived experiences of multilingual communities (Fairclough, 2013). Moreover, this strategy fosters a sense of cultural pride among isiXhosa-speaking viewers by showcasing the language's versatility and adaptability in modern media contexts. The success of code-switching in these instances underscores its potential as a model for other indigenous language promoters, particularly in media formats that demand broad audience engagement without sacrificing linguistic authenticity.

### 6.2.2 Community Driven Content Creation

Another critical strategy identified in the interviews was the deliberate development of community-driven content, which places the lived experiences, cultural values, and linguistic nuances of isiXhosa-speaking audiences at the forefront of media production. This approach represents a significant departure from top-down content creation models that often marginalise indigenous languages and cultures in favour of dominant linguistic norms. Instead, it emphasises a participatory character, where media practitioners engage directly with their communities to co-

create narratives that are both authentic and resonant. By centring isiXhosa cultural expressions and idiomatic language use, this strategy fosters a profound sense of belonging and recognition among viewers. It enables media content to function not merely as entertainment or information, but as a mirror reflecting the complexities, aspirations, and identities of isiXhosa-speaking communities. Such content often incorporates traditional storytelling techniques, local idioms, and culturally specific references that are immediately recognisable to the target audience, thereby enhancing relatability and emotional engagement.

Moreover, this community-oriented approach strengthens the relationship between media practitioners and their audiences, creating a feedback loop in which content is continuously shaped by community input and reception. This dynamic not only reinforces the relevance and vitality of isiXhosa in mainstream television but also challenges the historical dominance of English and Afrikaans in South African media. It repositions isiXhosa as a language of modern expression, capable of articulating contemporary realities while remaining rooted in cultural heritage. Importantly, this strategy aligns with the broader objectives of the study, which seeks to explore how media can serve as a tool for linguistic and cultural empowerment in a multilingual society. By embedding isiXhosa into the fabric of mainstream media through community-driven content, practitioners contribute to the normalisation and rise of the language. This, in turn, supports efforts to promote linguistic diversity and promote equitable representation in the public sphere.

Masomelele Jucwa, a celebrated SuperSport rugby commentator, exemplified this strategy through his vibrant and culturally infused isiXhosa commentary, which gained widespread praise during the 2019 Rugby World Cup. His commentary, as noted by TimesLive (2019), captivated both isiXhosa and non-isiXhosa-speaking audiences, transcending linguistic boundaries through its emotional intensity and cultural authenticity. Masomelele explained:

*“...the strategy that we use the most is not trying to be too deep in isiXhosa...the non-isiXhosa speaking people are also tuning in. So if we get too deep, we might lose the Zulu guys that love it and want to hear it in isiXhosa or a language closer to Zulu. So we don't get too deep and we also borrow. We borrow a lot of words.”* (Masomelele)

His use of colloquial isiXhosa phrases and passionate delivery instilled the sport with a sense of cultural ownership, challenging rugby's historical association with English and Afrikaans-speaking communities in South Africa (Mesthrie, 2002). This approach aligns with Mano's (2012)

argument that broadcasting in indigenous languages fosters trust, strengthens cultural identity, and overcomes communication barriers in multilingual contexts. By tailoring his commentary to reflect the linguistic and cultural realities of isiXhosa speakers, Masomelele not only popularised rugby within these communities but also elevated isiXhosa's visibility on a national and international stage, demonstrating the power of community-driven content to reshape media narratives.

Similarly, Nandipha Plaatjie, an emerging news presenter at the SABC, adopted a community-focused approach by curating stories that highlight the richness of isiXhosa-speaking communities. Her broadcasts often feature narratives about societal realities and local achievements, ensuring that the realities of the isiXhosa communities are portrayed as dynamic and integral to contemporary South Africa as that is evident in the two clips below:

Clip 1 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUdF7neuchA>)

Clip 2 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2r5eRMPMKY>)

She articulated:

*“I deliberately choose stories that showcase the vibrancy and relevance of isiXhosa culture, so our people see themselves reflected on screen.”* (Nandipha).

This strategy resonates with Moqasa and Salawu's (2013) assertion that media should employ community-specific language and content to accurately represent societal realities, thereby fostering cultural pride and engagement. Nandipha's focus on localised narratives contributes to the preservation of isiXhosa's cultural heritage, a priority emphasized by Adegoju (2008), who advocates for the active promotion of indigenous languages through culturally relevant media content. By centering the experiences of isiXhosa speakers, Nandipha not only validates their cultural identity but also counters the marginalisation of indigenous languages in mainstream media, as critiqued by Aiseng (2024).

The emphasis on community-driven content creation by both Masomelele and Nandipha reflects a broader and deeply rooted commitment to linguistic and cultural empowerment within the South African media landscape. This strategy connects the expansive reach of television not merely as a platform for entertainment, but as a powerful medium for cultural affirmation and linguistic revitalization. By intentionally highlighting isiXhosa's distinctive linguistic features, such as its

rich idiomatic expressions, tonal variations, and oral storytelling traditions, these practitioners insert cultural authenticity into their programming. These elements are not only central to isiXhosa identity but also serve as vehicles for transmitting intergenerational knowledge and values.

This approach directly challenges the historical marginalization of indigenous languages in South African media, a legacy of colonial and apartheid-era language policies that systematically privileged English and Afrikaans while relegating African languages to the periphery (Gxilishe, 2021). In this context, the production of isiXhosa-centered content becomes an act of resistance and reclamation, asserting the legitimacy and value of indigenous linguistic and cultural forms in contemporary media spaces. Furthermore, by crafting narratives that resonate with the lived realities of isiXhosa-speaking audiences, Masomelele and Nandipha foster a profound sense of belonging and cultural pride. Their work affirms the everyday experiences of their viewers, validating their language and worldview in a public domain that has historically excluded them. At the same time, their content invites non-isiXhosa speakers into a space of cultural appreciation and understanding, thereby promoting cross-cultural dialogue and empathy.

This dual appeal, rooted in cultural specificity yet accessible to broader audiences—enhances the inclusivity of their broadcasts. It illustrates the transformative potential of community-driven content to bridge linguistic and cultural divides in South Africa's multilingual society. Ultimately, this strategy not only contributes to the preservation and promotion of isiXhosa but also exemplifies how media can be mobilized as a tool for social cohesion and cultural democracy. Furthermore, this strategy aligns closely with sociolinguistic theories that emphasize the influential role of media in shaping cultural identity, language ideologies, and social cohesion (Makalela, 2018). Media, as a pervasive cultural force, does not merely reflect societal values, it actively constructs and negotiates them. By embedding isiXhosa within narratives that are grounded in community values, traditions, and lived experiences, media practitioners contribute to the ongoing process of identity formation among isiXhosa speakers. This reinforces the language's vitality and relevance in everyday life, particularly in a context where globalised, English-dominated media content often marginalises indigenous languages and cultures (Crystal, 2002).

The strategic use of isiXhosa in mainstream media serves as a counter-hegemonic practice that resists linguistic homogenisation and affirms the legitimacy of local linguistic ecologies. It challenges the notion that English is the default language of modernity and progress, instead

positioning isiXhosa as equally capable of articulating contemporary realities, aspirations, and complexities. This not only elevates the status of isiXhosa but also contributes to a more inclusive and pluralistic media environment. Moreover, the success of this approach suggests that community-driven content creation is not merely a practical tool for language promotion, it is a transformative force capable of redefining media representation in post-apartheid South Africa. It reconfigures the media landscape to be more reflective of the country's linguistic and cultural diversity, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and participation among historically marginalized communities. In doing so, it supports broader national goals of reconciliation, social justice, and cultural democracy, demonstrating the profound potential of media to serve as a catalyst for societal transformation.

### 6.2.3 Integration of Traditional Storytelling Techniques

In this study, media practitioners exhibited a purposeful and culturally resonant application of traditional isiXhosa storytelling techniques, including the strategic use of proverbs, metaphors, idiomatic expressions, and oral narrative structures. These elements, deeply rooted to isiXhosa oral heritage, were not merely decorative but functioned as powerful communicative tools that enriched the narrative texture of media content. By weaving these techniques into their broadcasts, practitioners created a dynamic interplay between the past and the present, allowing ancestral wisdom to inform and shape contemporary storytelling. The use of proverbs, for instance, conveyed complex ideas succinctly while grounding the content in communal values and shared historical consciousness. Metaphors and symbolic language added layers of meaning, inviting audiences to engage more deeply with the material. Oral narrative styles characterised by rhythm, repetition, and audience interaction evoked the traditional storytelling circles of rural communities, fostering a sense of intimacy and cultural continuity.

This deliberate integration of indigenous narrative forms served multiple purposes. It captivated isiXhosa-speaking audiences by sustaining their linguistic identity and cultural heritage, while also challenging the dominance of Western media norms. Furthermore, it revitalized the expressive potential of the isiXhosa language in a digital age, positioning it not as a relic of the past but as a living, evolving medium of communication. In doing so, these practitioners actively resisted the historical marginalisation of indigenous languages and asserted the relevance and richness of isiXhosa in shaping modern media discourse.

Masomelele frequently incorporated isiXhosa proverbs into his commentary to frame stories with cultural depth and moral insight. For instance, he would sometimes cite proverbs such as “*Indlovu ayisindwa ngumboko wayo*” (An elephant does not find its own trunk heavy) to underscore themes of self-reliance and the abilities of an individuals. This approach aligns with Ikuenobe’s (2018) assertion that oral traditions, including proverbs and storytelling, are critical for transmitting cultural knowledge and sustaining social cohesion in African societies. By weaving these traditional elements into modern journalism, Masomelele enriched his commentary with layers of meaning that affirmed isiXhosa’s cultural heritage and connected viewers to their communal roots. His use of proverbs also served as a subtle act of resistance against the erosion of indigenous knowledge systems, a consequence of colonial and apartheid-era policies that prioritised European linguistic frameworks (Bamgbose, 1991).

Also, Masomelele demonstrated the innovative fusion of traditional isiXhosa oral artistry with contemporary sports media. His commentary style was not merely descriptive but deeply performative, echoing the cadence, rhythm, and emotive delivery characteristic of isiXhosa oral storytelling traditions. Drawing on the legacy of <sup>2</sup>*imbongi* and griots, Masomelele infused his broadcasts with vivid metaphors, alliterative phrasing, and tonal cadence that transformed routine sports coverage into immersive cultural performances. This stylistic approach did more than entertain, it reorganised rugby, a sport historically associated with English and Afrikaans-speaking audiences, within an isiXhosa cultural framework. By doing so, Masomelele made the sport linguistically and emotionally accessible to isiXhosa-speaking viewers, fostering a sense of inclusion and cultural pride. His use of expressive language and traditional narrative devices not only captivated audiences but also asserted the legitimacy and richness of isiXhosa as a medium for modern commentary. Moreover, Masomele’s work challenged the linguistic hegemony of South African sports media, which has long privileged colonial languages in its coverage and presentation (Mesthrie, 2002). His ability to seamlessly blend oral tradition with the fast-paced demands of live sports broadcasting demonstrated the adaptability and expressive depth of isiXhosa. In doing so, he contributed to the broader project of linguistic promotion, positioning

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<sup>2</sup> An *imbongi* is a traditional praise poet in various Southern African cultures, particularly among the Xhosa, Zulu, and Swazi peoples. The role of the *imbongi* is deeply respected and culturally significant.

isiXhosa not as a language confined to heritage or domestic spaces, but as a dynamic and powerful tool for contemporary storytelling in a globalised media environment.

The deliberate use of traditional isiXhosa storytelling techniques by both Lerato and Masomelele underscores a profound commitment to promoting and celebrating the linguistic and cultural integrity of isiXhosa. Their integration of proverbs, metaphors, and oral narrative styles is not merely an aesthetic choice but a strategic act of cultural affirmation. These methods resonate deeply with audiences by invoking shared cultural memories, ancestral wisdom, and collective values that are embedded in the isiXhosa worldview. In doing so, they foster a powerful sense of pride, identity, and belonging among isiXhosa-speaking communities, reinforcing the emotional and cultural ties that bind language to lived experience. Furthermore, this approach serves as a potent counter-narrative to the standardizing tendencies of mainstream media, which often prioritize English and other dominant languages at the expense of indigenous linguistic diversity (Crystal, 2002). In a media landscape increasingly shaped by globalised norms and standardised forms of expression, the work of Masomelele challenges the marginalisation of isiXhosa by asserting its relevance, adaptability, and expressive richness. His commentary not only resists linguistic erasure but also reimagine isiXhosa as a vibrant, modern medium capable of articulating contemporary realities while remaining rooted in tradition.

By embedding these oral traditions into his media work, he contributes to the ongoing promotion of isiXhosa. He ensures that its nuanced expressive forms, once confined to familial or rural settings, are now accessible to broader audiences through television and digital platforms. This not only preserves the language for future generations but also repositions it as a dynamic force within South Africa's multilingual media conversation. His efforts exemplify how indigenous languages can thrive in modern contexts when given space, creativity, and cultural respect.

### 6.3 Audience Perceptions and Cultural Impact

The interviews conducted with ten audience members, representing a diverse cross-section of South African society, provided rich insights into the ways in which the promotion of isiXhosa on television shapes cultural identity, fosters linguistic pride, and influences societal perceptions. The participants, ranging in age from 18 to 60 and varying in gender and linguistic background (as demonstrated in Table 2), offered perspectives that illuminated the broader cultural and social implications of isiXhosa's increased visibility in mainstream media. Their responses underscored

the transformative potential of television as a platform for affirming indigenous languages, bridging linguistic divides, and engaging diverse audiences in a multilingual society.

**Table 2: Audience Demographics**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Linguistic background</b>
Alpha	28	Male	(Student)	isiXhosa, IsiZulu, and English
Bravo	26	Male	(Student)	isiXhosa and English
Charlie	28	Male	Attorney	isiXhosa and English
Delta	51	Male	Operational Manager (Nursing)	IsiXhosa and English
Juliette	28	Female	Marketing	IsiXhosa, Setswana, and English
Mike	31	Male	Contractor	IsiXhosa, and English
Oscar	29	Male	NA	IsiXhosa and English
Romeo	29	Male	NA	IsiXhosa, Afrikaans, and English
Sierra	50	Male	Administrative Officer	isiXhosa and English
Victor	60	Male	NA	isiXhosa and English

### 6.3.1 Validation of Cultural Identity

A noticeable and recurrent theme that emerged among audience members was the deeply felt sense of cultural affirmation and validation associated with the prominent representation of isiXhosa on television. For many isiXhosa-speaking participants, the visibility and audibility of their mother tongue within mainstream media landscapes transcended mere linguistic inclusion, it functioned as a potent symbol of recognition and respect for their cultural identity. This phenomenon underscores the critical role of language in the construction and reinforcement of cultural belonging. The integration of isiXhosa into widely consumed media content not only challenged historical patterns of marginalisation but also fostered a renewed sense of pride and legitimacy among speakers. In this context, media representation becomes a vehicle through which cultural heritage is not only preserved but also celebrated, thereby contributing to broader discourses of inclusivity and multiculturalism within the national narrative as Bravo commented:

*“In as much as it was happening but communicated. It kind of made me feel that there are people who are like me and who speak the same language I speak on television...another show called Tsha Tsha, it was aired in the year 2000. I still remember some of the episodes till this day. I still remember some of the things they used to say to me, for some time, that I am glad to pursue an acting career, specifically where I act and communicate in my own native language. So I would say those kind of shows played a very huge role in inspiring us...”* (Bravo).

This sentiment aligns with Tomasello’s (2010) argument that language is a cornerstone of social identity, facilitating community cohesion and a shared sense of belonging. By showcasing isiXhosa in a high-profile context, TV shows like “*Tsha Tsha*” helped counter the historical marginalisation of indigenous languages in South African media, a legacy of colonial and apartheid policies that prioritised English and Afrikaans (Gxilishe, 2021).

Some participants similarly highlighted the cultural significance of isiXhosa representation in media spaces traditionally dominated by other languages. Charlie expressed appreciation for Masomelele Jucwa’s rugby commentary stating:

*“His isiXhosa commentary makes rugby feel like it speaks to us, not just English or Afrikaans fans. It’s like the sport finally includes our community.”* (Charlie).

This response reflects the importance of media in reclaiming cultural spaces for indigenous language speakers, particularly in contexts like sports, which have historically been associated with colonial linguistic hierarchies (Mesthrie, 2002). By presenting isiXhosa as a vibrant and legitimate medium for mainstream content, practitioners fostered a sense of pride and ownership among audiences, reinforcing the language’s role in shaping collective identity.

### 6.3.2 Engagement with Younger Audiences

Younger audience members, aged 18–30, emphasised the appeal of modernised isiXhosa content, particularly when delivered through innovative and youth-oriented platforms as Bravo commented:

*“I mean, I would say it has evolved. The communication, the way isiXhosa is presented, has evolved, and the graphics and the visuals. I think everything has evolved compared to the first time I experienced it. I think three years ago, our language, isiXhosa, took social media by storm, where people were using the word ‘Sabawel’. I think some other words sparked interest in our language. Rather than people using the word ‘mfondini’ or ‘kwedini’, now people were using the word ‘Sabawel’. I think if we could use social media to that extent to promote those catchy words, that would make people interested in the language” (Bravo).*

This enthusiasm for contemporary isiXhosa content supports Mabika’s (2024) assertion that social media platforms, with their use of modern elements like hashtags, code-mixing, and viral trends, can be powerful tools for promoting indigenous languages among tech-savvy youth. Lerato’s strategic use of bilingualism and digital media countered the observed preference for English on social platforms, as noted by Malatji and Lesame (2019), who found that South African youth often favor English over indigenous languages in online communication. By presenting isiXhosa as dynamic and adaptable, media practitioners like Lerato fostered linguistic pride among younger audiences, encouraging them to embrace their heritage language in both traditional and digital media contexts.

The engagement of younger audiences also highlighted the role of media figures as cultural influencers who can reshape language attitudes. Participants appreciated content that blended traditional isiXhosa elements, such as proverbs, with modern expressions, creating a sense of

continuity between cultural heritage and contemporary identity. This approach not only made isiXhosa more accessible to youth but also positioned it as a language of innovation and relevance, challenging the perception that indigenous languages are outdated or confined to academic settings (Adegoju, 2008). The success of these efforts suggests that media practitioners play a critical role in sustaining isiXhosa's vitality among future generations, a key factor in long-term language preservation.

### 6.3.3 Bridging Linguistic Divides

Participants that have not been fully exposed to isiXhosa in their lives provided compelling evidence of the cross-linguistic appeal of isiXhosa content, driven by its cultural richness, emotional resonance, and strategic use of bilingual elements. Romeo who has been mostly exposed to Afrikaans and English in his life as compared to isiXhosa remarked:

*“You know Eastern Cape is the home of rugby, even though at home we watch it with English Commentary, but ever since ndaqala uybukela ngesiXhosa, I prefer sona more than English or Afrikaans ngoku.”* (Romeo).

This response underscores the ability of culturally authentic and engaging content to transcend linguistic barriers, fostering curiosity and appreciation among non-speakers. It aligns with Ndhlovu's (2015) view that media can serve as a bridge across societal divisions by showcasing linguistic diversity as a unifying force rather than a source of fragmentation.

Similarly, Alpha, a participant that grew up in Kwa-Zulu Natal where he was mostly exposed to isiZulu than isiXhosa noted:

*“The dynamic ways or approach styles of presenting make some of us to appreciate the language even though we only get to communicate in it at home but seeing the media practitioners or actors like uTshawe Emzini Wezinsizwa apho kukho maZulu nabe Sotho, that shows inclusivity and make us appreciate our languages even more”* (Alpha).

This inclusivity challenges the dominance of English and isiZulu in South African media, as critiqued by Aiseng (2024), who argues that unequal language representation perpetuates linguistic hierarchies. By creating content that resonates with diverse audiences, practitioners like Zizo and Masomelele contributed to a more inclusive media landscape, promoting cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect in a multilingual society. The ability of isiXhosa content to

engage non-speakers also highlights its potential to foster social cohesion in South Africa, a nation with a complex history of linguistic and cultural division (Mesthrie, 2002). Participants' willingness to engage with isiXhosa, even without full fluency, suggests that media can play a transformative role in normalising indigenous languages and challenging stereotypes about their relevance. These findings underscore the importance of strategic content creation that balances cultural authenticity with accessibility, offering a model for promoting other indigenous languages in mainstream media.

## 6.4 Challenges in Promoting isiXhosa

While media practitioners made a remarkable progress in elevating the status and visibility of isiXhosa on South African television, their efforts remain significantly constrained by fixed systemic and structural barriers within the broader media landscape. These challenges are not merely operational but are deeply rooted in the country's historical legacy of linguistic marginalization, where indigenous languages were sidelined in favor of English and Afrikaans during the apartheid era. This legacy continues to shape contemporary media practices, often privileging dominant languages in terms of funding, airtime, and audience reach. Moreover, the current media ecosystem is heavily influenced by market-driven imperatives that prioritise profitability and mass appeal, often to the detriment of linguistic diversity. Indigenous language programming, including isiXhosa content, frequently struggles to secure adequate sponsorship and advertising revenue, limiting its production quality and consistency. This commercial pressure creates a cycle where isiXhosa content is underfunded, under-promoted, and ultimately under-consumed, reinforcing perceptions of its limited viability in mainstream media.

Ultimately, the promotion of isiXhosa in South African television cannot rest solely on the shoulders of passionate individuals within the industry. It requires a concerted effort from government bodies, media institutions, advertisers, and the public to create an environment where indigenous languages are not only preserved but celebrated as integral components of the national identity.

### 6.4.1 Resource Limitations

One of the most pressing challenges is the scarcity of financial and scheduling resources allocated to isiXhosa programming. Lerato Fekisi, highlighted the prioritisation of English and isiZulu content due to their perceived broader audience reach, stating:

*“...absolutely, it’s too little. For instance, for SABC the only content we really have zindabazesXhosa from 7 to half past 7 ebsuku unlike u 404 which is an English Channel, the channel plays 24 hours...and you are competing against English that plays the entire day”* (Lerato).

This practice reflects Aiseng’s (2024) critique of unequal language representation in South African media, which perpetuates linguistic hierarchies established during colonial and apartheid eras (Mesthrie, 2020). The marginalisation of isiXhosa in scheduling decisions limits its visibility and accessibility, undermining efforts to promote the language as a central component of national media

Nandipha Plaatjie, an entry-level SABC news presenter, further noted the impact of budget constraints, explaining:

*“Budget cuts mean we can’t produce as many isiXhosa shows as we’d like, and the ones we do produce often lack the resources for high-quality production.”*

This aligns with Hlophe’s (2014) observation that minority languages, including isiXhosa, consistently receive disproportionately less airtime and funding at the SABC compared to dominant languages. The lack of investment in isiXhosa programming not only restricts the quantity and quality of content but also signals a broader institutional undervaluation of indigenous languages, reinforcing their secondary status in the media landscape. Addressing these resource limitations requires policy interventions to ensure equitable funding and airtime distribution across South Africa’s official languages.

#### 6.4.2 Balancing Linguistic Authenticity and Audience Accessibility

Media practitioners operating within South Africa’s multilingual landscape encounter a persistent and nuanced challenge. The need to balance linguistic authenticity with the imperative to engage a linguistically diverse and often heterogeneous audience. This tension is representative of broader sociolinguistic dynamics in post-apartheid media, where the promotion of indigenous languages such as isiXhosa must contend with the strong presence of English as a lingua franca and a marker of socioeconomic mobility. Nandipha Plaatjie articulated this dilemma, stating:

*“Some viewers want more English to understand the content better, but too much English dilutes our focus on isiXhosa and weakens its cultural impact.”* (Nandipha).

Her observation underscores the dual pressures faced by content creators. On one hand, the need to ensure accessibility and comprehension across a broad audience base, and on the other, the imperative to preserve the linguistic and cultural integrity of isiXhosa media content. This challenge aligns with Moqasa and Salawu's (2013) argument that media should employ community-specific language strategies that resonate with local audiences while safeguarding cultural authenticity. Their work emphasises the importance of linguistic relatability in fostering audience identification and cultural continuity. However, the increasing incorporation of English, often driven by commercial imperatives and audience analytics, risks marginalising isiXhosa and undermining efforts to normalise its use in mainstream media.

The resultant balancing act is not merely a technical or editorial concern but a reflection of deeper ideological and structural tensions within South Africa's media ecology. It raises critical questions about whose linguistic preferences are prioritised, how language hierarchies are reproduced through media, and what constitutes meaningful representation in a multilingual democracy. For practitioners committed to the promotion of isiXhosa, navigating this ground requires not only creative negotiation but also institutional support and policy frameworks that values linguistic diversity as a public good rather than a market liability.

Lerato highlighted a related issue, noting that urban audiences sometimes perceive isiXhosa as “rural” or less relevant to modern contexts. She explained:

*“I think we are sleeping a lot on older people ndik'xelele. I think there is so much rich culture in isiXhosa professors, bakhona abantu that were part of the formation of the isiXhosa bible, people that wrote beautiful books, who understand isiXhosa culture very well who can come and teach on it...because as long as you have a strong opinion and you can back it up, abantu bayamamela” (Lerato).*

This observation underscores the tension between local language promotion and the pervasive influence of globalized media, as discussed by Crystal (2002), who argues that English's dominance in popular culture often marginalizes indigenous languages. Practitioners must navigate these perceptions by crafting content that showcases isiXhosa's versatility and relevance, a task that requires both creativity and cultural sensitivity to avoid alienating audiences or diluting the language's authenticity.

### 6.4.3 Lack of Formal Language Training

The absence of standardized training programs for isiXhosa media presentation emerged as a significant barrier, particularly for newer practitioners. Veteran media practitioners possess invaluable insights, which can enhance the “authenticity” and depth of media representations. Their experience can guide new professionals in understanding the importance of contextually relevant narratives and ethical storytelling that honours as mentors, providing guidance on challenges faced in the industry, including audience engagement and content distribution. For instance, Nandipha and Lerato commented:

*“I do not specifically have a whole translation module. So when I was starting at the SABC, I would translate, and then I would ask the senior reporters to help check my isiXhosa translation. And then most of the feedback that I got was that I translated as if I'm engaging, like in a day-to-day conversation, you know?”* (Nandipha).

*“But the nice thing is also sinabantu within ASABC, abane experience in terms of isiXhosa because there are producers, bulletin writers, bulletin readers who assist us.”* (Lerato).

This institutional gap in support for indigenous language development is consistent with Kamwangamalu’s (2019) assertion that the absence of robust educational and professional training frameworks significantly impedes the advancement and normalisation of African languages in public domains. Without structured opportunities for formal instruction and skill development in languages such as isiXhosa, both linguistic proficiency and the capacity to use the language in specialised contexts, such as journalism, broadcasting, and public communication remain underdeveloped. The consequences of this deficiency are multifaceted. On a practical level, the lack of targeted training programs affects media practitioners’ confidence in using isiXhosa fluently and accurately, particularly in high-stakes or technical reporting. This can lead to inconsistencies in language use, code-switching, or reliance on English terminology, which in turn may erode the perceived legitimacy and authority of isiXhosa as a medium of professional discourse. More broadly, this undermines the standardisation and prestige of the language, reinforcing societal hierarchies that privilege English as the default language of professionalism and expertise.

Salawu (2006) underscores this concern by highlighting the critical need for capacity-building initiatives aimed at strengthening indigenous language media. He argues that without deliberate investment in training, mentorship, and institutional infrastructure, efforts to promote African languages in the media will remain fragmented and unsustainable. The professionalism of isiXhosa broadcasts, therefore, hinges not only on individual talent or passion but on systemic support that equips practitioners with the linguistic, technical, and editorial competencies required to produce high-quality content. In this context, the development of isiXhosa media must be understood as part of a broader sociopolitical project, one that seeks to redress historical marginalisation and affirm linguistic diversity as a cornerstone of democratic participation. Addressing the training gap is thus not merely a matter of improving media outputs but of fostering linguistic justice and cultural empowerment in the post-apartheid public sphere.

The absence of specialised training also reflects broader systemic issues, such as the underinvestment in indigenous language development compared to English and Afrikaans, which have well-established training frameworks (Gxilishe, 2021). Developing comprehensive training programs tailored to isiXhosa media presentation, including terminology for technical and modern contexts, is essential to equip practitioners with the skills needed to deliver high-quality content. Such initiatives could also standardise isiXhosa usage in media, enhancing its credibility and appeal to audiences.

#### 6.4.4 Competition with Dominant Languages

The dominance of English and isiZulu in South African media poses a difficult challenge to isiXhosa promotion, driven by both demographic and market factors. Lerato Fekisi Observed:

*“IsiZulu gets more airtime because it has more speakers, but isiXhosa deserves equal representation as an official language.”* (Lerato).

According to Statistics South Africa (2023), isiZulu is spoken by 24.4% of the population, compared to isiXhosa’s 14.7%, influencing media organisations’ prioritisation of content to maximise audience reach. This competition reflects Piller’s (2016) broader observation that linguistic hierarchies in media often marginalise non-dominant languages, limiting their visibility and cultural impact.

Aiseng (2024) argues that media organisations must adopt equitable language policies to serve all linguistic communities fairly, rather than favouring languages with larger speaker bases. The prioritisation of English and isiZulu not only restricts isiXhosa's airtime but also reinforces perceptions of its secondary status, perpetuating historical inequalities (Mesthrie, 2020). For practitioners like Masomelele, this challenge necessitates advocacy for greater representation, alongside creative strategies to make isiXhosa content stand out in a competitive media landscape. Addressing this issue requires a concerted effort from media regulators, broadcasters, and policymakers to ensure that all official languages, including isiXhosa, are afforded equal opportunities for representation and promotion.

Taken together, these challenges illuminate the deeply embedded structural barriers that continue to hinder the promotion and normalisation of isiXhosa within South Africa's media landscape. These are not isolated or secondary obstacles, but rather manifestations of broader systemic inequities that have historically marginalised indigenous languages in favour of dominant colonial languages. The persistence of such barriers underscores the need for a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy to support linguistic diversity in the media sector. Addressing these challenges requires more than symbolic gestures or isolated interventions. A sustainable and transformative approach must include increased and targeted funding for indigenous language content, ensuring that isiXhosa media productions are not only viable but competitive in terms of quality and reach. Equitable airtime allocation is also essential, as it directly influences audience exposure and the perceived legitimacy of isiXhosa as a language of public discourse. Furthermore, the establishment of specialised training programs tailored to the linguistic and cultural nuances of isiXhosa media is critical for cultivating a new generation of skilled practitioners who can produce content that is both linguistically authentic and professionally rigorous.

Equally important are policy frameworks that explicitly prioritise linguistic diversity as a national imperative. Such policies must go beyond rhetorical commitments and be backed by enforceable mechanisms that hold media institutions accountable for inclusive language practices. This includes integrating indigenous languages into content quotas, funding criteria, and regulatory standards. Despite these difficult challenges, the resilience, innovation, and cultural commitment demonstrated by isiXhosa media practitioners offer a powerful counter-narrative. Their efforts not only sustain the presence of isiXhosa in mainstream media but also reimagine its role as a vehicle

for cultural expression, identity affirmation, and social transformation. These experiences provide valuable insights and models for the promotion of other indigenous languages, both within South Africa and in similarly multilingual contexts globally. In this way, the struggle for isiXhosa media representation becomes part of a broader movement toward linguistic justice and cultural equity in the postcolonial world.

## 6.5 Textual and Thematic Analysis

The qualitative data gathered from interviews with media practitioners and audience members, combined with a content analysis of selected media outputs, provided a multi-dimensional understanding of the strategies and impacts of isiXhosa promotion on South African television. Thematic analysis of the interviews identified three core themes: cultural pride, linguistic inclusivity, and intergenerational engagement, which summarise the ways in which media practitioners leverage isiXhosa to foster cultural identity and social cohesion. Simultaneously, the textual analysis of media outputs, including news reports, entertainment programs, and sports commentary, revealed the deliberate integration of linguistic and cultural elements that reinforce these themes, aligning with theoretical frameworks in media and sociolinguistics.

### 6.5.1 Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis conducted in this study revealed three interrelated and mutually reinforcing themes that form the foundation of efforts to promote isiXhosa within the South African media landscape. These themes not only reflect the lived experiences and strategic choices of media practitioners but also illuminate the broader sociocultural and institutional dynamics that shape language representation in the public sphere. By unpacking these themes, the analysis provides a nuanced understanding of the opportunities and constraints involved in advancing isiXhosa as a language of media production, cultural expression, and public engagement.

1. **Cultural Pride:** The use of isiXhosa on television was consistently described as a powerful mechanism for validating and amplifying cultural identity among audiences. Zizo Tshwete's charismatic and confident presentation style on *Selimathunzi* inspired viewers to embrace their Xhosa heritage, with audience members citing her as a symbol of linguistic and cultural pride. Similarly, Masomelele Jucwa's passionate rugby commentary, infused with isiXhosa idioms and emotional resonance, transformed sports into a cultural celebration, fostering a sense of ownership among isiXhosa-speaking communities. This

theme aligns with Tomaselli's (2010) argument that language in media serves as a vehicle for social identity, reinforcing community cohesion and countering historical marginalization (Gxilishe, 2021). By foregrounding isiXhosa, practitioners validated the language's cultural significance, challenging the dominance of English and Afrikaans in mainstream media spaces.

2. **Linguistic Inclusivity:** Media practitioners' strategic use of code-switching and bilingual programming emerged as a key driver of linguistic inclusivity, enabling isiXhosa content to reach diverse audiences while maintaining its cultural authenticity. Lerato Fekisi's seamless integration of isiXhosa and English in news reports made complex stories accessible to multilingual urban viewers, while Zizo Tshwete's bilingual catchphrases on *Selimathunzi* drew in non-isiXhosa speakers. This approach aligns with Fairclough's (2013) perspective that language in media is a site of power and inclusion, capable of bridging societal divides. By prioritising isiXhosa while incorporating English as a complementary tool, media practitioners created content that was both culturally affirming and broadly engaging, fostering cross-linguistic appreciation and challenging linguistic hierarchies critiqued by Aiseng (2024).
3. **Intergenerational Engagement:** The promotion of isiXhosa resonated across age groups, reflecting its ability to bridge generational divides. Younger audiences (18–30) expressed enthusiasm for modernised content, such as the use of the word "*sabaweli*", which blended isiXhosa with contemporary slang and digital trends. Older viewers (40–60), meanwhile, appreciated traditional elements, such as Masomelele Jucwa's use of isiXhosa proverbs and oral storytelling techniques in rugby commentary. This intergenerational appeal supports Mkhize and Balfour's (2017) call for media to foster linguistic diversity that engages both youth and elders, ensuring the language's vitality across generations. By balancing traditional and modern approaches, practitioners sustained isiXhosa's relevance in a rapidly evolving media landscape.

### 6.5.2 Content Analysis

The content analysis of selected media outputs, Lerato Fekisi's news reports, Zizo Tshwete's interviews, and Masomelele Jucwa's rugby commentary revealed a strategic and deliberate use of isiXhosa linguistic and cultural elements to reinforce the themes identified above. These outputs

were examined for their use of idioms, proverbs, metaphors, and culturally resonant narratives, which collectively enhanced the emotional and cultural impact of the content.

1. **Masomelele Jucwa’s Rugby Commentary:** Masomelele’s commentary stood out for its rhythmic, performative style and vivid metaphors, which mirrored traditional isiXhosa oral storytelling. Phrases like “*Indoda iyotyia ukubila kwebunzi layo*” (A man eats from the sweat of his brow) injected excitement and cultural connection into broadcasts, transforming rugby matches into cultural spectacles. These metaphors and idioms not only heightened audience engagement but also made the sport feel accessible and relevant to isiXhosa-speaking communities, challenging its historical association with English and Afrikaans (Mesthrie, 2002). The use of such language aligns with Fowler’s (2013) argument that positive and evocative language in media shapes audience perceptions, reinforcing isiXhosa’s cultural and emotional significance.
2. **Zizo Tshwete’s Interviews:** Zizo’s presentation style was characterised by vibrant blend of isiXhosa and English, often incorporating catchy phrase and culturally resonant humour. Her iconic phrase “*Selimathunzi dukuduku*” had a universal appeal, creating a memorable cultural touchstone that engaged both isiXhosa and non-isiXhosa-speaking viewers. The episodes featured narratives celebrating isiXhosa traditions, such as community festivals and storytelling events, which reinforced cultural pride and inclusivity. This approach supports Nkoala’s (2024) argument that flexible language use in media enhances audience connection and promotes indigenous languages.
3. **Lerato Fekisi’s News Reports:** Lerato’s broadcasts frequently incorporated isiXhosa proverbs to frame stories with cultural and moral significance. For example, in a report on a community development project, she used the proverb “*Umntu ngumntu ngabantu*” (A person is a person through others) to emphasize the philosophy of *ubuntu*—the interconnectedness and mutual support within communities. This choice resonated deeply with isiXhosa-speaking audiences, reinforcing values central to their cultural identity. The use of such proverbs aligns with Ikuenobe’s (2018) emphasis on oral traditions as vital for transmitting cultural knowledge, enhancing the authenticity and relatability of Lerato’s reporting.

The deliberate integration of these linguistic and cultural elements across media outputs underscores the practitioners' commitment to promoting isiXhosa as a dynamic and vital language. By embedding idioms, proverbs, and metaphors, they created content that resonated with audiences on both emotional and cultural levels, fostering a sense of pride and belonging. This approach also countered the erosion of indigenous knowledge systems noted by Bamgbose (1991), ensuring that isiXhosa's rich oral traditions remain vibrant in modern media contexts. The findings from the content analysis, combined with the thematic insights from interviews, highlight the transformative potential of strategic language use in media to reshape cultural narratives and promote linguistic equity in South Africa.

The interplay of these themes and content elements suggests that isiXhosa promotion is not merely a linguistic endeavour but a cultural and social movement. The media outputs analyzed demonstrate how practitioners navigate the complexities of a multilingual society, using isiXhosa to affirm identity, foster inclusivity, and engage diverse audiences. These findings align with broader sociolinguistic theories that emphasize the role of media in shaping language attitudes and cultural representation (Makalela, 2018), offering a robust foundation for future research into indigenous language promotion in digital and traditional media platforms.

### 6.5.3 The Analysis of Key Questions Asked from the Audience

This section will discuss the observations among five audiences out of ten. These audiences are selected based on their similarities with the unselected audiences. As explained previously, the audiences' names will be substituted with pseudonyms, and the names that appear below are not the audiences' government names.

An audience participant, whom I will refer to as Alpha. Alpha is an isiXhosa-speaking PhD candidate at Rhodes University. He first explained his exposure to isiXhosa on television, naming the SABC telenovelas like *Velaphi*, stating that the exposure was very enlightening as it coincided with the time. Still, on the telenovela as an example, he remarks how well those isiXhosa actors and the producers represented the entire isiXhosa community, promoting isiXhosa on television, as there was even a white person speaking isiXhosa. He admires that this telenovela promoted language and unity as it served the family in a comedic manner. He believes that the storyline on the show might have motivated other isiXhosa-speaking people, as it showed isiXhosa people in better working environments than the typical portrayal of unemployed people. He then compared

the media practitioners or media figures of the past to the present, arguing that proper language promotion is still relevant, as there is still a rise and inclusion in academia and media. He does not disregard the contribution of social media as he notes how social media platforms allow individuals to use their language of choice, which puts isiXhosa further on the map. He also complements the role played by the government in inclusion, as the idea was about nation-building. He states that the idea of nation-building led to the development of pride and confidence in many communities, including the isiXhosa community.

Alpha also touches on the different dialects that exist within the isiXhosa language. He argues that different dialects should be understood as dialects, as there is no place and time in history where there was only one dialect, which enriches the language itself. He proceeds to argue on a larger scale, stating that English is one of the most understood languages across the world. Therefore, it is better to translate isiXhosa into English as it becomes easier to understand for most people as compared to translating English into isiXhosa. He supports his argument by giving an example of the isiXhosa TV drama *Ityala lamawele*, now available on Netflix. He argues that the isiXhosa used in the Drama series is not easy to understand, but it becomes much better when translated into English. As he continues with the role of translation and subtitles on television, he notes that having subtitles in isiXhosa is impossible due to the country's diversity, as that would mean some indigenous languages are left out. He touches on the fact that during the apartheid era, English and Afrikaans were the most dominant languages in the media. It has been evident that isiZulu is currently one of the well-competing languages. Here, he argues that it should be on the isiXhosa-speaking media figures to expose and promote isiXhosa more and allow more isiXhosa-speaking people to tell their stories in their indigenous language.

An audience which I refer to as Oscar. Oscar is an isiXhosa-speaking individual in his late 20s. Oscar first noticed the role and effort that SABC implemented, including isiXhosa, on television. Like the above participant, he notes the idea of nation-building, using the sitcom *Emzini Wezinsizwa* as an example. He argues that this sitcom introduced actors such as Vusi Thanda (who played Tshawe in the sitcom), who was well articulated in isiXhosa and represented the isiXhosa culture in a "true" reflection. He then depicts the isiXhosa promotion currently as the misguided one, as he believes that the portrayal of isiXhosa on television is now not the "true" reflection of how isiXhosa people outside the media live on a day-to-day basis. He argues that most of the

current shows on TV represent isiXhosa as a language that uses a lot of vulgar language, which confirms the stereotypes of non-isiXhosa speaking people. He gives a general example that when they learn a new language, most people start with a strong language. Then he argues that these new TV shows paint the isiXhosa community as people with vulgar. He criticises the use of non-isiXhosa-speaking people who are required to speak isiXhosa when they act, leading to a “broken” articulation of isiXhosa. He argues that for a better promotion and representation of isiXhosa, the media should use people who understand the culture itself, then isiXhosa as a culture would have a better reflection on television.

Oscar continues the importance of understanding the culture before understanding the language. He makes the isiXhosa initiation school one of his base examples, stating that the way the ritual is represented on television has a negative impact on the entire community, which brings shame to the language itself because language is associated with its people and its culture. Now he argues that for a better promotion of isiXhosa, the presenters and media practitioners should start using their home languages more when they interact with black people, unless there is a language barrier. Oscar then compares the productions between the promotion on isiZulu and isiXhosa using the *uShaka iLembe* drama series as an example. He says there should be more shows like *uShaka iLembe* that will focus on isiXhosa. He states that he has noticed that 99% of the show uses isiZulu, a good strategy to promote the language. Therefore, isiXhosa should have more similar shows focusing on isiXhosa. He argues that multiple documentaries could be used as a tool to promote isiXhosa, taking the history of the settlers' first encounter with the Grahamstown citizens. He states that if such documentaries could be 90% isiXhosa, that would bring more attraction to the language.

I refer to this audience participant as Bravo, also an isiXhosa-speaking individual. He says he sees the use of isiXhosa on television as a confidence booster, seeing people who speak the same language as him on television, as he viewed TV stars as people of high class. He remarks that TV shows like *Tsha Tsha* once inspired him to think of pursuing an acting career solely based on speaking isiXhosa. He debates that the old TV shows used to unite the isiXhosa community as these shows recognised different dialects. He denotes the evolution of isiXhosa on television, stating that there are more isiXhosa presenters and TV series than 20 years ago. His debate is based on the amount of isiXhosa communication found even on TV shows that are not specifically

isiXhosa shows. He says that the emergence of isiXhosa has made many people comfortable using isiXhosa on television. He argues that this evolution of isiXhosa is good as the language will evolve in different ways and have an influence on different people, leading to the isiXhosa community realising that there is a distinct dialect for each society, and that could be used as a strategy to promote these different dialects in media even further.

Bravo acknowledges that miscommunication is sometimes caused by differences in the dialects in which they are communicated. However, he also argues that if he, as a viewer, understood that different dialects contain words that mean different things in different geographical areas, then other viewers can have the same understanding. At the same time, he argues that presenters who are responsible for delivering information for the entire nation should use standardised isiXhosa that could be understood by the majority. He also argues that the diversity of the language would also help people who are still learning that there are different dialects within the isiXhosa community. He then touches on inclusion, talking about the word “*Sabaweli*”, which he says took the internet by storm, where people from different communities used the term and incorporated it into their languages. He then argues that if such phrases could be used in professional spaces on television, the younger audience could gain interest in the language. Still on the inclusion matter, he makes an example about Dr Noxolo Grootboom and Siyavuya Sineke, the news anchors, arguing that surely a reasonable number of audience, including himself, still tune in on the news because of such news anchors that show pride and passion when they use the language.

The next participant I refer to as Charlie. Charlie is a 28-year-old isiXhosa-speaking sports lover. Although he is more tuned to sports than any other programme on television, he acknowledges the work done by the news anchors and presenters promoting isiXhosa on television. He talks about how they would use figures of speech and the language taught in academia. He distinguishes the difference between the news and the soap operas that the soapies promoted in isiXhosa negatively culturally, as these soapies always showed people who are in the upper class, which he takes as not a proper representation of society. He argues about the dilution of the language and culture as there were very limited TV shows shot in the Eastern Cape, where a vast percentage of people speak the language and live the culture. He argues that the inaccuracy of isiXhosa in television shows is making it difficult for its people to resonate, simply due to the setting of these shows. Still on the news anchors, he talks about Siyavuya Sineke, whom he believes had much influence

on the new anchors since he was confident with the language. As a result, his infamous phrase in news reporting, “*Ndingaphozisanga maseko, mandiwagawule ndiwarhuqa*”, has been adopted by various news presenters. He argues that the proof of his role in promoting the language was evident when he was honoured by the Eastern Cape Arts and Culture department for preserving and promoting the isiXhosa language.

Charlie states that most of the language spoken on television is diluted. He argues that the media should try to use more of born and raised isiXhosa speakers, as he believes that the people who grew up speaking isiXhosa are the primary source of the language. He specifically states that if there were more actors and actresses, including the TV presenters from the Eastern Cape, there could be accuracy in the language spoken on television. He makes a comparison of the soap operas to the commentary of rugby, he argues that rugby uses people from the Eastern Cape for their isiXhosa commentary, which is people with a rich history of both the language and the sport, hence the language used is advanced and enjoyable in the rugby commentary. He says one of the things that makes the rugby isiXhosa commentary seem advanced is that the commentators use a lot of figures of speech, funnily and joyfully. He then argues that one other reason that isiXhosa finds it hard to compete with English and isiZulu could be due to the population size and individuals' preference for entertainment. He argues that the fact that South Africa is predominantly Zulu, and the language of instruction is English, makes it hard for other languages to compete as the media tries to reach the larger population.

I refer to this participant as Delta. Delta is an isiXhosa-speaking man in his 50s who lives and works in Cape Town. He contends that the promotion, improvement, and proper use of isiXhosa are detected in the news. He notes the lack of pride amongst the isiXhosa TV personalities, arguing that they would use English even when they interview or converse with other isiXhosa-speaking people. He argues that the lack of confidence in TV personalities starts at the schools they attend, as English is the only promoted and normalised or taken as a superior language in their schools. Therefore, that breaks their confidence in communicating in isiXhosa on national television, he believes that if the time slots on TV for other TV programmes could be equally divided for all 11 languages, as is practised with the news, isiXhosa could compete and be fairly promoted. He then compares the two nations, isiXhosa and Zulu, arguing that the Zulu nation prides itself on its language, making an example about one Swati TV and Radio host, Sbusiso Leope (Popularly

known as DJ Sbu), who worked at uKhozi FM where the Zulu nation complained about the language use which was not “proper” Zulu to the point that he was let go. He argues that isiXhosa-speaking people with high authority in the Department of Arts and Culture are not correctly using their voices and positions to promote isiXhosa on national television.

Delta advocates for different dialects to be used as he argues that when these dialects are visible on television or media in general, they highlight the beauty and the diversity of isiXhosa as a language. However, he argues that the media figures should be aware of some of the words that only exist in their dialects. Therefore, if they turn to use those terms, they could try to provide a brief explanation as they continue with the dialogue. He makes an example about the Zulu media practitioners who turn to use the term “*phecelezi*”, which is a hint to the Zulu nation that the word derives from a different language. He argues that other media practitioners could learn from that. He argues that professional spaces like SABC should have more well-articulated people for programmes. He supports his argument using Sanuse Noqolobe, who was a news presenter, as an example. He states that in his experience of listening to news, he has never heard any news presenter who could present isiXhosa news like Sanuse did. He further makes other examples like Dr Noxolo Grootboom and Themba Makeleni, saying that his Zulu friends also preferred to listen to isiXhosa news as they found the figures of speech like “*abasethyini*” (women) interesting, as they sounded completely different from the isiZulu figures of speech.

## 6.6 theoretical Contextualisation

The findings of this study are attached within a comprehensive theoretical framework that synthesises foundational concepts from both sociolinguistics and media studies. This interdisciplinary approach provides a critical lens through which to interpret the strategies employed by media practitioners, the sociocultural impacts of their work, and the persistent challenges they encounter in promoting isiXhosa on South African television. By situating the analysis within established theoretical paradigms, this section offers a deeper understanding of how language functions not only as a communicative tool but also as a site of ideological contestation and cultural negotiation.

Central to this framework is the concept of language ideologies, which refer to the underlying beliefs and assumptions about language that shape societal attitudes and institutional practices. These ideologies often privilege dominant languages such as English, while marginalising

indigenous languages like isiXhosa, thereby reinforcing historical hierarchies rooted in colonial and apartheid-era policies. The efforts of media practitioners to elevate isiXhosa can then be seen as acts of resistance that challenge these entrenched hierarchies and advocate for linguistic equity. Furthermore, the study draws on Bourdieu's (1991) notion of symbolic power, which highlights how language operates as a form of capital within social fields. In this context, the use of isiXhosa in mainstream media becomes a means of asserting cultural legitimacy and reclaiming narrative authority in a post-apartheid society. Media practitioners, through their linguistic choices and content production, engage in a form of symbolic struggle that seeks to reconfigure the value assigned to isiXhosa and, by extension, to the identities and communities it represents.

Together, these theoretical perspectives illuminate the complex interplay between language, media, and power. They underscore how the promotion of isiXhosa is not merely a linguistic endeavour but a deeply political and cultural project. One that seeks to transform societal perceptions, democratise media spaces, and foster a more equitable linguistic landscape in South Africa.

### 6.6.1 Language Ideologies and Linguistic Hierarchies

A central theoretical anchor for this study is Aiseng's (2024) articulation of language ideologies, which refers to the socially constructed beliefs, assumptions, and value systems that influence how languages are perceived, used, and hierarchically positioned within a given sociopolitical context. Language ideologies are not neutral, however, they are deeply embedded in historical power relations and serve to legitimise certain languages while marginalising others. In the South African context, these ideologies have long privileged English and, to a lesser extent, isiZulu, often at the expense of other indigenous languages such as isiXhosa (Mesthrie, 2020).

The findings of this study reveal that media practitioners are not passive recipients of these ideologies but active agents in contesting and reshaping them. Through deliberate editorial and linguistic choices, practitioners such as Lerato Fekisi, Zizo Tshwete, and Masomelele Jucwa challenge the dominant language hierarchies that have historically relegated isiXhosa to the border of public discourse. By highlighting isiXhosa in diverse media genres including news reporting, entertainment programming, and sports commentary, they assert its legitimacy as a language of modernity, professionalism, and cultural relevance.

This strategic use of isiXhosa aligns with Torquato's (2020) theoretical proposition that language is not merely a vehicle for communication but a constitutive force in shaping worldviews, identities, and social realities. In this sense, the promotion of isiXhosa in media is not only a linguistic act but also a political and cultural intervention. It disrupts the outstanding or remaining coloniality that continues to inform language practices in post-apartheid South Africa, where European languages and dominant African languages are often positioned as more "neutral" "universal", or "marketable". Moreover, Aiseng (2024) emphasises that language ideologies are reproduced and contested through everyday practices, particularly in influential domains such as media. The practitioners' efforts to elevate isiXhosa thus represent a form of ideological resistance, one that seeks to reconfigure the symbolic economy of language in South Africa. By asserting isiXhosa's presence in mainstream media, they contribute to a broader reimagining of the nation's linguistic landscape, one that affirms the cultural and epistemic value of all indigenous languages.

In doing so, these practitioners not only challenge the structural marginalisation of isiXhosa but also participate in a larger project of decoloniality, a process that involves dismantling the lingering effects of colonial power structures and affirming indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and identities. Their work exemplifies how media can serve as a transformative space for linguistic justice, cultural affirmation, and social change.

### 6.2.2 Translanguaging and Social Identity

The strategic deployment of code-switching and bilingual programming by media practitioners in this study exemplifies the principles of translanguaging, as theorised by Makalela (2018). Translanguaging refers to the fluid and dynamic use of multiple linguistic resources by multilingual speakers to construct meaning, foster communication, and affirm cultural identity. Rather than treating languages as discrete and bounded systems, translanguaging recognises the integrated and context-dependent nature of language practices in multilingual societies. Within the South African media context, this approach becomes particularly outstanding, as it allows practitioners to navigate linguistic diversity while promoting inclusivity and cultural resonance. Practitioners such as Lerato Fekisi and Zizo Tshwete illustrate this approach through their seamless blending of isiXhosa and English in news reporting and interviews. This bilingual strategy serves multiple functions. It enhances accessibility for a broader audience, including those with limited

proficiency in isiXhosa, while simultaneously promoting the cultural and linguistic integrity of the language. In doing so, it challenges the binary logic of language separation and affirms the legitimacy of mix linguistic practices in formal media spaces.

This practice aligns with Tomasello's (2010) assertion that language is not merely a tool for information exchange but a foundational element of social identity formation. Through translanguaging, media practitioners foster a sense of belonging and cultural pride among isiXhosa-speaking audiences, reinforcing community cohesion and validating their linguistic heritage. Audience responses gathered during the study are expressions of pride and emotional resonance from isiXhosa viewers underscore the affective power of seeing one's language represented authentically on national platforms. These responses echo Gxilishe's (2021) findings on the symbolic importance of indigenous language visibility in public discourse, particularly in contexts where such languages have historically been marginalised. Moreover, the application of translanguaging in media functions as both a practical strategy and a theoretical intervention. Practically, it enables content creators to bridge linguistic divides in a multilingual society, enhancing both reach and relevance. Theoretically, it disrupts monolingual ideologies that underpin much of traditional media production and language policy, advocating instead for a more inclusive and context-sensitive understanding of communication. In this way, translanguaging becomes a tool for linguistic equity, enabling the co-existence and mutual reinforcement of languages rather than their competition.

Ultimately, the use of translanguaging in South African media not only reflects the linguistic realities of its audiences but also contributes to the broader project of decolonising language practices. By legitimising and normalizing multilingual expression, practitioners help to reconfigure the symbolic order of language in post-apartheid South Africa, affirming the value of indigenous languages and fostering a more inclusive and representative media landscape.

### 6.2.3 Media as Catalyst for Societal Change

The findings of this study further resonate with Croteau's (2014) assertion that media serve as powerful agents in the construction and dissemination of societal norms and values. Within the South African context, where language is deeply intertwined with identity, history, and power, the strategic choices made by media practitioners play a critical role in shaping public attitudes toward indigenous languages such as isiXhosa. Through the intentional incorporation of isiXhosa

proverbs, culturally resonant storytelling, and the modernisation of traditional content, practitioners actively reframe isiXhosa as a language that is not only culturally rich but also adaptable to contemporary media formats. This reframing directly counters the negative discursive patterns identified by Fairclough (2003), who warns that media discourse if left unexamined can reinforce linguistic hierarchies and perpetuate stereotypes that marginalise non-dominant languages. In many post-colonial societies, indigenous languages are often portrayed as out-dated, rural, or incompatible with modernity. By contrast, the work of practitioners such as Nandipha Platjje and Masomelele Jucwa challenges these reductive narratives. Their use of isiXhosa in dynamic and contextually relevant ways disrupts the notion that indigenous languages are confined to ceremonial or folkloric functions, instead positioning them as viable and vibrant mediums for news, entertainment, and public discourse.

This aligns with Crystal's (2002) argument that the vitality of a language is closely linked to its visibility and functionality in high-status domains, including media. When indigenous languages are consistently represented in mainstream platforms, they gain symbolic capital and are more likely to be perceived as legitimate and valuable by both speakers and non-speakers. Moreover, these practices reflect broader theoretical insights from media and cultural studies, particularly those that emphasise the power of representation in shaping collective consciousness and social imaginaries (Hall, 1997; Makalela, 2018). In post-apartheid South Africa, where language remains a site of both contestation and transformation, the media's role in rearticulating the value of isiXhosa is not merely symbolic, it is foundational to the broader project of cultural reclamation and linguistic justice. Therefore, the strategic representation of isiXhosa in media content serves as a counter-hegemonic force, challenging the remaining effects of colonial language ideologies and contributing to the normalisation of indigenous languages in public life. It demonstrates how media practitioners, through culturally informed and linguistically inclusive practices, can actively participate in reshaping societal norms and fostering a more equitable linguistic landscape.

#### 6.2.4 Symbolic Power and Dominant Narratives

The challenges encountered by isiXhosa media practitioners ranging from limited resources and institutional neglect to competition with more dominant languages can be critically understood through Bourdieu's (1991) concept of symbolic power. Symbolic power refers to the capacity of certain languages or cultural forms to assert dominance not through coercion, but through their

perceived legitimacy, prestige, and institutional reinforcement. In the South African media landscape, English and isiZulu exemplify this form of power. Their dominance is not merely a reflection of demographic or practical considerations, but the result of sustained institutional investment, policy prioritisation, and cultural capital accrued over time.

As noted by practitioners such as Lerato Fekisi and Nandipha Plaatjie, English and isiZulu benefit from disproportionate access to funding, airtime, and infrastructural support advantages that reinforce their symbolic authority and normalise their presence in high-status domains. This dynamic reflects what Aiseng (2024) describes as the institutional reproduction of linguistic hierarchies, wherein certain languages are continually privileged while others, like isiXhosa, are marginalised despite their official status (Statistics South Africa, 2023). The result is a media environment in which isiXhosa is often perceived as bordering, less modern, or less commercially viable. However, the response of isiXhosa media practitioners to these structural constraints reveals a counter-hegemonic strategy that aligns with Foucault's (2005) conceptualisation of power as relational, diffuse, and contestable. Rather than accepting the marginalisation of isiXhosa, practitioners engage in creative and culturally grounded interventions that challenge dominant narratives and reassert the value of the language. Through the use of culturally resonant storytelling, idiomatic expressions, and localised content, they disrupt the symbolic power of English and isiZulu, carving out spaces where isiXhosa can be seen as both modern and meaningful.

This form of resistance exemplifies Foucault's notion that power is not only repressive but also productive, it generates possibilities for agency, subversion, and transformation. By asserting isiXhosa in media spaces traditionally dominated by more powerful languages, practitioners are not merely advocating for linguistic inclusion, they are actively reshaping the symbolic order of language in South Africa. Their work contributes to a broader project of linguistic justice, wherein the visibility and vitality of indigenous languages are reclaimed as central to cultural identity, democratic participation, and epistemic diversity. In this light, the promotion of isiXhosa in media is not simply a matter of representation, but a strategic intervention in the politics of language and power. It challenges the entrenched structures that sustain linguistic inequality and affirms the capacity of marginalised voices to redefine the contours of public discourse.

### 6.6.5 Synthesis and Implications

The theoretical contextualisation of the findings underscores the transformative potential of isiXhosa promotion in South African media. By challenging language ideologies (Aiseng, 2024), leveraging translanguaging (Makalela, 2018), shaping societal norms (Croteau, 2014), and contesting symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991), media practitioners contribute to a broader movement toward linguistic and cultural equity. Their strategies not only affirm isiXhosa's cultural significance but also foster inclusivity and social cohesion in a multilingual society. The alignment of these findings with sociolinguistic and media studies theories highlights their relevance to ongoing debates about language policy, cultural representation, and post-colonial identity in South Africa.

Moreover, the challenges identified such as resource constraints and linguistic competition reveal the persistent influence of historical power structures, underscoring the need for institutional reforms to support indigenous language promotion. These insights offer a foundation for future research into the role of media in revitalizing other African languages, as well as the potential of digital platforms to amplify these efforts. By situating the promotion of isiXhosa within these theoretical frameworks, this study illuminates the complex interplay of language, media, and power, providing a nuanced understanding of how practitioners navigate and transform South Africa's linguistic landscape.

## 6.7 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this qualitative study illuminate the pivotal role played by isiXhosa media practitioners in advancing linguistic diversity and reinforcing cultural identity within South Africa's complex, multilingual media landscape. By synthesising the strategies, impacts, and challenges identified, this discussion highlights the transformative potential of their efforts while situating them within broader scholarly debates on language promotion, cultural representation, and media's societal influence. The analysis also acknowledges the study's limitations and proposes directions for future research, offering a comprehensive reflection on the significance of promoting isiXhosa in mainstream television.

### 6.7.1 Strategies and Their Sociocultural Impact

The strategies employed by media practitioners: bilingual programming, community-driven content creation, traditional storytelling techniques, and partnerships with cultural and educational institutions, demonstrate a multifaceted approach to promoting isiXhosa. These strategies align with Ndhlovu's (2015) assertion that media serves as a powerful platform for preserving cultural heritage and fostering social cohesion in multilingual societies. Code-switching, in particular, emerged as a dynamic and inclusive tool, enabling practitioners like Lerato Fekisi and Zizo Tshwete to engage diverse audiences while prioritising isiXhosa's cultural authenticity. This practice supports Luna and Peracchio's (2005) findings that code-switching enhances persuasiveness in multilingual contexts by making content relatable and accessible without compromising linguistic identity. By blending isiXhosa with English, practitioners navigated South Africa's linguistic diversity, creating a media environment where isiXhosa is both celebrated and inclusive, resonating with Makalela's (2018) translanguaging framework.

Community-driven content, as exemplified by Masomelele Jucwa's rugby commentary and Nandipha Plaatjie's focus on local narratives, further reinforced isiXhosa's cultural relevance by reflecting the lived experiences of its speakers. This approach fostered a sense of ownership and pride among audiences, aligning with Mano's (2012) argument that indigenous language media builds trust and strengthens cultural identity. Similarly, the incorporation of traditional storytelling techniques, such as proverbs and metaphors, enriched content with cultural depth, countering the erosion of indigenous knowledge systems noted by Bamgbose (1991). Partnerships with institutions like schools and the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) extended these efforts beyond television, engaging youth and digital audiences in ways that align with Uysal's (2015) advocacy for social media as a tool for language promotion. Collectively, these strategies underscore the media's capacity to reshape linguistic and cultural narratives, as argued by Croteau (2014).

### 6.7.2 Cultural Identity and Audience Engagement

The validation of cultural identity among isiXhosa-speaking audiences, particularly younger viewers, highlights the media's power to influence social attitudes and foster linguistic pride. Some of the responses from the participants such as the pride in some of the media practitioners reflect Tomaselli's (2010) view that language in media strengthens social identity and community

cohesion. The engagement of younger audiences through modernised content, like the evolution of isiXhosa in media, counters the preference for English on digital platforms observed by Malatji and Lesame (2019), ensuring isiXhosa's relevance among tech-savvy generations. This intergenerational appeal, bridging traditional elements valued by older viewers and contemporary styles embraced by youth, supports Mkhize and Balfour's (2017) call for media to promote linguistic diversity across age groups, sustaining the language's vitality.

The cross-linguistic appeal of isiXhosa content, as evidenced by non-isiXhosa speakers' enthusiasm for Masomelele Jucwa's commentary, underscores the potential of media to bridge societal divisions. This aligns with Mesthrie's (2002) advocacy for linguistic diversity in media as a means of fostering inclusivity in South Africa's historically divided society. Non-isiXhosa speakers' willingness to engage with and learn from isiXhosa content suggests that culturally rich and accessible media can promote cross-cultural understanding, challenging linguistic hierarchies critiqued by Aiseng (2024). These findings highlight the broader societal impact of isiXhosa promotion, positioning it as a catalyst for social cohesion and linguistic equity.

### 6.7.3 Systematic Challenges and Hierarchies

Despite these successes, the challenges faced by practitioners: resource constraints, linguistic competition, lack of training, and audience engagement dilemmas, reflect systemic issues rooted in South Africa's colonial and apartheid history, as discussed by Gxilishe (2021). The prioritisation of English and isiZulu in media, driven by their larger speaker bases and perceived marketability (Statistics South Africa, 2023), perpetuates linguistic hierarchies that marginalise isiXhosa, as critiqued by Aiseng (2024). This aligns with Piller's (2016) observation that non-dominant language speakers face structural barriers in accessing media representation, limiting their cultural visibility. Resource limitations, such as restricted funding and airtime noted by Lerato Fekisi and Nandipha Plaatjie, echo Hlophe's (2014) critique of the SABC's unequal language allocation, highlighting the need for equitable media policies advocated by Brown (2019).

The lack of formal training for isiXhosa media presentation, as raised by Nandipha Plaatjie, further underscores the underinvestment in indigenous language development, aligning with Kamwangamalu's (2019) call for institutional support to standardise and professionalise their use in public domains. These challenges reflect Bourdieu's (1991) concept of symbolic power, where dominant languages maintain authority through institutional backing, while non-dominant

languages like isiXhosa struggle for recognition. By navigating these barriers with creativity and resilience, practitioners engage in what Foucault (2005) describes as challenging dominant narratives, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable media landscape.

# Chapter Seven

## Conclusion

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I provide a comprehensive summary and conclusion of the key findings derived from this study, synthesising the central themes and insights that have emerged throughout the research process. I highlight the most noticeable points discussed in earlier chapters, drawing attention to the empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks that underpin the analysis. I address challenges I encountered during the research process. These challenges may include methodological limitations, issues related to data collection, and constraints imposed by the context in which the research was conducted and engaging with these obstacles in this field. These challenges may have impacted the findings and interpretations, thereby affecting the research journey. Furthermore, to address the limitations, this chapter also outlines the strengths of the research. It emphasises methodological severity, the relevance of the theoretical framework, and the contributions of the findings to the existing body of knowledge. The discussion will underscore how the study advances understanding in its area of inquiry and identifies practical implications that may arise from the results. Finally, the chapter concludes with suggestions from the current study and aims to guide future research. These suggestions may include proposals for exploring under-researched areas, utilising different methodological approaches, or considering new theoretical perspectives. By outlining these avenues for further inquiry, the ongoing dialogue within the academic community can be encouraged to continue the exploration of the study.

### **7.1 Key Findings**

The role of isiXhosa media figures in promoting isiXhosa is crucial for promoting and elevating this indigenous language within a multicultural society. As dominant languages, such as English and isiZulu, continue to shape the media landscape, it becomes imperative for isiXhosa to maintain its relevance through effective representation in the audiovisual sector. The presence of isiXhosa-speaking media figures in media positions offers authentic representation that resonates with isiXhosa-speaking audiences. This visibility not only validates the cultural identity of isiXhosa speakers but also serves to engage younger generations who might otherwise feel detached from

their linguistic heritage. The strategic collaboration between emerging and seasoned media talent plays a pivotal role in this process. Young talent often brings fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and a wealth of experience, industry knowledge, and established audiences, creating a mentorship dynamic that enriches the overall production value. Furthermore, this intergenerational collaboration can lead to the development of programming that is both culturally relevant and appealing to a broader audience. By merging traditional narratives with contemporary themes, isiXhosa media figures can produce content that showcases isiXhosa culture while fostering a sense of pride among isiXhosa speakers and attracting interest from non-isiXhosa audiences. Also, the promotion of isiXhosa on linguistic diversity rather than a barrier, it encourages the development of national identity, social justice, and representation. Academic research could further media representation on language vitality, examining how increased visibility influences public perception.

The phenomenon of code-switching, an effective communication strategy that enhances linguistic accessibility and inclusivity within a diverse audience. Code-switching, defined as the practice of alternating between two or more languages or dialects within a conversation, serves not only as a means of bridging linguistic divides but also as a cultural tool that fosters a sense of belonging among speakers of different linguistic backgrounds allows content creators to incorporate elements of English or other local languages alongside isiXhosa. This practice recognises the bilingual or multilingual reality of many South Africans, particularly in urban settings where languages often intermix. By weaving English phrases or concepts into isiXhosa-speaking audiences while simultaneously reinforcing the significance of the isiXhosa language. Furthermore, code-switching can enhance the appeal of isiXhosa content by making it more relatable and digestible for a broader audience. This approach to language reflects an adaptive strategy that acknowledges the importance of audience reception, wherein media figures measure the language preferences of their listeners and adjust their communication accordingly.

In future studies, it would be valuable to explore the implications of code-switching on audience engagement levels and the perception of isiXhosa-language media. Research could focus on how such strategies influence the cultural representation of isiXhosa speakers in media narratives and contribute to the preservation and promotion of isiXhosa within the digital landscape. An analysis of audience feedback and participation could provide insights into the overall effectiveness of these

strategies, as well as their potential impact on the promotion of indigenous languages in contemporary media environments.

## 7.2 Reflections

### *Strengths*

This study employs qualitative research methods as one of its key strengths, primarily because qualitative methodologies facilitate an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives. By prioritising the subjective experiences and narratives of individuals, qualitative research allows for a detailed understanding of complex social phenomena. This approach is particularly valuable when investigating contexts that require insight into the meanings, motivations, and interpretations held by participants. The richness of qualitative data stems from its capacity to capture the details of human behaviour and thought processes, offering a more holistic view. This qualitative lens not only enhances the depth of analysis but also fosters a more empathetic understanding of the viewpoints. Furthermore, the flexibility inherent in qualitative methods allows for adaptive inquiry, enabling researchers to review and inquire deeper into emerging themes and responses during the data collection process.

This study significantly contributes to the growing body of literature on the importance of indigenous language preservation by examining the critical role that media plays in promoting these languages. Through a qualitative lens, this research highlights how television serves as a crucial platform for language visibility, which in turn can influence audience attitudes toward the use and promotion of indigenous languages. One of the central findings of this study not only provides access to indigenous languages but also fosters a sense of cultural identity and community among speakers. By analysing various programs and their content, we can observe how linguistic representation in media impacts public perception and validates the legitimacy of indigenous languages. Moreover, the study underscores the significance of audience engagement with indigenous languages in televised formats.

### *Limitation*

This study is not without its limitations, however, these limitations are relatively minor in nature and do not significantly overshadow the validity of the findings presented. The first limitation pertains to the restricted number of media figures who participated in this study. A small sample

size can potentially limit the generalizability of the results, as the perspectives garnered may not fully represent the broader spectrum of media figures and their experiences within the context of the study. While the insights provided by these selected participants offer valuable contributions to our understanding of the subject matter, a more extensive participant pool could have yielded a richer and more nuanced dataset, enhancing the depth of the analysis. The same goes for the number of interviewed audiences.

To mitigate the limitations of a relatively small sample size of 14 participants in total, the study employed several strategic measures to ensure the credibility, diversity, and richness of the data collected. Firstly, the inclusion of influential media practitioners, despite their limited number, was a deliberate choice to gain insider perspectives from individuals directly involved in the promotion of isiXhosa in mainstream media. These participants provided expert insights into institutional strategies, challenges, and decision-making processes that would not be accessible through audience interviews alone.

Secondly, the selection of 10 audiences was not random but purposive, aimed at capturing a diverse range of audience perspectives. These individuals varied in age, gender, and linguistic background, which allowed the study to explore how different segments of the public perceive isiXhosa representation in media. Their inclusion helped balance the professional viewpoints and added contextual depth to the findings, particularly regarding cultural identity and language authenticity. Furthermore, the study prioritised data richness over quantity, consistent with qualitative research principles. By conducting in-depth interviews and allowing participants to express their views in both English and isiXhosa, the research was able to uncover nuanced insights that a larger but less focused sample might have missed. This approach ensured that the small sample size did not compromise the validity or relevance of the study's conclusions.

Finally, a notable challenge encountered during the course of this study was related to the linguistic diversity of the audiences interviewed, particularly those who expressed themselves using their isiXhosa dialects. This became a challenge as I was not familiar with some of these dialects. This presented difficulties in accurately translating and interpreting the data into English, which is the primary language of the study. This phenomenon highlights the complexities inherent in cross-linguistic research and underscores the importance of data. Consequently, while these limitations exist of the study's conclusions but rather serve to highlight areas for future inquiry and

methodological refinement. Additionally, this study would have benefited from the peer review by a language expert, given the focus on isiXhosa.

### 7.3 Suggestions

For future research endeavours, particularly those situated within the field of sociolinguistics, it is imperative to explore the complex relationships and dynamics of human interactions as they manifest through language use. Sociolinguistics, which examines the interplay between language and social factors, offers a how linguistic variability correlates with social identity, cultural practices, and other sociocultural variables. Researchers embarking on sociolinguistic studies or media and language should consider the multiplicity of linguistic contexts in which their subjects operate. Proficiency in multiple languages or collaboration team can significantly enhance their findings. This multilingual capability enables researchers to navigate and analyse data across different languages. Moreover, employing a multilingual research methodology can facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of how language influences social behaviour allowing for the inclusion of non-dominant voices and perspectives that may otherwise be overlooked in studies that focus solely on a single language or dialect. Consequently, researchers are encouraged to actively teams that comprise individuals with varying linguistic backgrounds and expertise. This collaborative approach not only enriches the data collection process but also fosters a more inclusive and representative analysis of sociolinguistic research necessitates a concerted effort to embrace linguistic diversity both in terms. By and relevance of their findings, paving the way for future investigations that are more attuned to communication in our increasingly multicultural and multilingual world.

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# Appendices

The following Appendix is a list of questions that guided me for interviews with the media figures.

## Appendix A

### Questions

- What is your experience of the isiXhosa language and culture in television?
- What should the promotion of isiXhosa on television look like to ordinary people?
- What could media practitioners do to employ effective strategies in promoting isiXhosa on television?
- What strategies could be employed to increase isiXhosa representation on television? What role can subtitles play in promoting isiXhosa on television?
- What are the challenges of creating bilingual content?
- What strategies could be used to encourage audience participation?
- How can promoting isiXhosa in the media contribute to language preservation and cultural development?
- What initiatives are there to promote the effectiveness of isiXhosa on television?
- Do you think you have contributed in promoting isiXhosa on television (language and culturally) and how?

## Appendix B

The following Appendix is the Informed Consent Form



### **PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION** **(To be signed by research participant/s)**

Project Title: The Promotion of IsiXhosa in Mainstream Media:

A Case Study on The Strategies Used by Media Practitioners to Promote IsiXhosa

Siviwe Dyasi from the School of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University, has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to investigate the strategies used by the media practitioners and media figures in promoting isiXhosa in mainstream media. This study will also investigate how audiences feel about the role played by the media practitioners in promoting isiXhosa.
2. Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project (**Ethics Approval Number: 2024-7574-8763**) and I have seen/may request to see the clearance certificate by contacting the Ethics Coordinator ([ethics-committee@ru.ac.za](mailto:ethics-committee@ru.ac.za))
3. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.
4. By participating in this research project, I will be contributing towards the field of

Journalism and Media Studies. My contribution will also help other scholars that are interested in the language dynamics present in South African media.

5. I will participate in the project by engaging in an interview with the researcher.
6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. The following risks are associated with my participation: Participants may experience discomfort speaking about certain topics in the interview. To mitigate this risk, the researcher should and will stop asking the question or discussing the topic immediately when the participant wishes so.
8. The Researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of an academic paper that will be published in the university library website under the name of the researcher. However, confidentiality of records will be maintained and my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conducting of the research, ***unless I indicate to the contrary/recognize that as a public figure my identity will inevitably be/become known, in which case I agree to accept the loss of anonymity.***
9. In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013) it remains my right to request the Researcher to provide me with a detailed explanation of exactly how confidentiality and anonymity of the data I provide will be achieved. I may also request to know exactly how my personal information will be stored securely, for how long it will be stored.
10. If any data collected from me for this research project is to be used by the Researcher for any further study, I am to be informed in writing and my written consent requested again. I need not give consent for the new research if it is incompatible with the initial purpose of the present study (POPIA, s15(3)). Equally, I can simply reject the request. In such cases, a formal request needs to be made to me by the researcher via the Ethics Coordinator ([ethics-committee@ru.ac.za](mailto:ethics-committee@ru.ac.za)).
11. In terms of the POPI Act, I possess the right to receive feedback about this research. This will take the form of an email. Unless ***I elect not to receive this feedback.***
12. Any further questions that I might have regarding the nature of the research and/or my participation in it will be answered by email to the researcher, at Siviwe Dyasi <siviwedyasi1@gmail.com>

13. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record by the Researcher.
14. I **agree/disagree** (delete inapplicable) to the Researcher's request to take photographs, or videoing me as part of this research project, recognizing that agreement here is likely to raise the risk of compromising my anonymity and that steps will be taken to ensure this will not happen if my consent is given.
15. I **agree/disagree** (delete inapplicable) to the Researcher's use of voice recording of my comments and opinions during interviews, the purpose of which is to ensure the accurate recording of my views/responses. Furthermore, I have the right to request a copy of the interview transcriptions to confirm that my opinions are accurately recorded.
16. Any conduct or behavior that is inappropriate by the researcher must be reported to my thesis supervisor Dr Kealeboga Aiseng ([Aisengkealeboga@gmail.com](mailto:Aisengkealeboga@gmail.com)) and co-supervisor Dr Quatro Mgogo ([quatro.mgogo@ru.ac.za](mailto:quatro.mgogo@ru.ac.za))

I, ....., have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask, and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

.....  
**Participants signature**                      **Witness**                      **Date**

Rhodes University, Research Office, Ethical Review

Ethics Coordinator: [ethics-committee@ru.ac.za](mailto:ethics-committee@ru.ac.za)

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