A survey of undergraduate students' attitudes towards studying isiZulu at university

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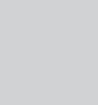
The study's main objective was to investigate the attitudes held by undergraduate students towards studying isiZulu at university. The purposive sampling method was used to gather data from 100 students who studied the language as major subject, as well as three lecturers who taught the language at the same university. The study was a descriptive survey that used questionnaires to gather quantitative data and face-to-face interviews to gather qualitative data – mixed methods were used. The following five variables, namely: (1) sex, (2) age group, (3) years at university, (4) location of nurture and (5) linguality, were used to test the extent to which they influenced respondents' attitudes towards the phenomenon under discussion. It was found that all five variables influenced respondents' attitudes towards studying their L1 at university level. The findings revealed that respondents generally held positive attitudes towards studying isiZulu at university level. The study explored secondary phenomena and found that respondents believed that there were adequate job opportunities for those who studied isiZulu at university level and that they were proud to be the Zulu people.

Background

Before 1993, English and Afrikaans were South Africa's two official languages. According to Ditsele (2014:1), English and Afrikaans enjoyed the status and prestige of use, particularly in formal settings in which black South African languages (BSALs)[1] were not developed in a significant way for use in formal functions (e.g. higher education, media and government). He further states that when South Africa became a democracy in 1994, the *status quo* largely remained, with English increasing its dominance at the expense of Afrikaans and BSALs not making significant inroads in formal functions relative to their population size.

In 1994, democracy came with many changes. South Africa now moved away officially from being a bilingual country to a multilingual one. According to Section 6 of the Constitution of South Africa (*Act No. 108* of 1996), the country now recognises 11 official languages. Even though it recognises these languages, English is still a dominant language in most spheres of society.

De Klerk (1999:312) argues that many black South Africans do not see the value of their first languages (L1s) because of the high status given to English. They perceive their languages as inferior to English and view them as relevant only for social and cultural purposes, whereas English is seen as the key to socio-economic advancement and presented as a language of opportunities. In South Africa black people have negative attitudes towards their L1s, making them see no point in using them for socio-economic advancement. De Klerk also remarks that many L1 speakers of BSALs regard their languages as worthless, because of their functional limitations, regarding access to participation and mobility in wider society.

Kamwangamalu (2003:225–242) and Kamwendo (2010:270–282) also note that apartheid laws have resulted in English becoming a prestige language and BSALs being seen as inferior and not as languages which can be used to access education. However, at some universities (e.g. University of KwaZulu-Natal [UKZN] and University of South Africa [UNISA]), there are programmes where BSALs are used as the medium of instruction (MOIs), but studies have indicated that some black African students and parents were not in favour of this practice (De Klerk 2002; Kamwangamalu 2000, 2003; Nkosi 2011).

1.According to Ditsele (2016:9), in most literature in South Africa, the term 'African languages' is used to refer to the 'Southern Bantu languages' spoken in the country. Some researchers such as Dyers (1999) prefer to use the term 'Black South African languages', which is also the preferred term used in this survey.

'Language attitudes studies' in South Africa

To explore the attitudes that people hold towards their L1s, numerous studies have been carried out nationally and internationally. Bekker (2002:90) states that 'language attitudes studies' in South Africa among L1 speakers of BSALs were conducted by Edelstein 1974.[2] Ditsele (2017:2) states that since 1994, the concentration of 'language attitudes studies' among university students has mainly been in the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape. However, there are other provinces where these studies have been conducted, albeit to a lesser extent, such as KwaZulu-Natal.

Ditsele (2014:2) notes that the province of Gauteng has not produced as many 'language attitudes studies' as the three provinces mentioned above. Be that as it may, Bekker (2002) conducted his study among UNISA students in Pretoria, while Ditsele (2014) focused on students at five universities in the metropolitan municipalities of Tshwane and Johannesburg.

IsiZulu: The language chosen for this survey

IsiZulu has the highest number of L1 speakers in South Africa and is the L1 of 22.7% of the nation's population (Census 2011). According to Census 2011, isiZulu L1 speakers are mainly concentrated in KwaZulu-Natal (77.8% of the province), with other significant L1 speakers found in Mpumalanga (24.1% of the province) and Gauteng (19.8 % of the province). IsiZulu, like the other eight BSALs, is an official language in South Africa.

At the university where this study was conducted, isiZulu was one of the BSALs studied by undergraduate students as a major subject. Prior to registering for isiZulu as a major subject at university, all the students ought to have passed the language as a Home Language or First Additional Language at Grade 12 level. Most of these students were L1 speakers, while a minority spoke siSwati or isiNdebele as L1s.

The survey's objectives

The objective of this survey was to establish the attitudes held towards isiZulu by undergraduate students who studied the language as a major subject at university. Data were gathered from 103 respondents, namely 100 undergraduate students and 3 lecturers who taught isiZulu at university. Anecdotal evidence from this university suggested that students who studied isiZulu tended to perform poorly in the language; as such, there was a need to establish whether their poor performance could be attributed to their attitudes towards studying the language. Data were gathered to seek an answer to this primary question:

• What attitudes do the respondents hold towards studying isiZulu at university?

2.While this study was conducted in 1972, Edelstein's book was published in 1974 (Ditsele 2017:2).

In addition to the primary question above, answers to the following two secondary questions were sought:

• What are the respondents' attitudes towards the use of isiZulu for wider societal functions, especially job opportunities?
• What are the respondents' attitudes towards the Zulus as a people?

Methodology

Mixed methods were used in line with Crotty's (1998:216) submission that they serve the purpose of a study well, help a study to have more information and help in the answering of research questions. Researchers believed that using mixed methods would allow them to be more confident about the accuracy and relevance of their findings because quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other in language attitudes studies.

The questionnaire

Babbie (2001:240) notes that 'closed-ended questions' are very popular in survey research because they provide a greater uniformity of responses and are more easily processed. Jackson (1995:372) remarks that 'open-ended questions' can provide insights to the researcher that otherwise might be missed, if they were not asked. In line with these submissions, a questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data. It comprised two sections:

• **Section 1:** personal information, which gathered data on the following five variables: sex, age group, years at university, location of nurture and linguality.
• **Section 2:** a Likert-type scale which comprised 12 Belief statements in which the respondents were asked to select responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. As noted by Mouton and Marais (1992:4), Likert-type scale statements are considered the best way to measure attitudes and awareness among people.

Face-to-face interviews

Qualitative data were gathered through interviewing (using semi-structured interview questions) a few respondents (i.e. 10 students and 3 lecturers). The semi-structured interview requires respondents to respond to a set of pre-determined questions (Maree 2007, in Cofu 2013:38), and respondents would be probed and asked for clarification. Maphumulo (2010, in Cofu 2013:38) notes that, 'Probing enables the interviewer to ask respondents to extend, elaborate, add on and provide detail for clarity or qualify responses'. This type of interview addresses richness, depth of responses, honesty and comprehensiveness for successful interviewing.

Best and Kahn (1993, in Tshuma & Mashoko 2010:365) believe that an 'interview' can be regarded as a data-gathering device, which is often superior to others as people are more willing to talk than to write, and confidential information may be obtained from respondents who might be reluctant to put it in writing.

All interviews in this research study were audio-recorded, and important notes were written down. Bell (1993, in Rananga 2008:103) states that there is a need to take notes, even though a tape recorder is used. Note-taking plays a major role, in case something happened to the recorder, such as a battery died or the recording cannot be traced. The recordings were then transcribed, so as to establish a record of the collected data.

Respondents

A total of 103 respondents who participated in this research study, were split as follows: (1) 100 students who studied isiZulu as a major subject at a university, and (2) 3 lecturers who taught isiZulu at a university. In other words, participation was limited to students who studied isiZulu as a major subject, as well as lecturers who taught the language. All respondents indicated that they were isiZulu L1 speakers. The students were purposefully selected because of defining characteristics (i.e. speakers of a language who studied it at university as a major subject at undergraduate level) that made them relevant for the data needed for the research study. According to Creswell (2008, Cofu 2013:32), 'purposive sampling' involves the researcher intentionally selecting individuals to be included in the sample based on their judgement. Maree (2007, in Cofu 2013:32) notes that sampling involves the explicit purpose of obtaining the richest possible source of information in order to answer the research questions formulated.

Variables

This research study explored five variables which were explored before in language attitudes studies in South Africa: (1) sex, (2) age group, (3) years at university, (4) location of nurture and (5) linguality. Aziakpono (2007), Dalvit (2004) and Dyers (1999) explored the first three variables, while Ditsele (2014) explored all five of them. Table 1 presents a summary of respondents' (students) profiles. Because of the number of students being 100, numbers thus represent percentages.

There is a need to give meaning to Variables 3, 4 and 5. With regard to Variable 3 (years at university), this research study focused on the 'number of years' spent by respondents at university, regardless of their 'year of study', an approach followed by Ditsele (2014), as opposed to the one followed by Dalvit and De Klerk (2005) and Dyers (1999), who focused on 'year of study' in a programme (e.g. year 1 and Honours). Ditsele (2014:130) argues that students' experiences at university are shaped by the amount of time they spent there, as opposed to the 'year of study' in a programme. As such, a student who may be in 'year 1 of study', but had been at university for 3 years, would have a similar university experience as those in 'year 3 of study'.

Looking at Variable 4 (location of nurture),[3] as mentioned earlier in this article, isiZulu L1 speakers are mainly

3.The two variables *location of nurture* and *linguality* were introduced by Ditsele (2014) to language attitudes studies in South Africa.

TABLE 1: Demographic details of the respondents (students).

Variable	%
Sex	
Females	50
Males	50
Total	100
Age group	
18–20 years	21
21–25 years	72
26 years and over	7
Total	100
Years at university	
1 year	30
2 years	30
3 years	30
4 years and more	10
Total	100
Location of nurture	
KwaZulu-Natal	88
Mpumalanga	4
Gauteng	8
Total	100
Linguality	
Group A (Sotho-Tswana languages)	49
Group B (Tshivenda and Xitsonga)	9
Group C (Tshivenda, Xitsonga and Sotho-Tswana languages)	15
Group D (Afrikaans)	6
Group E (Afrikaans and other languages)	17
Group F (French and other languages)	4
Total	100

concentrated in KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Gauteng. For that reason, only respondents who grew up in those provinces were considered for this research study. For Variable 5 (linguality), respondents were grouped according to the languages they communicated in, in addition to English and Nguni languages (viz. isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati and isiNdebele). By way of example, respondents allocated to Group A were those who indicated that they could communicate in Sotho-Tswana languages (viz. Northern Sotho, Setswana and Southern Sotho).

Data analysis

This study used descriptive statistics to analyse the data because it offered very simple summaries of the sample, and it appears as a suitable method to analyse the research study's quantitative data. A Likert-type scale with 12 Belief statements was used to gather quantitative data, and the respondents (students) were asked to select one option from the following five: (1) strongly agree (SA), (2) agree (A), (3) not sure (NS), (4) disagree (D) and (5) strongly disagree (SD). Table 2 shows 'scalar units' (used to calculate the mean), 'scores' and 'attitudinal positional tendencies' used to analyse the data.

Ethical consideration

Ethical clearance was issued by the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) Research Ethics Committee in January 2016, with ethical clearance number REC/2015/09/006 for this research project, and prevents the authors from

TABLE 2: Scalar units, scores and attitudinal positional tendencies.

Scalar units	Score	Attitudinal positional tendencies
4.50–5.00	5	SA
3.50–4.49	4	A
2.50–3.49	3	NS
1.50–2.49	2	D
1.00–1.49	1	SD

Source: Ditsele, T., 2014, 'Perceptions of Black South African languages: A survey of the attitudes of Setswana-speaking university students toward their first language', p. 146, Doctoral thesis, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria
SA, strongly agree; A, agree; NS, not sure; D, disagree; SD, strongly disagree.

disclosing the name of the university where the data were gathered from.

Means were used to analyse the options selected by the respondents. The analysis of the *mean* allowed for conclusions to be made about the respondents' general 'attitudinal positional tendencies' according to each of the five variables.

Qualitative data were gathered through face-to-face interviews with 13 respondents, namely 10 students and 3 lecturers. Data were coded and sorted into categories, and then interpreted. The sorting of data included the creation of the following three themes: (1) studying isiZulu at university, (2) pride of the Zulu people and (3) language practice in South Africa.

Findings

Quantitative data were analysed through allocating each of the 12 Belief statements to one of the three themes as follows:

- **Theme 1:** Studying isiZulu at university (Belief statements 2, 3, 7 and 11)
- **Theme 2:** Pride of the Zulu people (Belief statements 1, 4, 6, 8 and 12)
- **Theme 3:** Language practice in South Africa (Belief statements 5, 9 and 10)

Responses to face-to-face interview questions were used to gather qualitative data. The two sets of data were discussed (see 'Discussion') as a single entity.

Theme 1: Studying isiZulu at university

The above theme looked at respondents' attitudes towards studying isiZulu at university (Belief statements 2, 3, 7 and 11). As illustrated in Table 3, respondents disagreed that it was a waste of time to study isiZulu at university and that the language should be studied beyond high school (Belief statement 2), and this means that they were positive about studying isiZulu beyond high school.

Respondents also disagreed that they did not pass isiZulu because of the little time allocated to the subject, and this means that they were satisfied about the time allocated to the subject (Belief statement 3). The same attitudinal positional tendency was discovered in Belief statement 7, in which they disagreed that the time allocated for isiZulu was too much and therefore some of it should rather be used for learning

TABLE 3: Data for 'studying isiZulu at university'.

Number	Belief statement	Mean	Tendency
2	It is a waste of time to study isiZulu at university; the language should be studied up to high school.	1.75	D
3	I do not pass isiZulu as well as I want to because time allocated to the subject is too little.	2.29	D
7	Time allocated for isiZulu classes at university is too much; some of this time should rather be used for learning more English.	2.01	D
11	My motivation to do well in isiZulu at university is informed by knowing that the language could help me find employment once I had completed my studies.	4.10	A

Source: Ditsele, T., 2014, 'Perceptions of Black South African languages: A survey of the attitudes of Setswana-speaking university students toward their first language', p. 146, Doctoral thesis, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria
D, disagree; A, agree.

more English; this means that they felt that the time should still be used for the learning and teaching of isiZulu. They agreed that their motivation to do well in isiZulu at university was informed by knowing that the language could help them find employment once they had completed their studies (Belief statement 11).

An analysis of the mean suggested that Variable 2 (age group), Variable 3 (years at university), Variable 4 (location of nurture) and Variable 5 (linguality) were factors in determining the attitudes that respondents held towards 'studying isiZulu at university'. Variable 1 (sex) was the only variable which was not a factor in determining respondents' attitudes towards 'studying isiZulu at university'.

Theme 2: Pride of the Zulu people

The above theme focused on the attitudes held by respondents towards Zulus as a people and their culture (Belief statements 1, 4, 6, 8 and 12). As shown in Table 4, respondents were not sure whether the speakers of isiZulu perceived this language to being inferior to English (Belief statement 1). The same attitudinal positional tendency was discovered in Belief statements 4 and 12, in which the respondents were not sure whether it is embarrassing for someone who studied the language at high school to perform badly in this language at university, as well as whether it was okay for children whose parents are Zulus to speak this isiZulu with a Model C[4] accent, as long they could communicate in the language.

However, respondents revealed positive attitudes towards the Zulu people and their culture by agreeing that the Zulu people should reveal their Zulu roots when they meet people from other cultures (Belief statement 6). The same attitudinal positional tendency was noted in Belief statement 8, in which they agreed that their language was their identity, therefore, it needed to be developed further so that they could use it to transmit their cultural norms, values, customs and rituals. This means that they believed in the pride of the Zulu people and their culture.

4.'Model C schools' existed before South Africa became a democratic country in 1994; such schools were largely located at suburbs and were predominately attended by white learners (Ditsele 2014:160). A 'Model C accent' is one spoken by a black person who studied at a former Model C school.

TABLE 4: Data for 'pride of the Zulu people'.

Number	Belief statement	Mean	Tendency
1	Speakers of isiZulu perceive this language to being inferior to English.	3.34	NS
4	It is embarrassing for someone who studied isiZulu at high school to perform badly in this language at university.	3.46	NS
6	The Zulu people should not reveal their Zulu roots when they meet people from other cultures (e.g. Europeans, North Americans, etc.).	1.87	D
8	My language is my identity; thus, it needs to be developed further so I can use it to transmit cultural norms, values, customs and rituals.	4.49	A
12	It is okay for children whose parents are Zulus to speak isiZulu with a Model C accent, as long as they can communicate in the language.	3.18	NS

Source: Ditsele, T., 2014, 'Perceptions of Black South African languages: A survey of the attitudes of Setswana-speaking university students toward their first language', p. 146, Doctoral thesis, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria

NS, not sure; D, disagree; A, agree.

TABLE 5: Data for 'language practice in South Africa'.

Number	Belief statement	Mean	Tendency
5	Black people's South African languages should only be official languages in the provinces where they have many first-language speakers and not nationally.	2.47	D
9	Like English, the ability to communicate in black people's South African languages should be a requirement for getting jobs in South Africa.	3.90	A
10	English should be the only official language in South Africa.	1.69	D

Source: Ditsele, T., 2014, 'Perceptions of Black South African languages: A survey of the attitudes of Setswana-speaking university students toward their first language', p. 146, Doctoral thesis, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria

D, disagree; A, agree.

An analysis of the mean suggested that Variable 2 (age group), Variable 3 (years at university), Variable 4 (location of nurture) and Variable 5 (linguality) were factors in determining the respondents' attitudes regarding the 'pride of the Zulu people' in all five belief statements, while Variable 1 (sex), too, was a determining factor, albeit only regarding Belief statements 4 and 8.

Theme 3: Language practice in South Africa

The above theme looked at the attitudes held by respondents towards the use of language (or 'language practice') in South Africa, particularly BSALs. As illustrated in Table 5, respondents suggested that they supported multilingualism in South Africa by disagreeing that BSALs should only be official languages in the provinces where they have many first-language speakers and not nationally (Belief statement 5). They also disagreed that English should be the only official language in South Africa (Belief statement 10). This means that they supported multilingualism, as well as the equal treatment of all official languages, as stated in the Constitution.

Respondents also felt that communicative skills in BSALs should be a requirement for employment in South Africa (Belief statement 9) because this could promote their use in the country. Therefore, it can be said that respondents held positive attitudes towards the use of BSALs in formal settings.

The mean indicated that Variable 2 (age group), Variable 4 (location of nurture) and Variable 5 (linguality) were factors

in determining respondents' attitudes regarding 'language practice in South Africa' in Belief statements 5 and 10, while Variable 1 (sex) and Variable 3 (years at university) were factors in Belief statement 5 only.

Face-to-face interview questions (with students)

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 10 respondents (students), and this represented 10% of the students who took part in this survey. The five female and five male students were selected because they indicated (on a Consent Form) their willingness to be interviewed. Six semi-structured interview questions were put to the 10 interviewees.

Question 1: When you came to university, were you disappointed that you had to take isiZulu as a subject in your programme?

All the interviewees mentioned that they were not disappointed that they would be studying this language when they came to the university. Four interviewees stated that as prospective language practitioners, they had to have in-depth knowledge of isiZulu before being experts in other languages:

> 'As a prospective language practitioner, I have to know and understand my own language before getting exposed to other languages.' (Fourth-year student, Female)

Another four interviewees submitted that they were very happy with studying isiZulu at university because they knew that they would understand it better than other subjects, as well as obtaining the highest marks in this language.

> 'I was very happy because I knew that I will understand it better than other subjects, and do best in it.' (Third-year student, Male)

The remaining two interviewees stated that by studying their L1, they knew that they would be able to express themselves with confidence in the language.

> 'I felt grateful that I would be studying my home language because I knew that I would be able to express myself with confidence in my language.' (First-year student, Male)

Question 2: When you prepare for an isiZulu exam or test and are not confident about your chances of performing well in it, do you put in extra hours of preparation or do you study for it as normal?

Seven interviewees stated that they put in extra hours of preparing for isiZulu tests or examinations. Furthermore, they submitted that they studied isiZulu as a home language, and thus, there was an expectation that they needed to perform well in the language:

> 'Giving isiZulu an extra time when preparing for a test or an exam helps me to get the best results.' (First-year student, Female)

Three interviewees stated that they did not put in any extra hours to prepare for isiZulu tests or examinations because they attended lectures regularly and, therefore, they did not

feel any need to catch up on work covered during lectures. To them, they used regular studying time to do revision of work covered during lectures:

> 'I do not need extra time to prepare for tests or exams; I just do revision of what I learned and understood during lectures'. (Second-year student, Male)

Question 3: When you did not attend an isiZulu class and know that the section that was taught gives you problems, do you: (1) study it on your own, (2) ask other students to help you, or (3) approach the lecturer(s) to help you?

Four interviewees said that they asked other students because they did not want to bother their lecturers as they felt it would feel like making the latter repeat what they already taught during lectures. Some within this group indicated that they belonged to study groups which were handy if one had missed a lecture.

One submitted:

> 'We have a study group and we meet at least three times a week to help each other with the sections that we did not understood or missed during lectures.' (Third-year student, Male)

Three interviewees said that they approached their lecturers for help because the latter gave them accurate information as opposed to studying on their own or approaching fellow students:

> 'They give me the best information and I get an understanding that I would not get if I study it on my own or ask other students for help.' (First-year student, Female)

Two interviewees said they approached either their lecturers or fellow students, while one interviewee stated that he or she studied on his or her own.

Question 4: If you did not perform well in an isiZulu test and/or exam, what do you think contributed to such a performance?

Seven interviewees said that they took isiZulu for granted by not giving the language adequate study time:

> 'It could be that I took isiZulu for granted by giving it little time to prepare as compared to other subjects.' (Second-year, Female)

One interviewee said that she did not consult with her lecturers for help. The other two interviewees mentioned that their department sometimes did not give them adequate study time between the end of lectures and the beginning of the writing of tests or examinations:

> 'It becomes a challenge for me to study all my subjects within that short space of time, thus I end up spending less time on isiZulu.' (Fourth-year student, Female)

Question 5: After completing your studies and leaving the university, do you plan to look for employment as an isiZulu language practitioner?

Eight interviewees responded that they would feel grateful to work as isiZulu language practitioners, and thus, they planned to seek employment in this line of work. Only two interviewees stated that they were not interested in becoming isiZulu language practitioners because they planned to pursue a career in foreign languages; they said that they did not perform well in isiZulu:

> 'I am not good in isiZulu. Therefore, I cannot pursue a career as an isiZulu language practitioner. I struggle to pass tests, so it would not be possible for me to look for employment in this field.' (First-year student, Female)

Question 6: Do you work on improving your communication skills in non-Nguni languages by making friends with students whose first languages are Setswana, Northern Sotho, Xitsonga and/or Tshivenda?

All interviewees stated that they were working on their communication skills outside the Nguni languages by making friends with fellow students who spoke L1s which were not Nguni languages. Furthermore, eight of them believed that learning non-Nguni languages made them more multilingual:

> 'This improves my communication skills because I want to be multilingual.' (Second-year student, Male)

The other two said that learning non-Nguni languages helped them in their studies, particularly when such languages were their 'practical languages'. At this university, it was compulsory for all students who studied to be language practitioners to register for a language that did not appear on their Grade 12 Certificates, and such a language should not be mutually intelligible with the one they registered for as a major subject (e.g. Setswana major students were not allowed to register for Northern Sotho as a 'practical language' and vice versa).

Face-to-face interview questions (with lecturers)

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with three respondents (isiZulu lecturers). This was meant to get a different perspective from that of students. Six semi-structured interview questions were put to the three interviewees.

Question 1: Under which circumstances do students consult you regarding their academic progress in isiZulu?

All interviewees revealed that students did not consult them regularly regarding their academic progress. One interviewee said that they consulted when they had failed an assessment (e.g. tests or assignments). Another one said that they consulted a day or two before writing a test. The last one said that they consulted when their marks were incorrectly captured on the electronic system.

Question 2: When students do not perform well in isiZulu, what do they blame this on?

Two interviewees said that the students usually said that isiZulu was a difficult subject with a huge workload. They also noted that students complained that time allocated for the writing of tests was not enough, thus they sometimes failed because they could not complete the tests:

> 'Some students blamed themselves and others blamed us for not giving them the scope for the tests.'(Lecturer C, Female, taught third- and fourth-year students)

Question 3: Why do you think that students do not perform well in isiZulu?

Two interviewees said that it could be that they took isiZulu for granted because it was their L1, and thus, they did not give it enough attention as they would treat other subjects:

> 'They rush to give answers before understanding what has been asked of them, and they do not study isiZulu enough.' (Lecturer A, Female, taught first- and second-year students)

Question 4: What sort of questions do students ask you regarding their future job prospects?

All interviewees said that students asked whether they would find employment once they had qualified as isiZulu language practitioners. They were worried that career prospects appeared to be limited for those who studied isiZulu and other BSALs at university level.

Question 5: What impression do you have regarding students' attitudes towards learning other black South Africans' languages and culture?

Interviewees were split on this question. Two of them mentioned that students appeared not to be keen on learning other languages and cultures because they believed that those languages would not help them in any way:

> 'Only a few of them show interest in learning other people's languages and cultures.' (Lecturer C, Female, taught third- and fourth-year students)

The other interviewee said that students were open-minded and keen to learn other languages.

Question 6: What impression do you have regarding students' perceptions about the Zulus as a people?

Interviewees were also split on this question. One of them believed that students' perceptions about Zulus as a people were not good. This interviewee (a lecturer who taught second-year students) noted, 'Students think that isiZulu and the culture of the Zulu people are boring. Therefore, they do not take pride in themselves and their culture'. The other two disagreed; the first one said that students embraced their culture and maintained it even at university, while the second one mentioned that they saw Zulus as a people who loved and took pride in their language and culture.

Discussion
Theme 1: Studying isiZulu at university

Most respondents disagreed that it was a waste of time to study isiZulu at university and that it should be studied up to high school, and this is a different finding to that of Ditsele (2014:221). In his study on Setswana L1-speaking university students, respondents were not sure whether studying Setswana up to Grade 12 was enough; some argued that it was acceptable to limit the language to high school because, by that time, it would have served its purpose of teaching its L1 speakers about who they were, that is, their heritage. They were adamant that English had to take over and beyond high school (e.g. university), particularly as the job market sought those with stronger competence in that language, and Afrikaans to a lesser extent, and not in Setswana or the other eight BSALs.

Respondents also revealed that their motivation to do well in isiZulu was informed by finding out from their lecturers that the language could help them find employment upon completion of their studies.

Theme 2: Pride of the Zulu people

Regarding the Zulu people and their culture, most respondents who indicated that the cultural practices of the Zulu people would survive for many generations to come because Zulu people valued, honoured and kept their cultural practices, which they passed to other generations. Similar findings were made by Ditsele (2014:217) whose respondents agreed that Setswana was not just a language, but a people's identity as well. Over and above, respondents in his study mentioned that Setswana was their heritage, including roots and ethnicity. In this study, respondents mentioned that their culture was part of who they were as a people.

Respondents stated that the Zulu people should reveal their Zulu roots when they meet people from other cultures. This finding is similar to that of Dalvit and De Klerk (2005:7) who found that isiXhosa-speaking students in the Eastern Cape were proud of being Xhosa and eager to speak about their language and culture.

Respondents in a study by De Kadt (2005:33) stated that it would be very embarrassing for a person of isiZulu ethnicity not to be able to speak isiZulu. This study did not focus on the 'embarrassment' about the ability to speak isiZulu, but on two aspects, that is, 'embarrassment' about one's performance in the language at university level and 'embarrassment' on the accent in which it was spoken. On both aspects, respondents were not sure. Firstly, they were not sure whether it was embarrassing for someone who studied isiZulu at high school to perform badly in this language at university. Secondly, they were not sure whether it was embarrassing for children whose parents were Zulus to speak isiZulu with a Model C accent.

Theme 3: Language practice in South Africa

Kamwangamalu (1997:234) argues that taking BSALs into account as working languages in all domains of public life, must start at school, the best place for building know-how and developing knowledge, before it takes its place in other social spheres. He then notes that Africa is the only continent in the world where, in most countries, the person on trial within the judicial system does not have access to justice in their L1 and still must rely on an interpretation system inherited from the colonial period.

The picture painted above is not a positive one about the state of language practice in Africa. Be that as it may, Dyers (1999:79–80) found that most respondents in her study indicated that they would like to see BSALs being developed. Respondents in this study were asked about language practice in South Africa. They rejected the suggestion of English being the only official language in the country and also rejected the suggestion of BSALs being official only in provinces where they have significant populations of L1 speakers. They supported the suggestion of introducing competence in BSALs as a requirement for securing employment in South Africa. These findings paint an improving picture on the future of BSALs, particularly when viewed against a submission by De Klerk (1999:312) that speakers of BSALs perceive their languages as worthless, because of their functional limitations, regarding access to participation and mobility in wider society. Perhaps in fairness to De Klerk, this study did not extensively interrogate isiZulu's functional limitations.

Conclusions

As indicated earlier, the objective of this study was to seek answers to one primary question and two secondary questions. Regarding the primary question (viz. 'What attitudes do the respondents hold towards studying isiZulu at university?'), it is concluded that respondents held positive attitudes towards studying isiZulu at university.

In as far as the first secondary question is concerned (viz. 'What are the respondents' attitudes towards the use of isiZulu for wider societal functions, especially job opportunities?'), respondents believed that their future of the use of isiZulu and by extension other BSALs looked good, particularly regarding prospects of employment opportunities in the language-orientated field. It is then concluded that they held positive attitudes towards the use of isiZulu for wider societal functions.

Considering the second secondary question (viz. 'What are the respondents' attitudes towards the Zulus as a people?') respondents indicated that they were proud members of the Zulu people and also embraced the Zulu culture. It is concluded that they held positive attitudes towards Zulus as a people.

It is also concluded that all five variables, namely: (1) sex, (2) age group, (3) years at university, (4) location of nurture and (5) linguality, influenced respondents' attitudes regarding the study's three themes, namely studying isiZulu at university, pride of the Zulu people and language practice in South Africa. The statistical significance of the variables' influence was not explored through a rigorous statistical analysis (e.g. SPSS). Further research is needed to explore the statistical significance of such influence.

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Authors' contributions

N.T.M. conducted the study for her Master's degree under the supervision of T.D. and co-supervision of L.v.H. and C.R. The first draft of the article was written by N.T.M., which was reviewed, re-written and finalised by the others three authors.

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