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Code switching in contemporary isiZulu performance poetry

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Recent developments in isiZulu poetry have been marked by an emergence of performance poets whose poems have gained popularity with younger audiences. A constant feature in contemporary isiZulu poetry is a conscious deviation from adherence to rigid structural and formal linguistic requirements. Contemporary isiZulu poetry is also characterised by a shift from textual to performance-specific conventions that cater for radio, theatre, social-media platforms and so forth, and is more accommodative of linguistic dynamics that shape the current generation of artists and audiences. While contemporary isiZulu performance is a rather more recent innovation, it still owes its roots to oral poetry traditions and has evolved from literary art forms that were committed to memory and performed during family gatherings and communal events. This article explores code switching in contemporary isiZulu performance poetry and argues for appreciation of this phenomenon for its aesthetic appeal rather than as infringement on long-held attitudes about purity of artistic linguistic expressions. Hyme's Ethno-poetic Theory will inform analysis of selected poems in this article. Ethno-poetic Theory focuses, amongst others, on how a performance displays literary qualities.

Keywords: code switching; code mixing; contemporary poetry performance; ethnopoetics.

Introduction

Mathonsi and Mazibuko (2009) applauds the emergence of new writers who have contributed to the enrichment of isiZulu literature across genres in the past two decades. In line with this growth, recent trends in isiZulu poetry have been marked by a proliferation of performers who have revolutionised the local literary landscapes. This development has been enhanced by technological advancements in the form of digital media platforms as well as increased appreciation of indigenous language artists and inclusion thereof in literary festivals, radio programmes and print media columns. Unfortunately, there has not been remarkable research focus on the literary merits of contemporary isiZulu performance, particularly the linguistic dynamics that permeate this genre. Whilst there are various aspects that could be considered in analysing the linguistic manifestations of performance poetry, the focus of this article will be confined to code switching. Code switching is a widespread phenomenon by virtue of South Africa being a multilingual and multicultural society (Mabule 2015). Ndimande-Hlongwa and Ndebele (2017) argue for a need to embrace multilingualism through research on its various manifestations, such as code switching, for instance. Much of the research on code switching in a multilingual South African context focusses on the phenomenon as it applies in the educational setting and natural conversations (Dladla 2018; Ndebele 2012). Masubelele (2015) contends that there is a need to consider how literary texts portray social change in the form of linguistic shifts resulting from contact between languages. This article seeks to explore how isiZulu poets have embraced aspects of multilingualism in the form of code switching as evident in some performances.

Theoretical perspective

This article adopts ethnopoetics theory as its analysis tool. Ethnopoetics concerns itself with individual creativity and the careful attention to linguistic details (Hymes 1981; Johnstone 1996; Tedlock 1983). As Bahr (1986:171) noted, 'ethno-poetics should be more than the study of technique … it should include meaning and use'. Friedrich (1986) and Blommaert (2006) offered insight on the useful evaluations of ethnopoetics in literary texts.

Blommaert (2006) commented that:

> [E]thno-poetic work is one way of addressing the main issue in ethnography: to describe (and reconstruct) languages not in the sense of stable, closed and internally homogeneous units characterizing mankind … but as ordered complexes of genres, styles, registers and forms of use. (p. 259)

Such a perspective must engage individual poets, the language they use and the connections they make. The ethnopoetics theory takes interest in the aesthetic components and poetic structuring of oral poems. It also gives guidelines on how to appreciate the arrangement of an oral text in lines to render its fullest charge of texture: rhythm, nuance, phrasing and other components that allow full poetic meaning. Ethnopoetics has been concerned with individual creativity and the careful attention to linguistic details (Hymes 1981; Johnstone 1996; Tedlock 1983).

Pertinent literature on performance poetry

Most of the research on isiZulu literature has focussed on poetry, perhaps because more poetry collections have been published over the years, making poetry the most popular art form (Makhambeni & Ntuli 1998). Whilst the past few years have witnessed a surge of performance poetry, the genre remains neglected by researchers as focus still falls on written poetry. Some scholars have studied different apects of the poetry, particularly its structural elements and contribution by individual poets. For instance, recent research in isiZulu poetry by scholars such as Thwala (2000, 2016), Ngwenya (2015), Qwabe (2015), Ndlovu (2016) and Xaba (2018) deals with written poetry by individual poets such as JC Dlamini, Mazisi Kunene, AM Maphumulo, CT Msimang and BW Vilakazi, whilst research by Mdanda (2010) and Thwala (2018) explores thematic distribution and poetic features such as imagery and symbolism as used by various poets.

Contemporary IsiZulu performance poetry seems to be regarded as a new genre that is not yet worth research interest. Ronessi (2017) bemoaned the dearth of research on performance poetry and felt that 'performance poetry constitutes an opportunity for "Let's see" research possibilities which can generate vigorous research activities'.

Comparatively, performance poetry has enjoyed more appreciation as a research field in other cultural and language backgrounds. Schmid (2000) said 'performers in Iowa use the performance to forge bonds across racial, ethnic, class and gender divides'. Camangian (2008) examined the impact of a performance poetry unit on Los Angeles high school students' critical thinking, literacy and voice from the perspective of a teacher or researcher in an urban classroom. Bridging the critical and the performance aspects of spoken word poetry in a high school composition classroom, his work offers a concrete example of this praxis and reports on a curriculum project that empowered students to examine issues of privilege, social control and oppression in the United States of America (USA) society.

Locally, Brown (1995) felt that performance poetry should be accorded more research attention because 'oral poetry and performance have been an important feature of South African society since the development of the first communities in the subcontinent'. Mnensa (2010) contended that performance poetry enables younger generations to re-negotiate inherited identities and offered the possibility of creating new identities. This article, therefore, seeks to contribute to research pursuits in performance poetry.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative method to examine contemporary isiZulu performance poetry and its relevance in current literary discourse. According to Creswell (2009:4), qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Silverman (2000:1) suggested that if you are apprehensive with reconnoitring people's lives, histories or everyday behaviours, then qualitative methods may be preferred.

Data were collected using participant observation and recordings. Dewalt and Dewalt (2002:92) maintained that participant observation as a research method assists in the development of an all-inclusive comprehension and a more objective and accurate appraisal of the phenomena from which research findings will emanate.

The researchers attended poetry sessions and gathered data through voice recordings during performance. They also recorded poets who recited poetry live on radio for 'Back to my roots' poetry slot that Bongani Mavuso hosts every Friday morning on Ukhozi FM. Recordings were later transcribed for analysis. Focus was mainly on poems that feature code switching that researchers used to select poems to use for this article.

Code switching in isiZulu poetry

In the linguistic situation of the Zulu poets, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, isiZulu and English are major languages that not only exist side by side but also are sometimes integrated into single communicative events and speech acts. Mother tongue speakers of isiZulu usually use English as a language of communication with people from diverse backgrounds. As a result of this, the majority of poets are bilingual in isiZulu and English. Although isiZulu is both the mother tongue and the language of preference for the majority of the individuals residing in KwaZulu-Natal, some speakers of the language tend to switch to English in their casual, everyday conversations. This may explain the prevalence of the insertion of English words and expressions when poets compose and perform. Code switching can, therefore, be regarded as both a conscious stylistic feature and natural means of expression by poets.

Code switching and code mixing

In the context of this article, the term code switching refers to the frequent shifts from one language to another within a single piece of conversation speech acts, often involving switches within a single speaker's turn or a single sentence. For purposes of this article, reference to sentences as alluded to in definitions of code switching will be regarded as

applicable to lines and stanzas that are found in poems. Code switching is distinguished from a number of related phenomena which are manifest in bilingual conversations. Firstly, code switching differs from borrowing, which entails 'the incorporation of lexical elements from one language in the lexicon of another language' (Muysken 1995:189). Code switching is often reflective of communicative competence, which entails the ability by the speaker to select and use words and expressions that best reflect areas of linguistic interface between participants in a conversation. Speakers who apply code switching arguably do so intentionally for purposes of effective communication. '[P]urposeful and appropriate code switching, therefore, can be viewed as an expression of communicative competence' (Cheng & Butler 1989:296). Myers-Scotton (1993) defined code switching as the mixing of different linguistic codes by speakers in the same conversation. Switching may occur at any level of linguistic differentiation such as dialects, jargon, registers and so forth. Jack and Richard (2002) concurred that code switching is a change by a speaker (or writer) from one language or language variety to another.

Code switching may occur in a conversation where one interlocutor uses one language and the other answers in a different one. A speaker may start conversing in a particular language and then change to the other one in the middle of their utterance or sentence. Furthermore, Hornberger and Mckay (1998) stated that when two or more languages are in use in a community, interlocutors frequently switch codes, that is, they change from one language to another.

Some scholars such as Dladla (2018) viewed the term code switching as synonymous to code mixing because a thin line differentiates the two phenomena. Muysken (2000) stated that:

> [C]ode switching is a process of interchanging languages during a single speech event whereas code mixing is an all-encompassing term that extends to the interchanging of languages to grammatical features and lexical items. (p. 28)

Code switching also differs from code mixing in terms of the location of the point at which the language switch occurs. The main distinction between the two is observable between inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching (Saville-Troike 2003).

Holmes (2000) and Thompson (2000) made a distinction between code switching and code mixing and stated that code switching occurs when a switch is made between two sentences whilst code mixing occurs when a switch is made within a sentence. Inter-sentential switching consists of language switches at phrasal, sentence or discourse boundaries, whereas intra-sentential switching is a shift in language in the middle of a sentence, usually performed without pause, interruption or hesitation.

This article, whilst acknowledging the technical nuances that differentiate the two terms, will regard the two as synonymous and confine analysis to notions of code switching as evident in isiZulu.

Inter-lineal code switching

Inter-lineal code switching constitutes a switch from one language to the other that occurs at the level of a line in a poem. This means when a stanza of a poem is divided into lines, some lines appear in one language whilst other lines appear in a different language. Regarding code switching in normal speech acts, Eldin (2014) and MacSwan (1999) explained that because inter-sentential code switching takes place within the same sentence or during turn-taking between interlocutors, the phenomenon is demonstrative of the interlocutors' fluency in both languages.

Such fluency in two languages is discernible in a poem titled '*Ngingowesifazane*' by SimChina (Smangele Zungu), which has the following lines in isiZulu and English:

> Ngiyitshe elingaqhephuki
> Ngiwuthando
> Ngiyabekezela
> Ngiyigolide ngiyabekezela
> Ngingowesifazane
> Ngimuhlekazi.
>
> [I a rock that doesn't chip off
> I am love
> I persevere
> I am a gold, I am resilient
> I am a woman
> I am the most beautiful.]
>
> [I am a woman of prayer
> I pray
> Even when men make me pray
> I bow down to God and pray.]

The poet starts her poem in isiZulu, but later changes into English and then back and forth between the languages. The poet seems to assume that she is addressing a bilingual audience because the lines in the poem are not necessarily translations but are stand-alone entities that each conveys a different meaning and message. Other similar examples are available where poets use inter-lineal code switching between lines and stanzas.

One obvious reason for inter-lineal code switching is the poet's bilingualism or fluency in both isiZulu and English. According to Bouchard (2015), the level of code switching is determined by the levels of bilingualism, and, in some cases, multilingualism amongst the interlocutors. In the case of poems, poets seem comfortable in both languages, and code switching appears to occur naturally and seamlessly.

Inter-lineal code switching sometimes occurs when a poet seems to compensate for an absence of an expression in one language and is readily available in the next. Again, bilingualism saves the poet the burden of searching for an equivalent expression or translation or rephrasing thereof, which may temper with the message or make the line sound

contrived. This can be seen in Ntokozo Ngcobo's poem titled '*Izembe libekiwe*':

> Bayothi bakhangwa ubuhle bakho.
> Ubuhle bakho bumoshakale ngomzuzwana nje
> [*My sister, don't be fooled by oldest tricks in the book*]
> Ngikutshela ngemigulukudu amasoka amanyala
>
> [They will say they were attracted by your beauty
> Your beauty will be ruined in a mere second
> My sister, don't be fooled by oldest tricks in the book
> I am telling you about hooligans real playboys.]

This line, 'the oldest tricks in the book', idiomatically suggests that something has been performed repeatedly, across generations. An isiZulu equivalent expression would not have carried the same weight or meaning. The poet chooses to reserve its original meaning and refrains from translating it into isiZulu. In some cases, an equivalent concept or context may be absent in one language and necessitates code switching. An example from Makhafula Vilakazi' poem, '*Dear Queen Elizabeth*', illustrates this. The bulk of the poem is in English and the poet switches to isiZulu to express ideas that are foreign to English:

> S'gogwana waseNgilandi uyangizwa mani?
> Nale ncwadi ngiyibhala ngimanzi te izikali zikaMamuyangichaza
>
> [Old woman from England, do you hear me, man?
> I write this letter while drunk from Mamuyangichaza's home made beer]

Whilst the poem is addressed to the Queen Elizabeth, the poet is aware that the audience is local and may fail to appreciate the meaning of the lines if rendered in English and devoid of domestic expressions. One must also mention that the translation provided for purposes of this analysis hardly captures the essence of the original isiZulu version that comprises slang words and expressions. Code switching in this poem seems to be a deliberate effort by the poet to make sure that the message is convened to the audience as intended.

Inter-lineal code switching also occurs for emphasis reasons. The poet does this through repetition of lines or ideas for availability in both languages. In 'Ngingowesifazane' (I am a woman) by SimChina, the poet repeats the line 'ngingowesifazane' several times in the poem, in both isiZulu and English.

The effect of code switching employed in this poem deliberately lies in the apparent emphasis that ultimately clarifies the point she is making, that of being a proud woman. Repetition is a common stylistic feature at the disposal of many poets in their bid to emphasise or clarify certain meanings:

> Ngiyitshe elingaqhephuki
> Ngiwuthando
> Ngiyabekezela
> Ngiyigolide ngiyabekezela
> Ngingowesifazane
> Ngimuhlekazi

> I am a woman of prayer
> I pray
> Even when men make me pray
> I bow down to God and pray
> Ngingowesifazane
> Ngiyinzala bantu.
>
> [I am a rock that doesn't chip off
> I am love
> I persevere
> I am a gold I am resilient
> I am woman
> I am the most beautiful.
>
> Owesifazane womkhuleko
> Ngiyakhuleka
> Noma ngabe abesilisa bangenza ngikhuleke
> Ngiguqa phansi kuNkulunkulu ngikhuleke
> I am a woman
> I give birth to people.]

Solidarity with the audience may be another reason for code switching. According to Cheng (2003), a speaker may use code switching in order to show solidarity with the person being addressed. It is worth noting that the poem cited above was recited during a poetry session at the University of KwaZulu–Natal, Edgewood campus. The youthful audience comprised university students, some of whom were non–mother tongue speakers of the language and benefitted from the poet's code switching.

The poet artistically switches back and forth between isiZulu and English. Arguably, the poet succeeds in her use of the code switch to respond to the needs of the target audience which is achieved even in the conventional conversations. One could also surmise that the poet appeals to everyone because the language of the poem, especially the parts presented in isiZulu, could pose difficulty to some non–mother tongue members of the audience in terms of understanding and appreciating the message embedded in the poem, but the moment the poet switches to English, it becomes easier to understand the context of the whole poem. In the case of SimChina, one may argue that her code switching was meant for solidarity purposes. Seemingly, when poets compose, they foresee possibilities of mixed audiences and decide in advance to be accommodative of linguistic diversity by incorporating code switching in their poems. Das (2012) added that code switching is often employed as a tool to execute communicative functions and relay the intended message in the manner the speaker would want it relayed.

Code switching can be used for stylistic purposes. Qwabe (2015) defined style as a deviation from the norm, and this may explain why some poets use code switching as a stylistic device. In isiZulu poetry, preoccupation with language purity has always been the norm, with poets opting for difficult words and obscure expressions instead of simple, easy to understand alternatives. Contemporary performance poets seem to have shunned this notion and infused code switching as an ingredient, for stylistic effect.

In Makhafula Vilakazi's poem, 'Glen Dlamini', code switching is more stylistic and deliberate than random. The lines are arranged neatly, so that one stanza is in English and the next in isiZulu. Each stanza starts in isiZulu and ends with the line, 'Dear Queen Elizabeth', or by simply mentioning the queen's name. Vilakazi imbues his style with a sense of humour that he feels is best conveyed through code switching. He addresses the queen as '[A]pple of my black eye', a sense that could not be captured in an isiZulu equivalent expression.

They are cases where mere insertion of English words cannot necessarily be viewed as code switching in the strict sense of the word. This happens when a poet provides information or details to support facts as mentioned in a stanza. This can be seen in Siyabonga Mpungose's poem titled *Valentine*:

Siqale ndawonye eSifiso Esihle LP School
Konje kwakusadlise baphi abaculi?
'It about time …' Boomshaka
Vele ngase ngiyimbongi.

[We started off
together at Sifiso Esihle L.P School
Who were famous musicians by the way?
'It about time'… Boomshaka
I was already a poet by then.]

In this poem, '[I]t's about time', is a title of a song and not English words that can qualify as code switching. The line would not have made sense if the poet attempted to translate it into IsiZulu. He then decides to insert the title as it is so that people can recall the period instantly. This song was very popular, especially amongst the youths.

Even though the poet inserted this title in his poem, his intention was not necessarily for code switching purposes.

Lastly the plausibility of the poem's content sometimes necessitates code switching. This usually happens in poems of a narrative nature. In S'bo da poet's poem titled '*Incwadi engena-address*' we find the following lines:

Ukuhlala to the point nje S'bo
I have i-*stress*
Kwasekuqaleni Kwakufanele ushele mina
But bad luck for you, wangenza iposi lakho;
Impilo yami ayina-address, ifana nale ncwadi
Thanks for your time
Usale kahle.

[To get to the point, S'bo
I am stressed out;
I'm the one you were supposed to propose love to
But bad luck for you, you made me deliver letters to her
My life has no address, the same as this letter;
Thanks for your time
Remain well.]

Code switching in the poem makes the narrative credible. The letter is written by an urban young woman and the audience will not be surprised by her choice of words because they fit her character and bilingual background. In traditional conservative communities, a woman who makes advances at a man is frowned upon. Besides, it is normal for women her age to switch between languages in their conversations. In Makhafula Vilakazi's poem, '*Akufe ofayo*', the poet tells a story of young men who pounce on a white woman at her house and rob her of her possessions:

'Madam come here, why do you hide?
Madam speak fast, I am a fast guy'.

The poet uses English dialogue, not for code switching as such but renders the narrative plausible by using the exact words that were used to address an English-speaking woman. Code switching in this case is necessary to enhance the flow of the poem and to make the audience relate to the events that unfold during the robbery scene.

Intra-lineal code switching

Code switching can also occur within sentences. Muysken (2000) outlined three patterns of intra-sentential code switching, namely insertions, alternations and congruent lexicalisation. In the case of alternation, there is an overt switch from one language to the other, which involves both grammar and lexicon, and insertion which involves introduction of lexical items from the other language; whilst in congruent lexicalisation, the grammatical structure is shared by languages, with words from both languages inserted more randomly (Muysken 2000). Winford (2003) aptly reiterated that code switching involving a single morpheme is typical of intra-clause code switching, which is very common across bilingual communities.

Poplack (1979a) pointed out that this intimate mode of code switching is the most favoured type of tag-like switches. This requires intimate knowledge of both languages between which the speaker switches. Intra-sentential code switching occurs within a sentence and it accounts for the greatest syntactic risk as words or phrases from another language are inserted into the first language within one sentence or utterance. This type of switching enables speakers to switch from one language to another within the same sentence. Thus, a single sentence is made up of two or more languages. In the case of poems, intra-lineal code switching, particularly insertion is prevalent and seems to feature more than its inter-lineal counterpart. In most cases, a poet inserts a single English word in a line as can be seen in Siyabonga Mpungose's poem, '*Umalumekazi*':

Ok, besifihla ngoMgqibelo, namhlanje uMsombuluko kuyasherishwa
Siyabamba siyayeka, siyancenta siwasha izitsha
Ngisacwebise amehlo;
Phela ngisayikhumbula le ntokazi isanda kugqitshwa.
Indaba yaqala kancane kwathiwa,
'Ngisayolala ngehora lokuqala ubongivusa
And uhlukane nokulokhu usicefezelela ukhalela umama wakho
Asazi noma uzomvusa yini
And uhlukane nokuqedela izingane zami isinkwa
Laph' ekhaya ikwami …'

[Ok, we had a funeral on Saturday, today it's Monday and we are sharing

We are busy, mowing the lawn and washing dishes
My eyes are still wet with tears
Of course, I miss the lady, she has just been buried
It all started gradually with the words,
'I am off to sleep, wake me up at one o'clock
And stop irritating us by crying for your mother
It's not like you can bring her back from death
And stop eating up all of my kids' bread
I'm the one who owns this house …']

The intra-lineal code switching is evident in the poet's insertion of the English words, 'Ok' and 'And'. There is no obvious semantic significance of the inserted word and one may assume that it is evident of natural way of speaking resulting from bilingualism where English words are used even when isiZulu equivalents are available.

It is worth noting that the lines comprise the poet's own words as well as dialogue or words uttered by the wife of the poet's maternal uncle, and in both cases, insertion is used. This indicates that insertion within sentences occurs in normal speech acts between bilingual speakers. The inserted words have become part of natural speech such that the audience might not even be aware of the switch between languages.

In some cases, a poet may be alluding to a concept for which an isiZulu equivalent is not readily known, to the poet, audience, or both. This may be the case in Makhafula Vilakazi's '*USamson*' where we find the following insertion:

Kungcono ngikuthathe nge-*cremation*
Umlotha wakho ngiwulahle.

[The best is to take your body for cremation
And throw away your ashes.]

Cremation amongst Zulu communities is a relatively new burial option, and the use of the equivalent term 'ukulothisa', is not yet widespread. The Dent-Nyembezi bilingual dictionary uses 'ukushisa isidumbu' whose literal meaning denotes 'to burn a corpse' which may be misinterpreted by an isiZulu audience for whom cremation is a foreign and frowned upon practise. One may conclude that insertion in this poem is necessitated by the absence of an apt term. Jenkins (2006) maintained that speakers who have more than one language at their disposal may code switch or code mix apparently as a matter of choice but also for other pragmatic or expressive reasons. Ramsay-Brijball (1999:167) noted that 'although Zulu counterparts may exist for taboo words such as sex and prostitutes, speakers often opt for English terms rather than the Zulu terms in informal conversations'.

In other cases, a poet inserts more than word in a line, as can be seen in the following lines from a poem title '*Nelson Mandela*' by Siyabonga Mpungose:

Kwaze kwamnandi ukunidiba
Sondela ngikubambe ithambo
Kwaze kwamnandi ukukubona Mr Tambo
Even though impilo ibheda namuhla
Kodwa kusasa izobe i-*sweet like honey*

[It's so nice to meet you;
Come closer so I can shake your hand
It's so nice to see you, Mr. Tambo
Even though life is bad today
But tomorrow it will be sweet like honey.]

There is no obvious justification for code switching in the form of insertion in this poem because the equivalent words and expressions are also available in isiZulu. Pre-occupation with insertion can result in an awkward line construction that may dampen instead of enriching the artist's composition.

Code switching through insertion is best admired when it is endowed with artistic qualities that elevate the appeal of the lines where it occurs. A fine example of this instance is found in a poem by Siyabonga and Scelo Mpungose, titled '*Ngalezi zinkondlo*':

UNkulunkulu *is the master of ceremony*
Kukuwena ke ukuthi uyamlandela noma usele moni.

[God is the Master of ceremony
It's up to you sinner to decide if you will follow him.]

One is bound to applaud the poet's innovative use of insertion to imbue the lines with a rare rhyme scheme that occurs by mixing the words, 'ceremony' and 'usele moni'. Another example of innovative use of insertion to affect rhyme is found in a poem entitled '*Uthi udla ubusha bakho*' by: Nokulunga KaMajola Hlabisa:

Babambe ulayini ka-*NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme)*
Wena ubambe ulayini ka-*SASSA (South African Social Security Agency)*;
Uyofuna imali yeqolo,
Bayobuya sebeshayela ama-*Polo*.

[While they queue for NSFAS
You queue for SASSA;
You have come to apply for child grant money
They will come back driving Polos]

The poet simply inserted English acronyms and brand name, and the effect was remarkable enhancement of the beauty of the lines in the poem. Unfortunately, the same can hardly be said of a contrived rhyme attempt as found in the following lines from a poem by Siyabonga and Scelo Mpungose titled '*Ngalezi zinkondlo*':

Ngalez'izinkondlo siyofika sebeqediwe
Okwenhlabathi sebegqibile, sebe-*complet-ile*
Kodwa umsebenzi kaThixo bengawu-*complet*-ile.

[With these poems, they will already be finished when we arrive
Matters of the soil will already be completed
But they will not have completed God's work.]

Although the attempt by the poet to make the lines rhyme was somewhat successful, choice of words leaves much more to be desired. The word 'qedile' would have rendered the rhyme more acceptable, instead of using borrowed words that make the rhyme awkward. This is indicative of 'habitual' code switching and borrowing which is a tendency amongst bilingual speakers and happens even in cases where

speakers share a same language. Poets are not an exception in this case because code switching of this form is evident in non-academic situations such as public addresses, formal discussions and informal conversations with fellow isiZulu speakers. Ndebele (2012) mentioned that the Zulu people unconsciously switch the codes and do it out of habit rather than deliberately. This can also be seen in a poem by Siyabonga Mpungose titled '*This is a story about my sister*':

> *I'm so sorry* bafowethu ukunishiya le nkondlo ngingayiqedile
> *But* lolu cingo lungibikela ukuthi usisi emhlabeni usesishiyile;
> Nengane yakhe …ayishiyile
>
> [Folks, I'm sorry to leave you before I could finish this poem
> But I have received a call that my sister has passed away;
> And the child she left behind …]

This poem was recited on UKhozi FM, a predominantly isiZulu radio station where the use of isiZulu is not encouraged. But the station hosts *Back to My Root Show*, a slot dedicated to poetry where restrictions imposed on language are relaxed. Some poets use both languages in one poem whilst others recite their poems in complete English versions. People actually interact in more than one language on a daily basis at school, work or other social interactions. This renders it impractical for them to stick to one language even if they are inclined to do so.

Wardhaugh (2006) stated that people are expected to choose a language to be used in a particular situation. Poets compose and recite more often in isiZulu for they are able to express themselves competently in their mother tongue though they tend to resort to English where they feel the need to do so.

Presumably, they do this deliberately because performance poetry does not impose overt restrictions on the medium of presentation.

Conclusion

This article aimed at evaluating the prevalence of code switching in isiZulu performance poetry. Contemporary performance as a recent development in isiZulu literature has been enhanced by the availability of platforms that were not readily available in the past. Most of the artists who have embraced this genre belong to a younger generation and are thus more liberal in terms of strict adherence to 'pure' isiZulu as perceived by their predecessors. One obvious reason for code switching that prevails in isiZulu performance was increased juxtaposition of isiZulu to other languages, particularly English, which makes most artists bilingual and relatively competent in two languages. The audiences for which poems are composed and performances staged, are predominantly bilingual and do not frown on poets who spice their compositions with code switching. In cases where the audience may not be familiar with isiZulu, code switching by poets may be regarded as an attempt to be accommodative of non-mother tongue speakers of isiZulu.

At an artistic level, isiZulu performance poets seem to use code switching haphazardly, without any consideration of how it will affect the overall appeal of the composition. But there are cases where code switching is justifiable, particularly where there is absence of equivalent terms or expressions.

Some poets are quite innovative in their use of code switching and display stylistic qualities rather than using it as a natural inclination or fashionable ingredient for a performance. Whilst this is a relatively new genre in isiZulu, there are prospects for growth and that may help poets hone their skills and improve on what is already available. Whilst notions of code switching cannot be the only criterion for evaluation of standards for performance poetry, it is hoped that this article is an indication that isiZulu performance poetry is a fertile ground for more research.

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