

The influence of isiBhaca on written isiXhosa of learners in the Senior Phase in Umzimkhulu



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Dates:

Received: 02 July 2023

Accepted: 22 Nov. 2023

Published: 29 Mar. 2024

How to cite this article:

Majola, Y.L.P., 2024, 'The influence of isiBhaca on written isiXhosa of learners in the Senior Phase in Umzimkhulu', *Literator* 45(1), a2012. <https://doi.org/10.4102/lit.v45i1.2012>

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Learners in Umzimkhulu identify as amaBhaca and speak isiBhaca at home and with friends. However, at school, they use isiXhosa as a home language (HL) and first additional language (FAL). This article examines how isiBhaca influences isiXhosa in the educational space in Umzimkhulu. Research identified three schools across Umzimkhulu through which data were collected; using a qualitative approach, this article used document analysis and interviews for data collection. Data were gathered from 60 learners' written essays and 6 teachers through semi-structured interviews. Findings revealed that isiBhaca influences written isiXhosa in Umzimkhulu. This was seen through the learners' essays and teacher interviews. The conclusion of this study is that teachers should undergo standardised training on how to handle non-standard language speakers in class. At the same time, teachers should find a way of not disadvantaging learners who speak non-standard varieties and not encourage learners to develop negative attitudes towards their languages.

Contribution: The contribution to the body of scholarship is the consideration of learners who speak dialects in the classroom and the view that teachers should be taught strategies to change their approach to teaching an HL. Teachers do not have to penalise learners for using non-standard languages, especially when they are non-standard varieties of the HL, which is mostly the standard language, but rather introduce them, for example, to the correct word in the standard language.

Keywords: IsiBhaca; IsiXhosa; senior phase; home language; mother tongue education.

Introduction

Rakgogo (2019) posits that people in South Africa speak many languages, some of which are officially recognised, and others are not recognised but are regional languages (also called dialects or non-standard varieties). Language to South Africans and Africans in general is not only a way of speaking but also a symbol of people's ethnic identity. Section 29(2) of 1996 of the South African Constitution recognises 12 official languages, which are divided as follows: Nguni language cluster, which consists of isiZulu, isiXhosa, SiSwati and isiNdebele; Sotho language cluster, which consists of Sesotho, Setswana and Northern Sotho; Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans and South African sign language. Subsequent to that, the South African Language in Education Policy (LiEP) safeguards learners' rights by allowing them to select any of the aforementioned official languages as either a home language (HL) or a first additional language (FAL) in schools. As already stated, not all South Africans identify ethnically with the aforementioned official languages. IsiBhaca is an example, which, according to Majola (2021), linguistically, is mutually intelligible with isiXhosa, isiZulu and SiSwati. However, its speakers do not ethnically identify with any of the three languages; therefore, they are called amaBhaca. Although isiBhaca is the language some people of Umzimkhulu identify with, it is not used in formal settings. Instead, isiXhosa and isiZulu are used in various sectors. They use isiXhosa as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT), HL and FAL in education. IsiZulu is a language of communication in health, rural development, social development, transport and agriculture.

As previously stated, other spoken languages in South Africa are not officially recognised. Mokgokong (1966) states that the Northern Sotho language has 27 variations which are Pedi, Tau, Roka, Kone, Mphahlele, Tšhwene, Mathabatha, Matlala, Dikgale, Mothiba, Nkwana, Molepo, Mamabolo, Tlokwa, Birwa, Kweni, Moletši, Hananwa, Lobedu, Phalaborwa, Nareng, Maake, Mametša, Tlhabine, Pulana, Pai and Kutswe. According to Cole (1964), spoken Setswana is classified into four subgroups, each with its unique variants, which are: (1) Central Setswana; Serolong, as spoken by the Tshidi, Ratlou and Rrapulana nations; Serolong, as spoken by the Seleka in the Orange

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Free State; Sehurutse; and Sengwaketse; (2) Southern Setswana, Setlhaping and Setlhwane; (3) Northern Setswana, Sekwena, Sengwato and Setawana; and (4) Eastern Setswana, Transvaal Sekgatla and West-Transvaal Sekwena. According to Snail (2011:69), Sesotho comprises three variations, principally spoken in three sections of the Free State province which are Setlokwe, Sekgolokwe and Tsheseng. Da Costa, Dyers and Mheta (2014:345) classify 11 kinds of Xitsonga variations, which are Luleke, Gwamba, Changana, Hlave, Kande, N'walungu, Xonga, Jonga, Nkuna, Songa and Nhlanganu. According to Da Costa et al. (2014:342), Tshivenda is the smallest of South Africa's indigenous African language groupings which has seven variations, which are Tshipani, Tshitavha, Trinidad, Tshiilafuri, Tshimanda, Tshiguvhu, Tshimbedzi and Tshilembetu and most of Tshivenda speakers are based in Limpopo. Despite the fact that they are mother tongue speakers of these variants, all of them are not included in the 12 recognised national languages. This is to demonstrate that isiBhaca is not the only South African language spoken in regions of South Africa which is not officially recognised. However, it has a significant number of speakers.

According to the LiEP of South Africa (1997), learners from grade 1 to grade 3 in South Africa should be exposed to at least one recognised language as a medium of instruction. According to Majola, Ditsele and Cekiso (2019), isiBhaca learners from Umzimkhulu face language issues as they grow up speaking isiBhaca until they enrol in a school where they study isiXhosa. In this context, isiXhosa is a language of teaching and learning in some schools from grades 1 to 3, whereas it is an HL and a FAL for learners in grades 4 and higher.

It is assumed that isiBhaca-speaking learners should demonstrate the same language ability as native isiXhosa-speaking learners who speak isiXhosa at home and with friends, which may not be fair given that isiBhaca learners do not speak isiXhosa at home. As a form of reparation, Section 6(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa also supports the use and development of indigenous languages. Notably, Section 6(2) stipulates that official languages shall be treated with equity and respect, which serves as the LiEP's foundation. In addition, Section 29(2) of the South African Bill of Rights, which is part of the Constitution, stipulates that pupils have the right to be educated in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. This section of the Bill of Rights is biased towards official languages. It excludes learners who identify with dialects as their mother tongue such as learners who speak isiBhaca from Umzimkhulu.

This article sought to analyse the effects of isiBhaca on written isiXhosa for learners in the Senior Phase in Umzimkhulu schools. As already stated, most learners in Umzimkhulu speak isiBhaca as a native language but upon arrival at school, they come across isiXhosa, which is used as an LoLT from

grades 1 to 3, and choose it as either an HL or a FAL from grades 4 to 12. As a result, two research questions are posed:

- To what extent does isiBhaca influence learners' written isiXhosa output?
- What are the teachers' perspectives and recommendations on the influence of isiBhaca on isiXhosa?

Standard language ideology as a theoretical framework

According to Seargeant (2009), standard language ideology (SLI) is the society's set of beliefs and attitudes on language standards. It pertains to the prevailing societal perspectives on what constitutes linguistically acceptable or unacceptable forms of communication. The relevance of SLI in this study is that isiXhosa speakers regard it as the only correct form of language. They, in turn, disregard the fact that some people speak minority languages such as isiBhaca, which leads some teachers to reject the use of isiBhaca in the classroom by learners who regard it as a mother tongue. The study conducted by Horner and Weber (2017) presented one fundamental aspect of SLI – its inherent purpose of impeding or decelerating the process of linguistic evolution through the formal recognition and codification of a certain language within dictionaries, grammar books and educational materials. In the case of this study, isiXhosa is the formally recognised language which is used in most schools in Umzimkhulu as an HL and a FAL, while most learners from Umzimkhulu identify as amaBhaca who speak isiBhaca.

Non-standard languages

Non-standard languages are sometimes misinterpreted as intellectually limited, less brilliant or having slower language development, according to Mahlangu (2014). Myers-Scotton (1992:6) says non-standard languages are not developed. Hence, they are called dialects, non-standard variations and vernaculars. Khumalo (1985:109) postulates that non-standard languages should be recognised and be productive and satisfying official languages. Nfila (2002:38) defines a non-standard language as a language or dialect that does not comply with the recognised standard and is not socially equivalent to the standard language. Milroy (2001:534) says languages cannot be called non-standard unless a standard language is considered great and focal. Non-standard languages are socially stigmatised and not technically documented in syntax and word references. Therefore, they are fragile and cannot be utilised in educational contexts. According to Rakgogo (2021), non-standard languages are linguistic varieties that have not undergone the language standardisation process and do not have the same status as the standard language; they should not be used for official purposes. Non-standard language has typically been understood as a regional variety of standard languages. IsiBhaca is a non-standard isiXhosa language because it has not been standardised. Umzimkhulu's isiBhaca is related to isiZulu and siSwati.

Standard languages

Standard language is a systematised language mainly recognised as an official or national language used in education and business. According to Garvin (1993:41), 'standard language' is an ordered language variant that facilitates social and intellectual discourse network communication. Furthermore, society's direct and purposeful interference produces a standard language, says Msimang (1989:6). Standard language refers to the formal, scripted language used in classrooms, business dealings, radio and television. Nfila (2002) says it is used in parliament and gatherings.

Standard language is a formal or informal language used for a specified purpose, according to Nfila (2002:14–15). Van Huyssteen (2003:28) distinguishes standardisation and language standardisation. In a standard language, elective varieties become standard through a harmonisation process. However, language harmonisation is often handled by speakers of a language as a measure of language preservation and social honesty. Van Huyssteen (2003:30) says a linguistic variety becomes normal after passing specific steps. It has been: (1) chosen from the dialect that structures some of the languages; (2) organised, meaning the orthography, spelling, punctuation and dictionary have been established; (3) phrasing and archiving in word references, wording books and glossaries; and (4) the network perceives the tongue as its national language because the variety is now recognised and received.

According to Van Huyssteen (2003:30), the legislature should design and refine standardised language to make it helpful in all public organisations, including the business sector.

Language standardisation

Beukes (2009:37) defines language standardisation as the process through which a non-standard version of a language obtains aesthetic and political dominance over other languages and is acknowledged as the most genuine variety. Fasold and Connor-Linton (2006:312) define language standardisation as one non-standard form of a language becoming generally recognised by most persons in that discourse network as superior to other provincial and social languages. It was created or mediated. Makoni (2003:20) argues that standardising is difficult since language is alive.

According to Mojela (2008:124), language standardisation is the core component of language usage. It also has to do with a language that is generally used and acceptable in a society and is used in business (schools, government departments, etc.). Fasold and Connor-Linton (2006:312) agree with Haas, highlighting the necessity of language standardisation in allowing speaker correspondence, making the selected orthography viable and giving a standard to teach reading material. Data collection refers to the systematic gathering and measurement of information on specific variables of interest. This method enables researchers to address research questions, test hypotheses, and assess outcomes.

Standardisation is selecting one structure or variety from a few existing structures, linguistic varieties or development from various assortments with a specified number of variants. Van Huyssteen (2003:28) agrees with Nfila (2002:14–15) on standardisation but adds that arguments often exist between the majority in a discourse network and the minority who speak various dialects. While Nfila (2002:14–15) considers normalisation a conscious creation or intercession, Crystal (2010) considers it a standard language that grows naturally in a network or as an effort by the network to improve a vernacular as a norm. He also agrees that it is an attempt to enhance a particular type of language by controlling punctuation, spelling or grammar.

In summary, it is evident from the above literature that language specialists feel there should be some agreement during language standardisation and that this approach should be ongoing for a while. According to the theory, language standardisation is how non-standard languages become standard. The technique promotes semantic homogeneity in words, sounds and sentence structures.

isiXhosa as a standard language

According to Webb (2010:168), missionaries standardised Bantu languages in South Africa in the 19th century: French missionaries for Sesotho (from 1833), German missionaries for Sepedi, Tshivenda, and Swiss for Xitsonga (from 1883). These missionaries established orthographic systems, grammar, dictionaries and Bible translations and taught these languages in the schools they built (Webb 2010:168).

Webb (2010:163) argues that Bantu languages (Nguni, Sotho, Tsonga and Venda) have also been used as political instruments in South Africa – firstly, by colonial powers (albeit covertly), leading to the inferiority of Africa's indigenous people; secondly, by missionaries in the 19th century, who constructed different languages out of existing dialect continuity; and finally by politicians in the 20th century (Mojela 2008:122).

According to Nyamende (1994), isiXhosa has the most developed lexicon in southern Africa. isiXhosa etymology dates to 1776. Furthermore, 1776–2008 saw the publication of 16 isiXhosa dictionaries. Given the number of isiXhosa allusions and its long etymological history, mistranslations and persuasive disputes are likely (Moropa & Kruger 2000). There are a few isiXhosa-speaking clans in South Africa, with up to 12 groups speaking explicit dialects, such as isiBhaca, isiMpondo, isiHlubi, to name a few (Nyamende 1994). To better understand isiXhosa, it is crucial to understand the circumstances that led to the language's normalisation. Theodorus van der Kemp was the first preacher to live among the Xhosa clan in 1799 (Nyamende 1994). Van der Kemp combined Ngqika, Ndlambe and Thembu into Ngqika. Van der Kemp's replacements, such as Bennie and John Whittle Appleyard, to name a few, taught Ngqika in schools. To properly understand isiXhosa, we must examine the circumstances that led to normalised isiXhosa. Theodorus

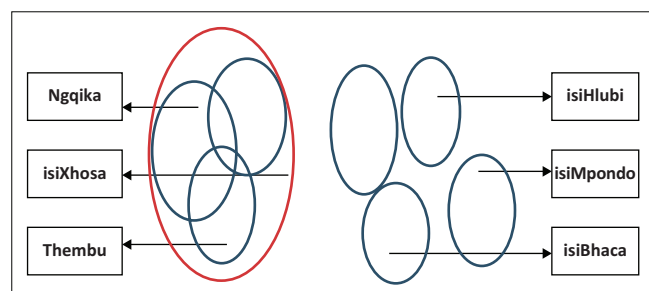
van der Kemp, among others, was the first preacher to visit Chief Ngqika's Xhosa clan in 1799 (Nyamende 1994). Van der Kemp blended Ngqika, Ndlambe and Thembu to produce Ngqika. Preachers who replaced Van der Kemp taught Ngqika in schools.

Using Lodge's (1995) framework, Mtatse and Combrinck (2018) concluded that standard isiXhosa is a mix of its dialects. Other dialects, however, are not true isiXhosa. Figure 1 depicts standard isiXhosa dialects. Figure 1 shows that mainstream isiXhosa is primarily Ngqika and Thembu. The non-pictured Ndlambe dialect is likewise related to these two. These dialects unite to form isiXhosa, the official language of the Eastern Cape (EC), the Western Cape and parts of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). On the right are unstandardised dialects spoken by several tribes in the EC. Even though there are different ways to speak isiXhosa, the official language is spoken between the rivers Kei and Idutywa-Bashee. Standardising one dialect as isiXhosa is a colonial legacy that may harm others who do not speak it.

According to Mesthrie (ed. 2002:66), the word Xhosa, which was once the name of a single tribe, has been aggressively promoted as a cover for merging the several Cape Nguni clans. IsiXhosa, isiZulu, isiNdebele and siSwati are considered 'daughter' languages that evolved from their 'father' language, Nguni, according to Da Costa et al. (2014:340). According to Da Costa et al. (2014:340), isiXhosa is one of South Africa's 12 official languages and a member of the Bantu and Nguni language families. According to the 2022 census, 16.3% of South Africa's population are isiXhosa speakers (Statistics South Africa 2011).

The influence of one language on another

In explaining the influence of isiXhosa on isiBhaca, Msimang (1989) mentions that isiBhaca shares many words with isiXhosa, but isiBhaca also has words that are either a mixture of both languages or entirely different from the two. Msimang (1989) further posits that the influence of isiXhosa on isiBhaca is simple to understand and explain. Firstly, much of Bhacaland (Modern Umzimkhulu and Mount Frere) has been absorbed into the Transkei and later EC. Secondly, within the Transkei, amaBhaca speak isiXhosa as their official language. As a result, isiXhosa is the medium of instruction in schools, churches and government offices.



Source: Lodge, R.A., 1995, *French: From dialect to standard*, Routledge, London

FIGURE 1: A reconstructed figure illustrating dialect issues in isiXhosa.

Majola (2021) confirms that amaBhaca were introduced and influenced by isiXhosa from when they were classified under Transkei and later under EC until 2006.

According to Kaschula and Kretzer (2019), teachers should not mark the learner but the work of learners. Simply put, it is unfair to mark learners down for writing or using a dialect or non-standard form of a language, especially when the teacher understands what the learner means and when the two languages are closely related. Non-standard type users are intellectually disadvantaged, according to Sigcau (1998:90). Language planners and topic consultants must change instructors' views on non-standard varieties. In a postmodern environment, the concept of standard language (uniform linguistic form and structure, minimal levels of diversity, and the belief in linguistic purity and 'beauty') may no longer be applicable, according to Deumert (2005:31). Hurst (2014) argues that opinions concerning mixed languages are shifting towards recognising their positive role in society. Calteaux (1996) studied how blended languages affect conventional ones. The researcher's investigation revealed that the influence of non-standard variations on the utilisation of standard African languages is distinctly evident in their grammatical structures.

Majola (2018) and Majola et al. (2019) studied learners' and teachers' attitudes towards using isiBhaca as a medium of instruction in Umzimkhulu and other areas where it is an HL. This study examined teachers' experiences teaching isiXhosa as an HL to isiBhaca speakers. Both these studies found that learners, teachers and officials in the Department of Basic Education (DBE) circuit office in Umzimkhulu were positive that although isiBhaca is not an official language, it should be developed for use in education and that such use will benefit its speakers.

Myburgh, Poggenpoel and Van Rensburg (2004) argue that authentic teaching and learning cannot be guaranteed when a second language is employed. According to Kubeka (1979), isiBhaca has *tsh* rather than *th* in isiXhosa and *dz* rather than *nd* in isiZulu. Thus, amaBhaca pronounces *udadobawo* as *udzadzobawo*, which suggests a sister of the father, and *shesha* as *tshetsha*, *khawuleza* in isiXhosa, which means urgency in English. According to Kubeka (1979), isiBhaca speakers added a sibilant after the letter t, so they say *ukuthsi* rather than *ukuthi* or *ukuba* in isiZulu or isiXhosa.

In isiBhaca, *u* and *owe* become *wi*. AmaBhaca say *kwitshi* when saying *kowethu* or *kokwethu*, meaning at home. Msimang (1989) explored isiBhaca and related varieties' phonology. Nomlomo (1993) studied how language variety in Transkeian isiXhosa affects learners' education. This study found that teachers had trouble pronouncing the letter s with isiBhaca learners. Instead of *ndingowase Mbodleni*, they say *ndingowake Mbodleni*. Participants in that study preferred to utilise isiBhaca because isiXhosa harmed their academic achievement.

Mutual intelligibility

Gooskens says this distinction presents several issues. People struggle to distinguish between a language and a dialect and to define a language. 'A language is a collection of mutually intelligible dialects' (Rakgogo 2021). This definition classifies dialects as language components and differentiates languages. Backus et al. (2013) say individuals do not comprehend because they do not want to. In one African study by Balogun (2013), ethnic group A, for example, demonstrated that while one ethnic group claimed to be able to comprehend the language of another ethnic group B, ethnic group B claimed not to be able to understand language A. It then emerged that group A, a larger and more powerful group, wanted to incorporate group B's territory into their own because they were the same people and spoke the same language. Group B's failure to comprehend Group A's language was part of their resistance to this attempted takeover. Hudson (1980:36) posits that mutual intelligibility is more about the people who speak different languages than the languages themselves. This is because people understand each other better than languages. As this is the case, the level of mutual intelligibility depends not only on how many of the same traits are shared by the parts of the two types, but also on the traits of the people involved.

Methodology

The study utilised a qualitative approach; that is, learners' written essays were assessed to identify words that are not isiXhosa, and open-ended interview questions were used to gather data from teachers. As a result, a case study was deemed acceptable for this analysis of the influence isiBhaca has on written isiXhosa on learners in the Senior Phase.

The purpose of this study was to analyse the influence of isiBhaca on isiXhosa, which teachers teach and learners choose as an HL. The study included 60 essays written by learners from three schools in Umzimkhulu. Twenty essays written by learners were used to extract information per school. Six teachers from three public schools were purposefully chosen for semi-structured interviews in Umzimkhulu, KZN. All 60 learners were in grades 8 and 9, and the teachers taught isiXhosa in the same grades; the learners' ages ranged from 14 to 16 years and included both males and females.

On the other hand, teachers ranged in age from 28 to 52 years and had between 6 and 22 years of teaching experience, including two males and four females. As Bryman (2012) points out, purposive sampling is one of the non-probability sampling approaches. It is a method in which the researcher picks volunteers they feel represent the group being investigated. Learners were selected based on doing isiXhosa as an HL and are in grades 8 and 9; teachers were selected according to their ability to teach isiXhosa, and schools were selected due to their location. Because Umzimkhulu has around 50 schools, the researcher chose three as a representative sample of schools from all Umzimkhulu wards. This study used written essays and semi-structured interviews to collect data.

The interview guide inquired about what characteristics of influence teachers observed when grading learners' academic work and how they dealt with such influences. How do teachers respond when, for instance, learners write isiBhaca words instead of isiXhosa? The interview guidelines were provided in English. Sixty grade 8 and 9 learners from three public schools in Umzimkhulu provided data. Sixty grade 8 and 9 learners, which include 20 learners per school, were purposefully sampled to compose a descriptive paragraph – the intended learners were identified as native speakers of isiBhaca. About 25 males and 35 females between the ages of 14 and 15 years from the three schools made up the total number of essay writers. Six isiXhosa teachers (two per school) were sampled because they had to be teachers who taught in the same grade as the learners who had already been sampled (either grade 8 or 9) to triangulate the data collected for the study. The teachers' familiarity with the phenomenon of interest, the writing experiences of grade 8 and 9 learners in isiXhosa, made them the appropriate source of accurate information regarding their writing experiences. Two instruments were utilised to collect data from participants: firstly, the objective of the first 60 descriptive learner essays was to determine if isiBhaca had influenced isiXhosa. Secondly, individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six grade 8 and 9 isiXhosa HL teachers to see if they have observed any influence of isiBhaca on isiXhosa in their learners' writing and how they handle such an influence. The DBE (South Africa 1996) mandates the teaching and grading of six essays: analytical, argumentative, descriptive, discursive, expository and narrative. The pupils' essay topic was '*Chaza ngemiseteyenzana eyenzeka/eyenziwa kwindawo ohlala kuyo*', which roughly translates to 'Describe activities that occur in and around your town'. The essays were graded using criteria created by the Department of Education for the CAPS document, which evaluates three components of writing: content (30 points), language (15 points) and organisation (5 points). For the study, the paragraph's content and language were evaluated, as its structure was too brief to evaluate. Three high schools (one in each village) were chosen deliberately, as they offered isiXhosa as an HL from grade 8 to 12. They were designated School 1, School 2 and School 3 within Umzimkhulu District Municipality.

Data collection procedures

Data collecting entails applying to measure instructions to the sample or case chosen for the research; this is referred to as a method of producing and recording data (David & Sutton 2004). Interviews were conducted at the participants' respective schools from August 2020 to September 2020. The circuit manager at the DBE granted one of the researchers permission to conduct the study when they requested it. Before data collection, the ethical problems of anonymity, confidentiality and data access were discussed with the participants before they gave informed consent to participate in the study. Each interview lasted around 15 min – 25 min. The participants were also asked for permission to record the interviews, which was granted by the participants. The

interviews were recorded on tape by the researchers. The researchers provided comments to the participants on the transcriptions of their responses after transcribing the data to verify that the transcriptions correctly reflected what they had expressed. As the learners were minors, authorisation to collect data at the research sites was also sought from the district office of the DBE, the school principals and the parents. The learners agreed to participate in the study after their teachers requested their participation.

To preserve anonymity and confidentiality, the learner essays were organised and labelled by the school, and each essay was assigned a number, such as Learner 1 (L1) and School 1 (S1). Thus, Learner 1 from School 1 will be L1S1, identifying the script number and school they are from. The three schools were denoted by the letter S (School), followed by a number from 1 to 6, for example, S1, S2 and S3. In order to hide the identity of teachers, they were referred to as FST (female school teacher) and MST (male school teacher) and then a number from 1 to 3, for example, MST1, MST2, FST1, FST2, FST3 and FST4.

Data analysis

Content analysis was used to analyse the data. According to Silverman (2013), the core notion of content analysis is that it attempts a reasonably methodical, detailed description of data. The recorded data were transcribed, classified, and codes were assigned. After the data were collected and evaluated, at least one teacher from each school was asked to confirm the researchers' interpretation of the data acquired from the teachers.

Each of the 60 essays was analysed to find isiBhaca words, sentences and phrases and to determine their language. As already said, isiBhaca can be understood by people who speak isiXhosa, isiZulu and Siswati. However, Majola (2021) states that the isiBhaca spoken by young people in Umzimkhulu now has less vocabulary closer to Siswati.

Findings

Analysis of essays written by learners

What emerged from the written essays was that a significant number of learners (85%) had isiBhaca words or words that relate to isiZulu even though the essays were written in isiXhosa, the language they do as an HL. Interestingly, most of these incorrectly written isiXhosa words were similar when linked with the teacher's interviews. According to teachers, learners' pronunciation and accent are more of isiBhaca than isiXhosa even when they utter isiXhosa words; learners mostly speak isiXhosa with the isiBhaca accent. In other cases, they would speak pure isiBhaca instead of isiXhosa. Moreover, the types of mistakes made by learners during the writing of essays revealed that they write the way they speak, and it further revealed that isiBhaca is the language in which they speak most of the time and not isiXhosa. Some similarities in terms of mistakes committed by learners are listed as follows:

Ukekhaya/kukekhaya/sikekhaya (isiBhaca) instead of *usekhaya/kusekhaya/sisekhaya* (isiXhosa), which means 'he/she is at home' or 'it is at home' or 'we were at home' (L1S1, L3S1, L5S1, L8S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L17S1, L18S1, L19S1, L20S1, L3S2, L4S2, L5S2, L7S2, L8S2, L9S2, L14S2, L4S3, L9S3, L11S3, L12S3, L14S3, L16S3, L17S3, L18S3, L19S3).

Bekuhum/humina/huyena (isiBhaca) of *bekundim/ndim/nguye* (isiXhosa), which means 'it was me/it is me/it was him/her' (L1S1, L2S1, L3S1, L7S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L17S1, L18S1, L19S1, L20S1, L2S2, L4S2, L5S2, L7S2, L8S2, L10S2, L12S2, L14S2, L15S2, L4S3, L9S3, L11S3, L12S3, L14S3, L15S3, L17S3, L19S3).

When writing the affricate *tsh*, learners wrote *Tshetsha/tshaya/tshuba/itshumi* (isiBhaca) instead of *khawuleza/betha/gqiba/iranti* (isiXhosa), which indicates 'haste/beat-up/finish/one rand' (L1S1, L2S1, L3S1, L7S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L17S1, L18S1, L19S1, L20S1, L2S2, L4S2, L5S2, L7S2, L8S2, L10S2, L12S2, L14S2, L15S2, L4S3, L9S3, L11S3, L12S3, L14S3, L15S3, L17S3, L19S3).

Replacing the letter *x* in isiXhosa with *n* in isiBhaca, so instead of saying *xa* (isiXhosa), they say *na* (isiBhaca): *xa ndifika/xa efika/xa esiza/xa esuka* (isiXhosa), *na ndifika/na efika/nangabe eza/nayesuka* (isiBhaca) which means 'when I arrive' (L1S1, L3S1, L5S1, L8S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L17S1, L18S1, L19S1, L20S1, L3S2, L4S2, L5S2, L7S2, L8S2, L9S2, L14S2, L4S3, L9S3, L11S3, L12S3, L14S3, L16S3, L17S3, L18S3, L19S3, L19S3).

Chana (isiBhaca) instead of *hayi* (isiXhosa), which means 'no' (L1S1, L5S1, L8S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L18S1, L20S1, L3S2, L4S2, L7S2, L9S2, L14S2, L4S3, L9S3, L12S3, L14S3, L16S3, L18S3, L19S3, L19S3).

Iligxa/egxeni (isiBhaca) instead of *ihlathi* (isiXhosa), which means 'forest' (L1S1, L3S1, L5S1, L8S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L17S1, L18S1, L19S1, L20S1, L3S2, L4S2, L5S2, L7S2, L8S2, L9S2, L14S2, L4S3, L9S3, L11S3, L12S3, L14S3, L16S3, L17S3, L18S3, L19S3, L19S3).

Ijiki (isiBhaca) instead of *utywala*, which is 'African beer' (L1S1, L3S1, L5S1, L8S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L17S1, L18S1, L19S1, L20S1, L3S2, L4S2, L5S2, L7S2, L8S2, L9S2, L14S2, L4S3, L9S3, L11S3, L12S3, L14S3, L16S3, L17S3, L18S3, L19S3, L19S3).

Khamba (isiBhaca) instead of *hamba*, which means 'to go' (L1S1, L2S1, L3S1, L4S1, L5S1, L6S1, L8S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L16S1, L18S1, L19S1, L20S1, L1S1, L3S2, L4S2, L5S2, L6S2, L8S2, L9S2, L14S2, L4S3, L9S3, L11S3, L12S3, L15S3, L16S3, L17S3, L18S3, L19S3, L20S3).

Ixhegu (isiBhaca) instead of *ixhego* (isiXhosa), which means 'old man' (L1S1, L2S1, L3S1, L4S1, L5S1, L6S1, L8S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L16S1, L18S1, L19S1, L20S1, L1S1, L3S2, L4S2, L5S2, L6S2, L8S2, L9S2, L14S2, L4S3, L9S3, L11S3, L12S3, L15S3, L16S3, L17S3, L18S3, L19S3, L20S3).

Ukungcweka (isiBhaca) instead of *ukulwa ngentonga* (isiXhosa), which means 'stick fighting' (L1S1, L2S1, L3S1, L4S1, L5S1, L6S1, L8S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L17S1, L18S1, L19S1, L20S1, L3S2, L4S2, L5S2, L7S2, L8S2, L9S2, L14S2, L4S3, L9S3, L11S3, L12S3, L14S3, L16S3, L17S3, L18S3, L19S3, L19S3).

Ukujuba (isiBhaca) instead of *ukutsiba* (isiXhosa), which means 'to jump' (L1S1, L2S1, L3S1, L5S1, L6S1, L8S1, L9S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L16S1, L17S1, L18S1, L19S1, L20S1, L2S2, L3S2, L4S2, L5S2, L7S2, L8S2, L9S2, L14S2, L16S2, L2S3, L3S3, L4S3, L9S3, L11S3, L12S3, L14S3, L16S3, L17S3, L18S3, L19S3, L20S3).

Layo (isiBhaca) instead of *apho* (isiXhosa), which means 'over there' (L1S1, L3S1, L5S1, L8S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L17S1, L18S1, L19S1, L20S1, L3S2, L4S2, L5S2, L7S2, L8S2, L9S2, L14S2, L4S3, L9S3, L11S3, L12S3, L14S3, L16S3, L17S3, L18S3, L18S3 and L20S3).

Ushekhasi/ucwathu/ucwathi (isiBhaca) instead of *iplastiki* (isiXhosa), which means 'plastic bag' (L1S1, L3S1, L4S1, L5S1, L8S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L17S1, L18S1, L19S1, L20S1, L3S2, L4S2, L5S2, L7S2, L8S2, L9S2, L14S2, L4S3, L9S3, L11S3, L12S3, L14S3, L15S3, L16S3, L17S3, L18S3, L19S3).

Ngesheya (isiBhaca) instead of *Ngaphesheya* (isiXhosa), which means 'across'. L1S1, L3S1, L5S1, L8S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L17S1, L18S1, L19S1, L20S1, L3S2, L4S2, L5S2, L7S2, L8S2, L9S2, L14S2, L4S3, L9S3, L11S3, L12S3, L14S3, L16S3, L17S3, L18S3, L19S3 and L19S3.

Ukutshika (isiBhaca) instead of *ukujula* (isiXhosa), which means 'to throw' (L1S1, L3S1, L5S1, L8S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L17S1, L18S1, L19S1, L20S1, L3S2, L4S2, L5S2, L7S2, L8S2, L9S2, L14S2, L4S3, L9S3, L11S3, L12S3, L14S3, L16S3, L17S3, L18S3, L19S3 and L19S3).

Ukudilika/edilika/bedilika (isiBhaca) instead of *ukwehla/esihla/besihla* (isiXhosa), which means 'to go down' (L1S1, L3S1, L5S1, L8S1, L12S1, L13S1, L15S1, L17S1, L18S1, L19S1, L20S1, L3S2, L4S2, L5S2, L7S2, L8S2, L9S2, L14S2, L4S3, L9S3, L11S3, L12S3, L14S3, L16S3, L17S3, L18S3, L19S3 and L19S3).

Analysis of the qualitative data from teachers

The researcher interviewed six teachers from the three schools separately in English. The interview schedule included three open-ended questions that allowed the teachers to elaborate if appropriate. The teachers' overall interview replies are shown as follows. The analysed data are presented in this section. Specifically, the data are presented according to the research questions mentioned in the introduction.

Question 1: What is your understanding of the language context at your school?

This question was intended to determine how teachers view the language situation in Umzimkhulu. In Umzimkhulu, isiXhosa is used in education, but isiZulu is used in other

sectors, such as health and agriculture, whereas most Umzimkhulu citizens identify as amaBhaca. Therefore, this question was asked to see how well the teachers understood what was happening with language in their schools. In response to this question, teachers acknowledged that Umzimkhulu has become a multilingual community where learners use isiXhosa at school as a medium of instruction (MOI) in lower grades and as either an HL or a FAL from grade 4 upwards. Some (four) teachers indicated that they, too, only speak isiXhosa when at school. Some felt that the language situation in Umzimkhulu is interesting because it gives people linguistic freedom, wherein they can identify with any of the languages from isiBhaca, isiXhosa or isiZulu. Hereunder are some verbatim quotes from the participants:

'Umzimkhulu is a very interesting place, and I say this because most learners in my class speak isiBhaca, isiXhosa, isiZulu, and sometimes a mixture of all the languages mentioned above. I guess this is the situation in Umzimkhulu because it is like that to most people, even those who learners are not. I notice this when learners are speaking and writing. For instance, a learner would be doing an oral presentation or answering a question in isiXhosa but would say the word with an isiBhaca accent. An example is *intyantyambo* which is a flower in isiXhosa, and learners will say something like *intshantshambo*.' (Male, School Teacher 1, grade 8)

'Umzimkhulu is a multilingual community, so most learners in my class are multilingual. Even we, as teachers, are part of this multilingual situation. I know and speak isiXhosa well since I also studied in school and university. Still, when I meet real isiXhosa speakers, I realise that my accent is different from amaXhosa, and this is the case with learners in my isiXhosa class.' (Male, School Teacher 2, grade 9)

'IsiXhosa is the only official language used in Umzimkhulu. However, not all learners easily understand it, and not all speak isiXhosa as their mother tongue. Although some learners speak isiZulu, I think most speak isiBhaca because they were born and bred in Umzimkhulu.' (Female, School Teacher 1, grade 8)

'In most schools in Umzimkhulu, including mine, isiXhosa is supposed to be used as a Medium for learners in grades 1 and 2. Then from grade three, we introduce them to English as a medium. But because our learners are from rural areas, they struggle to understand isiXhosa, so we teach them in isiBhaca and mix it with isiXhosa here and there in order to accommodate them.' (Female, School Teacher 2, grade 9)

'The language situation in Umzimkhulu is confusing. I say this because there is a combined use of more than one language, English included. Parents are not comfortable with their children being taught isiXhosa because they feel that they cannot understand it well. On the other hand, the department expects us to teach learners isiXhosa as a HL and FAL, which is okay. The only problem is that unlike learners in the Eastern Cape, those in Umzimkhulu do not have time to practice by speaking at home.' (Female, School Teacher 3, grade 8)

'I think the language situation in Umzimkhulu is interesting because everyone from Umzimkhulu can be anything they want to be. I mean, if you want to you can be a Xhosa, Zulu, or Bhaca, it all depends on which language you understand better. At school, though, learners need to know isiXhosa. However, the fact that at home they speak isiBhaca makes it difficult for them to understand isiXhosa and speak and write it well.' (Female, School Teacher 4, grade 9)

Question 2: Describe your learners' writing in your classroom and give one or two examples where possible (Find a source or two)

The intention for this question was for teachers to describe their learners' writing challenges in the isiXhosa classroom. More specifically, it was for teachers to explain with examples the problems they experience in learners' written texts. Teachers indicated that learners' challenges are mainly grammatical. As such, learners who do isiXhosa in Umzimkhulu find it difficult at first but later adapt, although there are still issues regarding understanding what they say. Teachers, however, acknowledged that because they were born and bred in Umzimkhulu, they understood where learners come from and even understood what they meant in cases where the learners used an isiBhaca instead of isiXhosa word. Hereunder are some verbatim quotes from the participants:

'My learners are doing well when it comes to writing isiXhosa but only to a certain extent. When writing simple words such as *suka*, *vimba*, *thatha*, *landela*, *vula*, learners have no problems simply because these words are similar in both isiXhosa and isiBhaca and, to a certain extent, isiZulu. However, for words such as *hamba*, which means "to go," almost all learners from Umzimkhulu write *khamba*, which means the same in isiBhaca.' (Male, School Teacher 1, grade 8)

'Learners in my class are not doing very well in isiXhosa, both in writing and speaking. I have noticed that the reason is that they mostly write how they speak, and they speak isiBhaca, which then influences their isiXhosa writing. They also struggle to correct writing words like *apho*, *phaya*, *apha*, in isiXhosa, which means "here" or "there." They instead say *layo*, *laphayana*, *layo*, which is isiBhaca.' (Male, School Teacher 2, grade 9)

'In my class, learners miswrite isiXhosa, or should I say they sometimes write isiBhaca. I say this because, most often than not, I witness an isiBhaca word as I read their academic work. Although I understand isiBhaca because I am a Bhaca ethnically, it worries me that they write isiBhaca words here and there. Some of the words I can think of are *khamba* instead of *hamba*, which means "to go," *egxeni* instead of *ehlathini* which means "in the forest." They mostly need guidance as they write because they struggle to separate between what they speak and what or how they write.' (Female, School Teacher 1, grade 8)

'My learners are mostly isiBhaca speakers; it is only a few of them who are either Zulu or Xhosa. Although all learners struggle with writing well generally, their writing in isiXhosa is understandable, and there are, however, a few cases where they use a mixture of isiBhaca and isiXhosa words. I am not sure whether they understand isiBhaca more than isiXhosa or are just used to isiBhaca, which they speak at home to the point where they use isiBhaca words interchangeably with isiXhosa. Most isiBhaca words they write are *khamba* instead of *hamba*, which means "to walk," *tshiya* instead of *shiya*, which means "to leave something," *Humhanha* instead of *ngumama*, which means "mother." *Ijiki* instead of *utywala*, which means "alcohol," and *tshaya* instead of *betha*, which means "to beat [someone]". (Female, School Teacher 2, grade 9)

'Learners' writing is a challenge for learners in my isiXhosa classroom. I always have to correct learners when writing words they think are part of isiXhosa only to find that they are isiBhaca. Words like *Chana* instead of *hayi*, which means "no." *Nangabe*

instead of *xangaba*, which means when. *Dilika* instead of *yehla*, which means "to get off" or "get down." *Tshika* instead of *jula*, which means "to throw". (Female, School Teacher 3, grade 8)

'Our learners struggle with isiXhosa, yes, they can write and speak, but there is still a difference compared to real isiXhosa speakers. In my class, they understand nouns, grammar, and sentence structure, but the problem is the isiXhosa vocabulary. They are not consistent in writing isiXhosa. They mix it with isiBhaca, now and then, which makes it difficult for them to understand, speak and write isiXhosa well. In my class, I have seen words such as *chana*, instead of "hayi," meaning no, *ixhegu* instead of *ixhego*, which means "an old man," *usekhaya* instead of *ukekhaya*, *khamba* instead of *hamba*, *edasi* instead of *ezansi*.' (Female, School Teacher 4, grade 9)

Question 3: In an event where learners use another language other than isiXhosa during the lesson or for assessments, how do you deal with it?

This question aimed to establish teachers' reactions to learners who are either not consistent with the use of isiXhosa in the isiXhosa HL classroom or who use isiBhaca instead of isiXhosa when writing their schoolwork. Teachers responded that they understand the learners' situation, but some say they have to penalise learners so they can be prepared in case they have other teachers in the future who do not understand them. Others (three) mentioned that the reason they penalise learners for writing isiBhaca instead of isiXhosa is that in cases like grade 12, examination papers are marked externally by people who do not understand the issue learners in Umzimkhulu are faced with. The other teachers (three) indicated that they do not penalise the learners. Still, they encourage the learners that they should know standard isiXhosa but may use isiBhaca too, as long as they understand that they are doing isiXhosa, not isiBhaca. Hereunder are some verbatim quotes from the participants:

'Well, I am always caught between a rock and a hard place because I understand learners who are born and bred in Umzimkhulu because I was also born and bred there, but I am worried that if I give them marks for writing isiBhaca words instead of isiXhosa is because they are supposed to be doing isiXhosa, not isiBhaca, so this might affect them at a later stage.' (Male, School Teacher 1, grade 8)

'I always have to mark the learners down or penalise them when they do not write correct isiXhosa or mix isiXhosa and isiBhaca. This is because I am not too well versed with isiBhaca words, so if I can give those marks, then I may not be able to justify to the school leadership what are the reasons for me to give marks for incorrect isiXhosa spelling or vocabulary. So, I have to penalise them.' (Male, School Teacher 2, grade 9)

'The only important thing for me is to understand what learners mean to say. Particularly when it comes to writing essays, I do not mark the learners wrong if they write an isiBhaca word instead of an isiXhosa word. For instance, when a learner writes *ubontshisi* instead of *iimbotyi*, I understand that they mean beans. But I do write the isiXhosa word so that as they develop and improve their isiBhaca vocabulary as their mother tongue, they should also develop isiXhosa because that is the language they do as a HL in school.' (Female, School Teacher 1, grade 8)

'What I normally do is to tell the learners the correct equivalent in isiXhosa of a word they would have used, which is mostly in isiBhaca. So I correct them, but in class when giving feedback, I try to show them that although isiBhaca is their mother tongue, they should remember that they still need to know and write isiXhosa well in order to pass.' (Female, School Teacher 2, grade 9)

'I always sympathise with learners whenever I see that they have used another language like isiBhaca because I understand their problem, but I have to think about when they get to other grades and have different teachers who will not tolerate this switch between two languages because it is not all isiXhosa teachers in Umzimkhulu who understand the language situation which learners find themselves in. So I penalise them when they write isiBhaca words instead of isiXhosa.' (Female, School Teacher 3, grade 8)

'Learners mostly switch between isiXhosa and isiBhaca in the classroom and when they write. It is a problem for us teachers because our memorandum and course content are in isiXhosa. So what makes me penalise them is that when they get to grade 12, for instance, their papers will be marked externally and likely by someone unfamiliar with the language practice of Umzimkhulu, and may disadvantage learners. So when I penalise them, it is because I'm helping them and training them for grade 12 and beyond.' (Female, School Teacher 4, grade 9)

Discussion of findings

What emerged from this study is that isiBhaca greatly influences written isiXhosa; this was seen through the learners' written essays where the learners confused some isiXhosa words with those of isiBhaca. Furthermore, it was revealed through the interviews with the teachers that teachers are also facing a situation where learners write isiBhaca words instead of isiXhosa words. Teachers acknowledge that they fully understand what causes this; also they did not agree on how they deal with such a situation. Some penalise the learners and some do not penalise learners. Although this study is about the influence isiBhaca has on written isiXhosa, it is essential to note that the ancient isiBhaca was influenced by isiXhosa since it was classified as a variant of isiXhosa.

Myburgh et al. (2004) contend that language learners do not always speak or comprehend the instruction language or HL. According to the study, isiBhaca and isiXhosa are comprehensible. It is unique, as evidenced by excerpts from learners' essays and interviews conducted with Umzimkhulu teachers. There is a distinction between isiBhaca and isiXhosa. However, most isiBhaca speakers sound more like amaXhosa due to the fact that amaBhaca utilise isiXhosa for official purposes. As stated in the theoretical framework of this study, the dominance of isiXhosa and the failure to recognise isiBhaca may somewhat be detrimental to the learners' progress. This is because learners are expected to perform well in isiXhosa, even though they do not use the language at home and use it only in their schools. This is confirmed by Majola (2018) that most learners who identify as amaBhaca in Umzimkhulu only use isiXhosa in school but isiBhaca at home and when speaking to their friends at school. While it may be difficult for the learners to learn two languages at a time, isiBhaca at home and

isiXhosa in school, it may be an advantage for them as they may be bilingual or multilingual at a young age which may lead them to have more opportunities in language-related fields post university. The only challenge is that the knowledge they accumulate of isiBhaca will not and cannot help them since it is not recognised, but that of isiXhosa may help them because isiXhosa is used in schools, news on TV and radio and other platforms.

Conclusion

Firstly, the research question of the study asked how much isiBhaca influences learners' written isiXhosa output. The analysis of the first set of data (from learners) demonstrated that isiBhaca considerably influenced the written output of learners who studied standard isiXhosa in Umzimkhulu. The second statistic reveals that Umzimkhulu teachers have seen isiBhaca impact written isiXhosa. IsiBhaca considerably influenced isiXhosa learners' writing output, answering the first research question.

Secondly, what are the teachers' perspectives and recommendations on the influence of isiBhaca on isiXhosa? According to the research, teachers indicated that they do understand where the learners who still confuse isiXhosa with isiBhaca come from, but they were divided in terms of the solution to the problem. Some felt that learners who use isiBhaca words when writing isiXhosa should be penalised so that they can learn since in grade 12 they may find teachers or markers who do not understand their dilemma; while on the other hand half of the teachers felt that there was no need to penalise learners as long as the marker understands what the learners are trying to say. Therefore, teachers handle contradictions differently. Some teachers punish learners, and some do not. Wagner, Ditsele and Makgato (2020), Malimabe (1990) and Nkosi (2008) found that Sepiroti, a non-standard Setswana variation spoken in Pretoria, influenced standard Setswana and Northern Sotho.

The study concludes that there is a need for policy-makers to revisit the issue of learners who use non-standard varieties as HLs but have to choose standard languages as HLs at schools because non-standard languages are not offered. Furthermore, teachers should undergo standardised training on how to handle non-standard language speakers in class, where teachers who teach isiXhosa should all be made to understand that some learners who are doing isiXhosa are not its mother tongue speakers. This would help them treat such learners in a fair and similar manner. At the same time, teachers should find a way of not disadvantaging learners who speak non-standard varieties in order not to encourage learners to develop negative attitudes towards their languages, in cases where their language is a non-official language.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to express his sincere appreciation to the 60 learners and 6 teachers who were participants in this study.

This article is partially based on Y.L.P.M.'s thesis entitled, 'South African non-official languages: A case for the adoption of isiBhaca as a medium of instruction in Umzimkhulu, KwaZulu-Natal,' for the degree of Masters Language Practice (Sociolinguistics) at the Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa, with supervisors Prof. Thabo Ditsele and Prof. Madoda Cekiso, January 2017, available here: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361711306_south_african_non-official_languages_a_case_for_the_adoption_of_isibhaca_as_a_medium_of_instruction_in_umzimkhulu_kwazulu-natal.

Competing interests

The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Author's contributions

Y.L.P.M. has declared sole authorship of this research article.

Ethical considerations

An application for full ethical approval was made to the Tshwane University of Technology Ethics Committee and ethics consent was received in 2016. The ethics approval number is FCRE/APL/STD/2016/03.

Funding information

This study received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in the Tshwane University of Technology Digital Open Repository.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author, or the publisher.

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