The future of IsiZulu lies in GautengThe importance of taking into account urban varieties for the promotion of African languages with special references to isiZulu - issues for a debate

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The Standardisation of African Languages in South Africa

Report on the workshop held at the University of Pretoria
30 June – 1 July 2005

Edited by

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Chapter Twelve

ISIZULU
THE FUTURE OF ISIZULU LIES IN GAUTENG
THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING INTO ACCOUNT URBAN VARIETIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ISIZULU. ISSUES FOR A DEBATE

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Sociolinguistic & economic pointers

- IsiZulu is spoken in two main situations:
  - areas where it is the only language: KZN, parts of Mpumalanga, Free State and possibly Gauteng
  - areas where it shares the linguistic scene with other African languages: essentially Gauteng South, where it has become the lingua franca or dominant language between speakers of various languages (Sesotho, isiNdebele, Siswati, isiXhosa, etc), in possible "competition" with English.
- Gauteng (South) can be seen as the second isiZulu-speaking region
- Not all isiZulu speakers from Gauteng have maintained contacts with KZN

Users of isiZulu are not all isiZulu first language speakers, or from Zulu parents, in particular in Gauteng;

- The language variety has evolved considerably on all levels:
  - lexically, with the entry of "borrowed" words
  - phonically, with new sounds such as "r" (*rayithi*), "kl" (*eklubini*), possibly reduction of clicks (*phaca* rather than *phaqa*), and loss of tonal distinctions
  - morpho-syntactically, inter alia:
    Gauteng: *bekala* vs KZN *ube lapha*;
    Gauteng: *akekho muhle* vs KZN *akamuhle*, etc.
- Gauteng isiZulu can be said to consist of those forms generally considered as isiZulu, even if grammatically "wrong" or innovative, but still by and large intelligible to KZN isiZulu speakers:
- History in SA has emphasized ethnic identities, and these were supported in large part by language affiliation; this was used to distinguish between ethnic groupings, but also, especially for the Zulu, within one ethnic group, to stigmatize origin, between rural (KZN) and town (Gauteng), language variety being associated, to a large extent, with political affiliation

- New language forms different from varieties of existing languages have developed in Gauteng in a sort of continuum situation: tsotsitaal, isCamtho, and code-switching

- Gauteng is the main economic region of SA, and the most dynamic; it still attracts internal immigrants, in particular from KZN

Contention

The future of isiZulu depends largely on the attitude of isiZulu-speakers who would identify themselves as "Gautengers", coming from, or living in, Gauteng: the economic, political & cultural leadership of Gauteng ensures that a significant part of the forthcoming elite come from, or at least study, work and live in that area; Gauteng modes tend to spread to the rest of the country, especially among the youth, in part due to the influence of the modern media (music, TV, etc).

Language planning aspects

- African languages in SA are not yet fully acknowledged as media for expressing modernity and the written world; they are seldom used by choice as far as writing is concerned - see Mark Data and medium of instruction (2000)
- The multilingual context in Gauteng cannot be directly codified:
  ◇isCamtho, or similar varieties, have not yet developed enough to warrant their extended use in writing;
  ◇it seems difficult to build or derive a "standard" language from code-switching, due to its inherent instability and variation
- There is a broad perception that standard isiZulu:
  ◇reflects the variety spoken in Zululand;
  ◇forms the basis of "school" isiZulu;
  ◇refers to a large extent to traditional culture (viz. idioms, cultural contents, etc.)
- It can be considered a democratic tenet that a language belongs to all of those that are deemed to belong to the selfsame linguistic group, that all are equal in regard to its norm; it then becomes axiomatic that standard isiZulu should be owned by all those recognized as isiZulu (first language) speakers, whatever their area of origin, their life experience and attitudes;
- Webb & al, (2003, p 3) reminds us that "full-fledged standard languages" are "varieties which cut across regional differences, providing a unified means of communication".

Impediments to isiZulu language promotion

The isiZulu norm as posited leads to difficulties for non-KZN-bred isiZulu speakers, in particular Gauteng isiZulu speakers, in school exams: the Gauteng pass-rate in Grade 12 in 2001 was over 95% for English and Afrikaans, but lower than 55% for isiZulu (Gauteng Department of Education).

This leads to a rejection of isiZulu as a subject among those unfamiliar with the "norm": isiZulu is rarely a positive choice as a subject. This is counterproductive in terms of language promotion, especially considering the importance of Gauteng. Besides, it infringes on equality between all isiZulu-speakers.

Some Gauteng isiZulu speakers have a tendency to look down on the standard variety, seeing it as rural, backwards, etc

An inclusive language policy

It is suggested:

> That Gauteng isiZulu tenets be accepted - alongside the present norm - in the standard, on all levels - lexical as well as morphosyntactical - in school, literature, and other prestige domains.

Writing is a powerful stabilizing factor in language development: by including Gauteng isiZulu in the written norm, it can be to some degree at least stabilized and prevented from drifting further away. Such a policy would also acknowledge the linguistic rights of Gauteng isiZulu speakers, and probably encourage them as they would feel "empowered" and recognized: that could contribute in turn to a more positive attitude on their part towards KZN isiZulu.

Positive developments

In education

In classrooms there is a generally favourable attitude to code-switching, with recourse to the mother-tongue encouraged for explanations, even when the medium of instruction is English or Afrikaans. This is now officially accepted policy.
The applicability of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) has been the topic of debates (see numerous papers by Jansen), especially due to the low level of training of many teachers and the high expectations placed on them for lesson preparation. However, as regards language and culture, it appears to be less demanding for teachers, hence relatively easy to implement. It offers a ready answer to the oft quoted irrelevance of the curriculum and teaching material, inappropriate pedagogy, lack of enthusiasm, and other weak aspects of the teaching of African languages; it also has the potential to overcome the problems of language norms and culture.

Aspects of the new education philosophy (C2005 (NRCS), OBE, the communicative approach) relevant to the issue of language variety are:
learner-centredness and continuous assessment practice
group work
activity-based and skills-driven activities
contextualized knowledge and integration of learning areas
taking into account learners' prior knowledge and their life experience
emphasis on getting the message across not on forms

Perceivable improvements.

According to the Ministry of Education's declared policy, the new system will reach grade 12 by 2008.
As regards the Grade 12 exam, the moderating committee for isiZulu (which gives recommendations for correcting the exam papers) is already becoming more flexible regarding language norms.

Learning materials are being compiled according to the new curriculum and education philosophy; we refer in particular to the Grade 10 reading book: *Isisekelo solimi* , authored by Sebenzile Khanyile and I.K. Ngonyama (Maskew Miller & Longman), which is innovative in terms of language and content; this manual has been accepted in several provinces, including KZN.

Growing perception of the importance of language maintenance

There is a growing perception that something has to be done regarding the place of African languages in schools, lest the new generations loose the ability to read and write in their languages. Use of mother-tongue during the first 3 years' of school seems bound to become official policy, as stated by Minister Naledi Pandor.

Some schools have in fact anticipated this move (viz.,Thabisile JPS (Soweto-Diepkloof), which re-installed isiZulu as language of instruction in the first 3 years since 2002, after an English-only policy), whilst others have always used African languages. Others in fact never moved away from the use of mother-tongues. The situation therefore is not yet beyond redress.

Open-minded attitude of the IsiZulu Language Body

According to Prof. Maphumulo's presentation during the workshop, on the work of the IsiZulu language Body, there is a promising trend towards the acceptance of new words, "loans", possibly differing spellings, etc by the IsiZulu National Language Body.

What remains to be done?

- To follow an inclusive approach to standardising isiZulu, grounded in the fact that it is the language of all (mother-tongue) isiZulu speakers , therefore integrating without prejudice socially or regionally differing forms;
- To popularize the new inclusive approach with teachers and learners
- To entice writers to write without fear of cultural and linguistic censors.

This process could possibly result in the development of a new set of norms for the language.

In this way a process of fully-fledged standardisation, whereby all speakers own the language, could be placed on track.