The emergence of isiZulu in *Skeem Saam* (2011): sociolinguistics factors and the politics of the 'loss of ethnolinguistic pluralism' at the SABC 1

Kealeboga Aiseng

Published online: 13 Apr 2022.

Submit your article to this journal ↗

Article views: 92

View related articles ↗

View Crossmark data ↗

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

The emergence of isiZulu in *Skeem Saam* (2011): sociolinguistics factors and the politics of the 'loss of ethnolinguistic pluralism' at the SABC 1

Kealeboga Aiseng ⓘ

Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate how an ecological understanding of polyglossia is used in the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) television channel, SABC 1 to maintain and create ethnolinguistic dominance. Key arguments this study will make are: (1) polyglossia is a language ideology masquerading as ethnolinguistic pluralism, (2) there is a loss of ethnolinguistic pluralism in SABC 1 because of the polyglot culture and its transmissions, (3) isiZulu is emerging as a language and cultural flare of the channel. This paper concluded that isiZulu's presence is rising in a soap initially meant to be a Sepedi show. And this has negative consequences for language equality in the SABC.

Introduction

The media are a linguistic space that relies on languages to deliver its content. Bourdieu (1977) conceptualised the linguistic space as hierarchical markets, they assign different values to different languages and people. In addition, the value that speakers see in languages is dependent on the social, political and economic statuses that come with the languages (Mensah, 2016). This leads to ethnolinguistic pluralism shrinking because only a few languages and cultures in the world have social, political and economic privileges. Ethnolinguistic pluralism refers to the multiplicity, variety and presence of ethnicities (cultures) and languages. In the case of South Africa, the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) mandate is to ensure this ethnolinguistic plurality. Thus, this paper focuses on how the SABC is treating multiple indigenous languages in its programming.

Television in South Africa is sectioned into public broadcasting (SABC), commercial broadcasting (DSTV) and community broadcasting (Soweto TV, iTV, Tshwane TV, etc.). Out of these, the SABC is the flagship channel with a disproportionately large section of the audience (The Broadcasting Research Council of South Africa, 2021). The BRC states that the most-watched television programmes in South African television play in the SABC, *Uzalo*, *Generations: The Legacy* and *Skeem Saam*. *Uzalo* has daily viewers of +6 million, *Generations: The Legacy* averages +5 million viewers daily and *Skeem Saam* is sitting on +3 million daily viewers.

Since the focus of the paper is on the use of language in the SABC, it is worth discussing the SABC linguistic profile. SABC television is divided into three channels. SABC 1, 2 and 3. SABC 1 broadcasts mainly in the Nguni languages, isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati and isiNdebele. SABC 2 broadcasts in Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana, Tshivenda, Xitsonga and Afrikaans. SABC 3 broadcasts mainly in English. This linguistic profile shows that Sepedi when it became a language of *Skeem Saam* that plays in SABC 1 it broke into an ecosystem that is meant for the Nguni languages, hence, it is facing a predatory incursion by isiZulu.

This study aims to investigate how an ecological understanding of polyglossia is used in the SABC television channel, SABC 1 to maintain and create ethnolinguistic dominance. Polyglossia refers to a situation in which more than one language is used (Holmes, 2013). Key arguments this study will make are: (1) polyglossia is a language ideology masquerading as ethnolinguistic pluralism, (2) there is a loss of ethnolinguistic pluralism in SABC 1 because of the polyglot culture and its transmissions, (3) isiZulu is emerging as a language and cultural flare of the channel. Evidence of these arguments is provided through a textual analysis of *Skeem Saam*, a soap opera that airs on SABC 1, one of three television channels of the SABC.

Background

South Africa is a very rich and diverse country concerning linguistics. The country's constitution gives all the previously disadvantaged languages, including former hegemonic languages: English and Afrikaans, the legal recognition as official languages. All languages in the country must be treated with equal respect.

The SABC is guided by the constitution of the country and its editorial policy in carrying out its mandate. Of interest in this study is the SABC language policy which is part of its editorial policy. Tollefson (1991) argues that language policies are adopted to solve language problems in multilingual settings and to increase social and economic opportunities for linguistic minorities or majorities in any society. SABC editorial policies are important as they guide arguments made in this study regarding the reality of what transpires in the national broadcaster regarding ethnolinguistic plurality. Arguably, in the SABC editorial policies, it is stated that the SABC commits to reflecting the South African attitudes, values and ideas, the broadcaster also intends to advance the national and public interest (SABC editorial policy, 2020). Among the core editorial values of the SABC is equality: the SABC intends to provide programmes for everyone, in all official languages and provide universal access to its services (SABC editorial policy 2020). The SABC editorial policy postulates that the broadcaster will not promote any form of discrimination and marginalisation on the grounds of gender, race, language, culture and religious belief. However, despite the goodwill enshrined in its editorial policy, the opposite pertains especially with regard to the treatment of different ethnic interests and linguistic interests of the minority groups in the country.

The SABC language policy considers the provisions of the Constitution of the country and guides the SABC in:

- Proving a range of distinctive, creative, compelling, and top-quality content in all official languages across its platforms.
- Reflecting the needs of each language community in its content and offerings.

- Maintaining distinctive and separate radio services in each of the official languages.
- Integrating the South African Sign Language into its offerings as a means of making content accessible to people with hearing disabilities and
- Including other non-official languages spoken in South Africa, with particular emphasis on Khoi, Nama, and San Languages (South African Editorial Policies, 2020, p. 32).

Subsequently, in achieving these commitments the SABC is guided by the following:

- The need for key institutions, in adding to the SABC, to take practical and positive steps to treat all official languages fairly.
- The need to address the marginalisation of indigenous languages and the South African Sign Language in recognition of the impact of previous systematic deprecation of those languages.
- The obligation to reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity, and multilingual nature of South Africa while promoting national unity.
- The SABC's responsibility to be responsive to the needs of all South Africans, including persons with disabilities; and
- The importance of language in communication as the carrier of values, attitudes, culture, and expression (South African Editorial Policies, 2020, p. 32).

These legal frameworks show that the SABC is Constitutionally mandated to use indigenous languages in its programming fairly. Also, the SABC's vision is to reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingual nature of South Africa. On paper, the SABC has a good plan to give South African indigenous languages spaces in its programming. But the reality points to a bleak picture for minority languages.

This paper takes the view that the SABC falls short in upholding these legal frameworks. And this is partly due to the important role played by advertising in the public broadcaster. The 2016 SABC Performance Information showed that the SABC is financed through (in the order of their importance): advertising revenue, sponsorship revenue, TV license fees and government grants. More of this information can be seen in Figure 1.
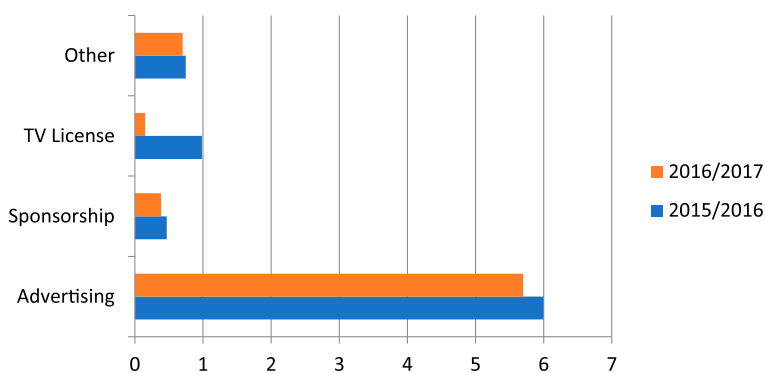

Figure 1. SABC revenue comparative. Source: SABC (2017) Annual Report.

The graph indicates the sources of revenue collection for the SABC. From the above, advertising plays a huge role in the SABC. The category of the 'Other' is mostly government grants and trade exchanges. The key concern from this graph is that when there is high revenue generated from commercial companies in a form of advertising, the SABC risks compromising its constitutional mandates for appeasing commercial interests.

Curran (1997), Howley (2004), Kupe (2005) argue that PSBs are now completely covered by commercial interests. Public interests can still be seen in them, but it is not as deep as commercial interests. They have become more commercialised by always having to secure advertising revenue. Hence, Mooney (2004) argues that PSBs are losing their identities by pursuing the commercial model. This is the reason why only one language can stand out from the rest. The notion of equal utilisation of indigenous languages has become a myth because the SABC is partially endorsing it.

If advertisers do not recognise Tshivenda, Xitsonga or siSwati as a relevant language to sell their product(s), they will not advertise during a time in which that language is dominating, except if there is a high viewership for that programme. This means that the language is being commodified, if it does not attract enough viewers, then there will not be advertising during the programme that uses that language. Therefore, the SABC will call off the programme because it does not generate the money.

Part of the reason why isiZulu gets to enjoy the dominant status in SABC 1 and can outset Sepedi in *Skeem Saam* is that it is the most spoken language in South Africa. It is a language used as a form of communication in most economic hubs of South Africa, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Durban. Most black people in these economic hubs have conversations in isiZulu, especially the ones who are not from the Nguni cluster: Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele and Swati. Some White, Indian and Coloured people have some understanding of isiZulu compared to other indigenous languages (Amtaika, 2014; Sibanda, 2019). Alongside its number of speakers, isiZulu's status as a lingua franca among the people raise its status in society. While the paper is aware of this social status of isiZulu, it is concerned by the language's takeover of spaces reserved for shows in other indigenous languages in SABC 1. This has negative consequences for language equality in the SABC.

The production of *Skeem Saam*

Skeem Saam was initially conceptualised as a Sepedi language soap opera. It engages pre-university and university students' life experiences, having chosen the purest form of Sepedi language as a medium of communication across all its generations. This language use is an interesting take on youth languages in South Africa, which were progressively gravitating towards the English vernacular, or *Tsotsitaal*.

The use of Sepedi language in its purest form was further buoyed by a cast from Sepedi television drama of the 1980s (*Bophelo ke Semphtekgo*, Anthony Thobejane, 1980), who through their impeccable use of the Sepedi vernacular and its metalinguistic flare made its regular use in African modernising social spaces and popular imagination a fashionable predilection. *Skeem Saam* as a drama series attracted a great audience viewership in its first season, 2.3 million viewers (IMDb, 2011).

Subsequently, *Skeem Saam* was converted into a soapy which further drew an unprecedented audience, (3.8 million viewers in 2015; IMDb, 2015) for vernacular soap operas to

an extent that when the *Generations* fall outplayed itself on the public pages of South Africa's print and broadcast media, the SABC scheduled *Skeem Saam* in the 8:00 PM prime slot that *Generations: The Legacy* had occupied for more than two decades. It was at the time when *Skeem Saam* was converted to a weekly soapy that new African languages found spaces of articulation, which was a welcome development because South Africa's linguistic terrain evinced such polyglot groupings. However, in time, isiZulu, which has begun to occupy a new linguistic hierarchy in the SABC, began to make its presence felt, slowly supplanting Sepedi vernacular and the Sepedi broadcast visual and cultural tradition *Skeem Saam* was predicated upon.

This paper will rely on case study analysis (*Skeem Saam*), interviews with producers of *Skeem Saam* and television experts in South Africa to support the arguments made. There is a lot of slippage between multilingualism and polyglotism going on at SABC 1 which will be brought to light in this study to support the arguments that there is a polyglot culture in the channel which is made to appear as multilingualism. My analysis focuses on four interrelated realms produced by the channel through *Skeem Saam*: (1) language attitudes; (2) language regimes; (3) loss of agency and (4) ethnolinguistic revitalisation.

Language shift and polyglossia: a threat to multilingualism?

The main argument of this theoretical framework is that language shift leads to polyglossia, which ultimately threatens multilingualism. Language shift denotes a community giving up a language completely or partially in favour of another one. In this case, the members of the community choose a new language where an old one existed. Romaine (1994) posits that in such a situation, a community that was once monolingual becomes bilingual due to contact with another language, usually a socially more powerful language. In this case, the community transitions into a new language until their language are given up completely. The transitioning from one language to another is partly because the other is appealing and speaking such languages offers speakers lucrative opportunities that their native languages cannot offer them.

However, the shift from one language to another could be regarded as a realisation for multilingualism, especially in a multilingual setting such as South Africa. Hence, shifting from Sepedi to isiZulu or to a more multilingual approach than the monolingual one that the soap started with requires a nuanced and holistic sociolinguistic investigation.

Language shift is not an unusual phenomenon in South Africa. Raymond (2020) explains that South Africa's multilingualism creates a plethora of contact scenarios, all of which result in language variations and change. Almost two decades ago Kamwangamalu (2003a) indicated that socio-political changes from Apartheid to democratic South Africa impacted everyday linguistic interactions and have contributed to a language shift from the indigenous languages to English, especially in urban black communities.

Mufwene (2021) argues that language shifts indicate that few opportunities exist in some languages, which lead to speakers shifting to other languages. As a process, it may threaten multilingualism (Ostler, 2011; Pauwels, 2016). Thus, it is vital to study the process of language shift, especially in the media as these are spaces where language usage is crucial for creative reasons and keeping languages alive.

Language usage in the media can lead to language shifts. Producers may decide to change the languages of the show. This may be due to creative factors, socio-political

and economic reasons. However, the way languages are also used in the media is meta-linguistic. That is the decisions on which language (s) will be used in the show and how depends on the successful deployment and uptake of what has already been framed pol-itically, socially and economically at the expense of other languages (Jaworski, 2007). The choice to make English a language of instruction in most schools around the world, using Kiswahili an official language in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, spreading Mandarin to other parts of the world by the Chinese government, making Setswana a dominant language in the Botswana media or Shona being a dominant language in Zimbabwe even among other official languages is all metalinguistic, it is embedded with power relations that create a world of inclusion and exclusion, us and them.

Therefore, language shift in the media classifies and categorises languages, it creates an unequal environment within which other languages must exist. Kramsch (1998) argues that such linguistic systems help draw cultural and linguistic boundaries. They also help classify languages in groups of their importance or power.

Such is a typical case of what is unfolding in SABC 1. The more airtime and platform given to isiZulu over other indigenous languages is carving a way for isiZulu to become a powerful language in the channel, a language with higher status, importance and influence. The result of this is that cultural and linguistic boundaries are drawn, a hier-archy is created, one in which isiZulu is at the top and other indigenous languages are at the bottom. This also creates a linguistic ecology in which isiZulu is out-competing other indigenous languages in SABC 1, it is becoming a lingua franca of the channel.

While in monolingual states this would be welcome, in a multilingual and polyglossic state like South Africa this is a disadvantage to other indigenous languages. Various definitions of polyglossia exist. Two seminal definitions from Ferguson (1959) and Fishman (1967) are that polyglossia derives from the well-known concept of diglossia, the kind of standardisation when two varieties of a language exist side by side throughout the community, with each having a role to play, language varieties which show functional distribution within a speech community. Polyglossia might also be taken to refer to speak-ing many languages, it can mean multiplicity of languages, the use of several languages (Berger & Komori, 2010). Leo and Wong (1990) define polyglossia as dichotomous language contexts with a 'High' and a 'Low' language variety. Di Carlo (2017) adds a con-temporary definition to the term and explains it as a linguistic ecology in which a multi-lingual speaking community has a consensus that the main spheres of social interactions should be accessed via specific languages, codes or registers. Using a polyglossia approach it is realised that in multilingual settings there is an ideological division, stratifi-cation and compartmentalisation of languages. That is, within multilingual settings, language usage is ideological, it is designed and planned.

Therefore, for SABC 1 it would be more appropriate to speak of polyglossia, many pro-grammes use a verbal repertoire containing more than two languages (except for *Uzalo* and the news). The reason for selecting the term 'polyglossia' over diglossia for the present study is mainly pragmatic. This study is concerned with investigating language use in the mass media (SABC 1) where a wide range of languages are used, unlike only two as in a diglossic situation.

Polyglot media depict the diversity of language use (Berger & Komori, 2010), they are characterised by the presence of bi- or plurilingual dialogues or languages. Drawing from this definition the focus of the present study is on the presence of multiple languages in

the media. The presence of two or more languages on a screen presents complex solutions for programs to be accessible to almost everyone. However, it also requires a sociolinguistic analysis to unpack the deeper meaning behind it. In what follows, I focus on the analysis of language usage in *Skeem Saam*. Media is central to contemporary language politics. Yet, the issue of minority language media such as the use of low-status languages in the media is not generally noted for its political involvement (Cormack, 2000), that is, how it carries with itself ideologies of oppression and resistance. Minority language media reveal a lot about active political, economic and social tensions involved in languages. They reveal that some languages have more power than others, some deserve to be used in certain settings while others do not. They reveal which languages attract advertisers and which ones do not. All of these indicate the inequality that exists among languages.

Scholars such as Bourdieu (1977, 1991), Eckert (2003), Mufwene (2005), O'hlfearnain (2015), Costa (2015) have studied the relationship between languages, focusing on the relationship between colonial and indigenous languages. But they do not look at such relationships between indigenous languages. They have argued that colonial languages remain dominant in Africa; thus, they are given such high respect in Africa, and across the world. A few scholars have also looked at the relationship between Kiswahili and other African indigenous languages. Amidi (1995), Moshi (2006), Okombo and Muna (2017) note that Kiswahili is rising above other indigenous languages in East Africa, it is becoming a lingua franca of the region, it is being used to kill other indigenous languages and making it the ultimate language.

In South Africa, scholars in this field (Bouwerman, 2000; De Klerk, 2000a, 2000b; De Wet, 2001; Kamwangamalu, 2003a, 2003b) have dedicated their work to issues of language shift in the South African context, with a special focus on the shift from indigenous languages to English in the media and education sector. This paper acknowledges the previous work done in the field of language shift, especially in media. However, not much work has been done in language shift among indigenous languages on television dramas. It is, therefore, the intent of the current study to pursue an element of language shift among indigenous languages, especially in the media. Scholars have indicated the danger of shifts from indigenous languages to colonial languages. But what is at stake when the shift is from one indigenous language to the other has not been adequately studied.

This study is an attempt to contribute to this body of work that has looked at power dynamics among languages, with a special focus on indigenous languages in South Africa. It is the view of this study that the same social stratification between colonial languages and indigenous languages (rendering the former more powerful and superior) is emerging and gaining momentum among indigenous languages in South Africa. And SABC 1 is playing a central role in that process.

These arguments undergird some of the questions this paper attempts to answer: Was the introduction of isiZulu into *Skeem Skeem* meant to expand its population (viewership) while deliberately competing with Sepedi? Was this a strategy meant to consolidate the dominance of isiZulu SABC 1? What about Sepedi speakers having their soap opera-like Zulu people have *Uzalo*? These questions will be addressed during this study.

In contemporary times, languages are dependent on broadcasting for their continuation and survival rather than just on language speakers. Furthermore, almost three

decades ago (Howell, 1992) claimed that television was the most powerful vehicle for keeping languages alive from generation to generation. Although the dynamics have changed with the rise of new media, there are now new platforms that keep languages alive. But the role of television in this regard cannot be ignored. Television still has a very strong influence on people's lives (Dongre & Nehulkar, 2019; Motsaathebe & Chiumbu, 2021). Therefore, it is easy to understand why cultural minorities throughout the world are fighting to gain access to their national and/or public airwaves, this is a strategy to help their languages survive and keep them alive (Howell, 1992).

Mufwene (2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2004), Sissons (2005) and Woolard (1998) have looked at how media create linguistic authenticity and legitimacy in empowering and disempowering languages, which include and exclude languages. Drawing from this scholarship, I further advance a view that media engineer much of the language shifts to create superiority and inferiority among languages. This view is based on (1) media has the power to influence worldviews, ideologies and behaviours, (2) the more languages are given airtime in the media is the more they appeal to the listeners/viewers. Therefore, the media is used as a drive/tool/weapon to make people shift from one language to the other.

Ethnolinguistic attitudes, language regimes and the politics of monetary value on isiZulu language as a commodity in *Skeem Saam*

The introduction of isiZulu into *Skeem Saam* and its ultimate takeover creates certain ethnolinguistic attitudes which are detrimental to minority languages. Two important concepts here are ethnolinguistic and language attitudes. The former denotes all speech codes or the languages and dialects spoken by various groups of people (Farr et al., 2010). The latter refers to speakers' feelings towards a language (rich, poor, ugly, beautiful). In other words, language attitudes are actually 'the feelings people have about their language or the language of others' (Crystal, 1997, p. 215). The SABC strives to achieve multilingualism and support indigenous languages. However, it is important to ask whether SABC 1 has a tolerance towards ethnolinguistic minorities in its programming. The answer to this relies on many factors such as the economic statuses associated with languages in the channel. The capital influence on the SABC's operation has a role to play in the emerging ethnolinguistic attitudes of the channel. Funding is an important element in determining the SABC's operations (Rootman, Tait, & Nyembezi, 2019). However, growing challenges such as competitive markets, a growing number of emerging media organisations and a globalised economy threaten public broadcaster's democratic mandates (Rootman et al., 2019). With more languages becoming commercialised, broadcasters opt for commercial languages to broadcast their programmes. This secures broadcasters revenues and keeps programmes on the air. *Skeem Saam* demonstrates how language attitudes are influenced by SABC 1 programming, and how these attitudes are intertwined with economic agendas.

The SABC runs that risk of being a victim of an economic agenda. Canagarajah (2017) argues that neoliberal agencies can turn cultural products into profit-making schemes. The country's multilingualism can, therefore, be commodified and marketised. Duchene (2011) argues that in this way neoliberalism is using linguistic diversity as a factor for profitability.

It is against this background that I access the development and current state of ethno-linguistic attitudes that are emerging in the SABC. In this section, I discuss how language attitudes are created in SABC 1 and how they are intertwined with socio-political agendas. In so doing, this section shows the danger of ethnolinguistic attitudes in functioning as a cause for ethnic and linguistic discrimination and rendering the language policy null and void.

To get to the crux of the problem I conducted interviews with filmmakers, some of whom have worked in the production of *Skeem Saam*. These were Tshidiso Mtshali*[1], Lerato Tsotso* Bantu Ndumiso*, Timothy Owen, Tshiamo Masemola. Interviewees were selected for their specialist knowledge in broadcasting. Ethics clearance was granted to do interviews for this study. Some of the interviewees requested that their identities be concealed especially because of their association with the SABC and production companies. For this reason, pseudo names were used for these interviewees. Other interviewees consented that their actual names be used.

Mtshali is one of the key figures behind the production of *Skeem Saam*. With the experience of more than 10 years in the film and television industry, Mtshali has produced films for Mzanzi Magic and National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF). He has also worked in sitcoms and drama series in SABC 1. When Mtshali first began working as a programme provisioning producer for SABC he realised that languages were not treated equally at the public broadcaster.

The conversation with Mtshali revealed that profitability is paramount in language utilisation in the SABC. Mtshali (2020) notes that 'not every language will make you a profit. Not every language will appeal to the advertisers and audiences. That is one of the reasons why isiZulu is progressing in those domains. It is a popular language'. Television shows rely on advertisers to make a profit, they also need audiences to stay on the air. This explains why dominant groups depend on popularity to remain powerful. The use of language and cultural flares (elements that make-up culture: clothing, religious beliefs, customs, and social standards) in the media is based on how many people react to them, in that, they gain their growth and survival on how the popular masses react to them. Hence, isiZulu can stay long in SABC 1 and even outcompete other languages because it has established itself as a language of the masses in the channel and society. According to Mtshali (2020):

> This production pattern is achieved with the help of the producer. Producers have a job of making sure that shows make money and profit for the production company. The job of the producer is to sell the show, source funding, deal with broadcasters and all other financial stuff. And it would be naïve for me to ignore the power of Zulu in selling the shows in SABC. The language is just a commodity, it sells, audiences do not mind it, advertisers want it for their products.

Mtshali (2020) further states that every show that is commissioned must bring profit. He states that the first season of *Skeem Saam* had an unstable profit, advertisers did not trust the show to sell their product. Possibly isiZulu was brought in for this reason because the language came towards the end of season 2.

The introduction of isiZulu to *Skeem Saam* inevitably was to increase viewership and help stabilise the finances of the show. But Mtshali explains that when that happens it is a top-down decision, without the involvement of the production team. According to Mtshali (2020)

> The management will not tell you to 'use isiZulu only, a little bit of Venda and no Swati'. The mandate will be that the show must make money. You must attract audiences; you must use sociocultural elements that will generate profit for the show. What does that mean? What does it mean for small languages, small cultures? As producers, we have our backs against the wall. We choose between what is morally or societally correct and what is right for our stomachs. (profit)

In the above, the latter (profit) will prevail over what is morally or societally right. Mtshali's proposition indicates that in the SABC there is an unwritten policy that favours certain socio-cultural factors over others. In as much as it is the responsibility of the producers to make the show generate profit, grow viewership and increase ratings, the broadcaster uses ideologies to influence shows and the content that come out of the shows.

It does not come as a surprise that languages are commodified for generating profit in SABC 1. According to Mtshali (2020), profitmaking and language use cannot be separated in the SABC. Mtshali explains that the industry-standard cost to produce a soap opera in South Africa is R14 000 per minute. But when *Skeem Saam* started it was given R11 000. After the third season, the soap was awarded R13 000 per minute, corresponding with the introduction of isiZulu as the language of the soap. This was one of the early signs of the importance of isiZulu in the channel. When the language was introduced, the show's budget was increased. This ultimately creates economic disparities between the two languages.

Karl Marx's ideas of commodity exchange in capitalism are very relevant here. Marx argued that capitalism creates economic relations among people, things, and cultures and as such their value can be deduced by the prices they fetch. In *Skeem Saam* price tag for languages became important, isiZulu had a better price tag than Sepedi. Hence, it managed to penetrate *Skeem Saam* and build its strong base in the show.

The power and presence of isiZulu can be seen in the whole of SABC television. Tsotso[2]* (2020), a production member in *Skeem Saam* supports Mtshali's statement by arguing that the shows in other SABC channels are not as profitable as the shows in SABC 1 and that is because of the influence of language factors. Tsotso (2020) states that

> Let me tell you a secret, shows in SABC 2 and 3 are not so profitable as the ones in SABC 1. Language is very important in that. 2 and 3 (SABC 2 and 3) do not have programmes that are purely in Zulu. That is why they don't sell. This is the biggest language in the whole of South Africa. It is bound to make you money.

The adoption of language as a commodity stems from the influence of neoliberal ideology in languages. That is an ideology that promotes market-orientated reform policies. Under the neoliberal order, commodification spreads mysteriously to all aspects of social life (Holborow, 2018), language and cultures are no exception to this process. Under neoliberal domains languages and cultures are monetised, they are used for commercial purposes. Languages and cultures are no longer treated as cultural tools, as symbols of identity and pride, but as economic tools used to maximise profit. And SABC 1 has realised the power and importance of language in this aspect. As Tsotso (2020) states, isiZulu is generating profit for the channel. To support this argument, Heller and Duchene (2016) observe that commodification of languages is memetic of the neoliberal order of things. That is, language is straightforwardly an economic asset. Citing a human capital theorist, Becker (2002, 3), 'what should lead some speakers of

language X to learn language Y rather than language Z'? The answer for this relies on which language will give speakers economic and political freedom, or power, which language will give them access to resources.

These questions are fundamental to the SABC situation, and the following rephrasing makes it clear why they are important: what should make SABC use language X instead of language Y? The answer for this is based on which language has strong political, social and economic support of the country, which language will give the channel revenues. This is very relevant especially because SABC 1 is the most-watched channel among all SABC channels and isiZulu is the most spoken indigenous language in the country. Therefore, SABC 1 is aware of the social and economic status associated with isiZulu. The channel uses isiZulu's status to its advantage

These arguments reveal that indeed not all languages are equal in SABC, just like they are not anywhere else. The respect, prestige and value given to a language are dependent on various factors. In an ideal world of linguistic diversity

> All languages are morally equal, and, therefore, each has the right to have an unrepressed presence at the global linguistic banquet. In the real world, however, languages are not equal. While some are privileged as the languages of politico-economic power and control, others are marginalised, and others are still pushed to the verge of oblivion. (Mazrui, 1988, 52)

It is no surprise that some indigenous languages are pushed to the periphery in SABC 1. They do not have the same political, social and economic benefits for SABC as isiZulu does. Also, this creates ethnolinguistic attitudes that are composed of two parts: the economics of language and cultural status. This stems from Tsotso's statement above, which shows programmes that do not use isiZulu as a leading language do not make as much profit as the ones that use isiZulu. Mtshali's (2020) words also explain that politics, finances, and social matters influenced the production of *Skeem Saam* over the years. Mtshali explains that (2020)

> Politics, finances, social matters, all play a role in what *Skeem Saam* is today. There is a lot that is going on behind the scenes, behind closed boardrooms that you as an audience and does not know about. But the *Skeem Saam* that you see each day of the week on TV is a product of all those factors. And it won't surprise me if Zulu outplays Sepedi completely.

However, the ethnolinguistic attitudes created through *Skeem Saam* are not just economic, they are also cultural, they can be felt among audiences. As part of this study, I conducted a focus group. The focus group had 6 students from City Varsity College, where I lectured in the film and television department. Out of these six students, 2 are Sepedi speakers, 2 are isiZulu speakers and the other two speak isiXhosa. The purpose of the focus group was to understand audiences' perspectives on the use of language in *Skeem Saam*.

The focus group results indicate that even from audiences' perspective, there is a battle for power in terms of these indigenous languages. Zulu speaking audiences are comfortable with isiZulu dominating the media because this is the biggest language in the country. Speakers of other indigenous languages feel that their languages are being treated unfairly.

Sizwe Nkosi maintains that 'isiZulu is the biggest language in South Africa, Zulus are many, more than any other tribe in this country. So, it is not a problem for isiZulu to

dominate in the media'. According to Kgotso Moleka, on the other hand, 'as Mopedi (a Sepedi speaking person) I feel like our language and other minority languages are becoming undermined in South Africa. Zulus have *Uzalo*, they also have *Isibaya*, they have many shows. That is unfair'. Other students were neutral in this debate. Their stance is that the broadcaster must use a language that audiences will understand, and a language that will generate income because broadcasting is all about profit. According to Xolani Phakathi

> As a Xhosa-speaking person, I understand isiZulu. So, if shows are playing in isiZulu, I do not have a problem with that and most people in the country understand isiZulu. But, if we have Tshangane (Xitsonga) or Venda shows, people will not watch TV because they do now know those languages. That is why I do not watch *Muvhango* because I do not know Venda.

Members of the public have different views about language usage in the show. Inevitably, ethnolinguistic issues in SABC 1 are also felt in the public. Giles, Coupland, and Coupland (1991), Giles (2012) and Weatherall (2013) demonstrate that attitudes towards languages and communication are inseparable. In other words, which languages are used for communication, when and how creates certain attitudes, people build perceptions and attitudes towards these issues. If SABC 1 privileges isiZulu over other languages, speakers of other languages might start to build attitudes towards isiZulu and its speakers. They might also start to build attitudes about themselves and their languages.

Although media in South Africa, especially the SABC has been argued to be 'democratic' and 'plural' in that they promote equal participation (Duncan, 2015), there is little protection of minority languages. IsiZulu is increasingly dominant in the channel, while multilingualism is circumscribed. The SABC 1 linguistic environment is persistently hierarchical, which creates a dichotomy of dominant and dominated languages.

These emerging ethnolinguistic attitudes in *Skeem Saam* also produce language regimes. Language regimes are the distribution of linguistic power (Knight, 1992), that delineate which languages can be used when and where. This suggests speakers of certain languages can lay claim to greater respect (Horowitz, 1985). Language regimes cannot distribute linguistic power equally, they cannot create a sense of collective community that is shared by all.

In an interview with Tshepo Morena (2020), a film director in South Africa, a lot of issues emerged regarding language usage in South African media. Morena argues that the 'multilingualism' in *Skeem Saam* does not come as a surprise, even though the soap was initially meant to be a Sepedi programme. According to Morena (2020), from his experience of working in several media productions in the country, there is a clear agenda to undermine the status of minority languages and replace them with isiZulu. Morena further points out that the SABC is driven by surface language popularity considerations, a language that is popular among audiences gets preferences in SABC programming.

Morena's stance was also supported by Simon Owen, a film lecturer in one of the South African films and media institutions. In an interview, Owen (2020) stated that isiZulu is becoming a new English/Afrikaans of the post-Apartheid era. There is a sense of disregard for minority languages in the South African media, these languages are overshadowed by the political and social support of isiZulu (Owen, 2020).

The shift from Sepedi as a language of *Skeem Saam* to a polyglot culture that is leading to isiZulu dominating the soap opera is multifaceted. From the above arguments, politics, economy, and status of a language all play a role in determining which language is going

to be used for the programme. Bantu Ndumiso*[3] (2020), one of the core production members in the show acknowledges that there was a managerial influence on the move from *Skeem Saam* becoming a pure Sepedi soap opera to a multilingual soap. According to Ndumiso, this was a decision taken without consultation with the executive production team of the soap, it was a decision from the higher office of the SABC. The time in which isiZulu rose to prominence in *Skeem Saam* is the time in which SABC was clouded by political and executive interference in the broadcasting of programmes under the leadership and vision of Hlaudi Motsoeneng. Therefore, Ndumiso's note of management making decisions on the language of programmes that would affect productions is not a surprise.

The SABC has always been surrounded by controversies regarding top-down decisions taken by management without consultations with production teams. In an interview with some actors from *Skeem Saam,* these contestations emerged. For instance, Jack Masemola* (2020), one of the leading actors in the soap states that 'at first we were excited as Bapedi that we also have our programme on TV. But that changed gradually, by the time we realised it, *Skeem Saam* was a mix of all other languages'. Tsotso (2020) reveals that transitioning from being purely Sepedi to multilingualism was something that took everyone by shock in the production team, 'we were told that the show has to make money, and money comes from more viewers'. This indicates the production members were not consulted when isiZulu was introduced in *Skeem Saam*. It was a top-down decision.

The other important issue in the case of *Skeem Saam* is the agency, the power or capacity of an individual or group to act independently or make their own choices. Agency exists alongside space; they are intertwined. Blommaert (2010, p. 6) states that 'space is always *someone's* space … filled with norms, expectations, conceptions of what counts as proper and normal … language use and what does not country as such' [italics added]. Pennycook (2010) further describes space as 'organised' and given meaning, it produces meaning as well as the subjects who inhabit it. Miller (2012) argues that one way to investigate the meaning behind spaces is to consider the linguistic acts coming out of space.

In the film, television, or theatre space is very important. Location reveals a lot about the characters, the story and the creators. In other words, space is ideological. The linguistic space of *Skeem Samm* was introduced as a show set in Turfloop, a township in Limpopo, a space dominated by Sepedi, with a little bit of Setswana. Later siSwati and isiXhosa were also introduced but none of them took over as languages of the show. When isiZulu came into the show the space was drastically transformed. isiZulu took over. This reveals how *Skeem Saam* became a typical space where language ideologies have unfolded. According to Masemola (2020, 1) 'when you talk about the language you talk about status, dignity, respect, your being. And when you lose your language, you lose all of that'. Sepedi certainly is losing the elements reiterated by Masemola. This eventually leads to minority languages assimilating into the mainstream. There is a consensus established that SABC 1 is an agent of social control whose operations and functions are driven by a desire to elevate isiZulu to an ethnolinguistic dominance of the channel.

Mtshali (2020) explains that Sepedi might have just lost its autonomy in *Skeem Saam*. He (2020) states that 'when you talk about the agency you talk autonomy. Your research is raising an important issue, an issue that we might have all overlooked, Sepedi has lost its

autonomy in *Skeem Saam*. It is now just one of the languages in the show'. In support of Mtshali, Tsotso (2020, 1) contends that 'languages do not only lose stature when they are being undermined in media, they also lose credibility'.

Any form of speaking involves agency. This is because language usage establishes a reality that has the potential to affect whoever might be listening (Duranti, 2004). Van Lier (2008) further adds that agency is central to language usage. In a similar vein, Joseph (2006) argues that agency is a paradox, either we have it or we do not have it. But some have it more than others; however, no one lacks it. In other words, the level to which we have agency is not the same.

Through *Skeem Saam,* SABC 1 is demonstrating that agency is not the same for all languages and cultural groups in the channel. Multilingual spaces such as SABC 1 contain groups in contact and frequently in competition. This has dire consequences for ethnolinguistic maintenance and pluralism. The loss of ethnolinguistic pluralism is apparent in SABC 1. This will result in a culture of monoglot which ultimately will mean that SABC 1 is a one-language channel, others are just being accommodated. This strategy defeats the purpose of the SABC language policy, which intends to represent the multi-culturalism of South Africa's linguistic ecology. Now, the SABC 1 is giving agency to some linguistic and cultural groups, while depriving them of others.

Conclusion

There is an argument to be made that soap operas are primarily meant to entertain audiences. However, this study challenges that view and contend that soap operas are also ideological. Therefore, the use of languages in soap operas are used for pleasure, entertainment, propelling the narrative, develop characters, but they also carry socio-political implications. Blommaert (2005) maintains that language use is fundamentally indexical. While performing language shift analysis in *Skeem Saam*, the process displays orientation towards isiZulu. The soap is producing language norms such as superiority and inferiority, prestige, high status, low status.

The SABC language policy was designed to produce inclusionary linguistic practices in the SABC programming. However, this has not been fruitful for all indigenous languages. In this study, I incorporate an analysis of the SABC language policy to which the examination of the use of languages in *Skeem Saam* is tied, as well as the ways the use of these languages is undergirded by ideologies. The shift from monolingual Sepedi in *Skeem Saam* to an inclusionary polyglossia approach has done potential harm to minority languages, it has destabilised them in SABC 1 and weakened their base which they were starting to enjoy.

As far as this paper is concerned, the shift from Sepedi to a multilingual terrain in *Skeem Saam* is 'multilingualism in disguise', it is polyglossia, it elevates isiZulu in one more soap opera in SABC 1 (as it is the case with *Generations: The Legacy* and *Uzalo*) to a lingua franca of the channel. In the case of *Skeem Saam*, the slight shift from Sepedi to isiZulu offers the show a lucrative opportunity to prosper, to grow its ratings and viewership (Mtshali, 2020).

Introducing isiZulu into *Skeem Saam* should not have been problematic. The issue is that isiZulu was brought into the show and took over. It was brought in as a language that has invasive capabilities and outcompetes the language that was initially meant to

be the language of the show, thereby trampling on linguistic rights of the speakers and the language's right to protection as spelt out in the constitution and the SABC language policy. If left unchecked, the problem here is that some languages and cultures have the potential of being elevated to a higher status, thus rendering others inferior. This defeats the purpose of the multilingual/multicultural policy of the SABC because it uplifts one indigenous language over others. It also calls into question the future of other indigenous languages, cultures, identities and practices in SABC 1 and other SABC channels.

Notes

1. *Names have been changed at the request of the interviewees.
2. Name changed at the request of the interviewee
3. *Names have been changed at the request of the interviewees.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Kealeboga Aiseng 🔵 http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5684-9519

References

Amidi, A. A. (1995). Kiswahili: People, language, literature and lingua franca. *Nordic Journal of African Studies, 4* (1), 104–123.

Amtaika, A. (2014). The power and authority of the dominant to name: A case study of selected Nyanja and isiZulu linguistic expressions regarding the 'national assets. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, *26*(1), 99–115. https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2013.823856

Becker, G S. (2002). The age of human capital. In E. P. Lazear (Ed.), *Education in the twenty-first century* (pp. 3–8). Hoover Institution Press.

Berger, V., & Komori, M. (2010). *Polyglot cinema: Migration and transcultural narration in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain*. Transaction Publishers.

Blommaert, J. (2005). Situating language rights: English and Swahili in Tanzania revisited. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *9* (3), 390–417. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1360-6441.2005.00298.x

Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). The economics of linguistic exchanges. *Social Sciences Information*, *16*(6), 645–668. https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847701600601

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Polity Press.

Bouwerman, S. (2000). *Linguistic imperialism in South Africa: Unassailable Position of English* [Master's thesis]. The University of Cape Town.

Canagarajah, S. (2017). *Translingual practices and neoliberal policies*. Springer.

Cormack, M. (2000). Minority languages, nationalism and broadcasting: The British and Irish examples. *Nations and Nationalism*, *6* (3), 383–398. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1354-5078.2000.00383.x

Costa, J. (2015). New speakers, new language: On being a legitimate speaker of a minority language in Provence. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *231*(231), 127–145. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2014-0035

Crystal, D. (1997). *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics*. Blackwell.

Curran, J. (1997). The liberal theory of the press. In J. Curran & J. Seaton (Eds.), *Power without responsibility: The press and broadcasting in Britain* (5th ed., pp. 287–301). Routledge.

De Klerk, V. (2000a). Language shift in Grahamstown: A case study of selected Xhosa-speakers. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *146*(1), 87–110. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.2000.146.87

De Klerk, V. (2000b). To be Xhosa or not to be Xhosa: That is the question. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *21*(3), 198–215. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434630008666401

De Wet, C. (2001). Factors influencing the choice of English as language of learning and teaching (LoLT) – a South African perspective. *South African Journal of Education*, *22*(2), 119–124.

Di Carlo, P. (2017). Towards an understanding of African endogenous multilingualism: Ethnography, language ideologies, and the supernatural. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *2018*(254), 139–163. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2018-0037

Dongre, M. R., & Nehulkar, R. (2019, January 9–10). Paradigm shift in TV and radio broadcasting in digital age. *Proceedings of International Conference on Media Ethics*.

Duchene, A. (2011). Neoliberalism, social inequalities, and multilingualism: The exploitation of linguistic resources and speakers. *Langage & Societe*, *2* (136), 81–108. https://doi.org/10.3917/ls.136.0081

Duncan, J. (2015). Pluralism with little diversity: The South African experience of media transformation. In P. Valcke, M. Sukosd, & R. Picard (Eds.), *Media pluralism and diversity: Diversity: Concepts, risks, and global trends* (pp. 237–251). Palgrave Macmillan.

Duranti, A. (2004). Agency in language. In *A companion to linguistic anthropology* (pp. 451–473). Blackwell Publishing.

Eckert, P. (2003). Dialogue: Sociolinguistics and authenticity: An elephant in the room. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *7* (3), 392–397. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9481.00231

Farr, M., Seloni, L., & Song, J. (2010). Ethnolinguistic diversity in language and literacy education. In M. Farr, L. Seloni, & J. Song (Eds.), *Ethnolinguistic diversity and education: Language, literacy, and culture* (pp. 1–20). Routledge.

Ferguson, C. A. (1959). Diglossia. *Word*, *15*(2), 325–340. https://doi.org/10.1080/00437956.1959.11659702

Fishman, J. (1967). Bilingualism with and without diglossia; diglossia with and without bilingualism. *Journal of Social Issues*, *23*(2), 29–38. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1967.tb00573.x

Giles, H. (2012). *The handbook of intergroup communication*. Routledge.

Giles, H., Coupland, N., & Coupland, J. (1991). Accommodation theory: Communication, context, and consequences. In *Studies in emotion and social interaction. Contexts of accommodation: Developments in applied sociolinguistics* (pp. 1–68). Cambridge University Press.

Heller, M., & Duchene, A. (2016). *Language in late capitalism*. Routledge.

Holborow, M. (2018). Language, commodification and labour: The relevance of Marx. *Language Sciences*, *70*, 58–67. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2018.02.002

Holmes, J. (2013). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Horowitz, D. L. (1985). *Ethnic groups in conflict*. University of California Press.

Howell, W. J. (1992). Minority-language broadcasting and the continuation of Celtic culture in Wales and Ireland. In S. H. Riggins (Ed.), *Ethnic minority media* (pp. 217–242). Sage Publications.

Howley, K. (2004). Remaking public service broadcasting: Lessons from Allston-Brighton free radio. *Social Movement Studies*, *3*(2), 221–240. https://doi.org/10.1080/1474283042000266137

IMDb. (2011). *Skeem Saam (2011)*. Retrieved June 2, 2020, from https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3597664/

IMDb. (2015). *245 Vip Boss*. Retrieved June 2, 2020, from https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7631464/

Jaworski, A. (2007). Language use in the media: Authenticity and othering. In S. Johnson & A. Ensslin (Eds.), *Language in the media* (pp. 271–280). Continuum.

Joseph, J. E. (2006). Applied linguistics and the choices make (or do they?) *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *16*(2), 237–241. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.2006.00116.x

Kamwangamalu, N. (2003a). Social change and language shift: South Africa. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *23*, 225–243. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190503000291

Kamwangamalu, N. (2003b). Globalization of English, and language shift and maintenance in South Africa. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *164*, 65–81. http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.2003.056

Knight, J. (1992). *Institutions of social conflict*. Cambridge University Press.

Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and culture*. Oxford University Press.

Kupe, T. (2005, September 7). Defining the public interest – the SABC as a public broadcaster. *Paper for Harold Wolpe Memorial Seminar*.

Leo, T., & Wong, C. (1990). Polyglossia in the 'printed cantonese' mass media in Hong Kong. In H. D. Pierson & H. Giles (Eds.), *Journal of Asian pacific communication* (Vol. 1, pp. 27–43). Multilingual Matters.

Mazrui, A. A. (1988). Language and race in the black experience: An African perspective. *Dalhousie Review*, *68*(1&2), 87–110.

Mensah, C. E. (2016). *A Morpho-semantic analysis of Mfatse neologisms in some radio stations in the Central Region* [Master's dissertation]. University of Cape Coast.

Miller, E. R. (2012). Agency, language learning and multilingual spaces. *Multilingua*, *31*(4), 441–468. https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2012-0020

Mooney, P. (2004). *Parliamentary assembly: Public service broadcasting*. Retrieved June 29, 2018, from http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/Home-EN.asp

Morena, T. (2020, June 12). *Interview with Kealeboga Aiseng*. Johannesburg.

Moshi, L. (2006). The globalised world languages: The case of Kiswahili. In O. F. Arasanyin & M. A. Pemberton (Eds.), *Selected Proceedings of the 36th annual conference on African linguistics: Shifting the center of Africanism in language politics and economic globalization* (pp. 166–175). Cascadilla Proceedings Project.

Motsaathebe, G., & Chiumbu, S. H. (2021). Navigating the digital milieu in the context of television in Africa: A synchronic appraisal of the disjunctures, continuities and prospects. In G. Motsaathebe & S. H. Chiumbu (Eds.), *Television in Africa in the digital age* (pp. 1–11). Springer.

Mtshali, H. (2020, June 17). *Interview with Kealeboga Aiseng*. Johannesburg.

Mufwene, S. (2001). *The ecology of language evolution*. University of Chicago Press.

Mufwene, S. (2002b). Colonization, globalization and the plight of 'weak' languages. *Journal of Linguistics*, *38*(2), 375–395. http://doi.org/10.1017/S0022226702001391

Mufwene, S. (2004). Language birth and death. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *33*(1), 201–222. http://doi.org/10.1146/anthro.2004.33.issue-1

Mufwene, S. S. (2002a). Language birth and death. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *33*(1), 201–222. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.33.070203.143852

Mufwene, S. S. (2005). Globalization and the myth of killer languages. In G. Huggan & S. Klasen (Eds.), *Perspectives of endangerment* (pp. 19–46). Georg Olms.

Mufwene, S. S. (2021). Language shift. In J. Stanlaw (Ed.), *The international encyclopaedia of linguistic anthropology* (pp. 1–9). John Wiley & Sons.

Nyembezi, V., Rootman, C., & Tait, M. (2019). The South African public broadcaster's financial sustainability: Internal stakeholders' perceptions. *Acta Commercii*, *19*(1). http://doi.org/10.4102/ac.v19i1.711

O'hlfearnain, T. (2015). Sociolinguistics vitality of Manx after extreme language shift: Authenticity without traditional native speakers. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *239*, 45–62. http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2014-0031

Okombo, P. L., & Muna, E. (2017). The international status of Kiswahili: The parameters of Braj Kachru's model of world Englishes. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, *10*(7), 55–67.

Ostler, N. (2011). Language maintenance, shift and endangerment. In R. Mesthrie (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of sociolinguistics* (pp. 315–334). Cambridge University Press.

Owen, O. (2020, June 8). *Interview with Kealeboga Aiseng*. Johannesburg.

Pauwels, A. (2016). *Language maintenance and shift*. Cambridge University Press.

Pennycook, A. (2010). *Language as local practice*. Routledge.

Raymond, H. (2020). English in South Africa: Contact and change. In *English in multilingual South Africa: The linguistics of contact and change* (pp. 3–15). Cambridge University Press.

Romaine, S. (1994). *Language in society. An introduction to sociolinguistics*. Oxford University Press.

SABC. (2017). *SABC Annual Report (2016/2017)*. Retrieved October 21, 2019, from https://www.sabc.co.za/sabc/sabc-annual-report-201617-thursday-28-september-2017-1408/

SABC. (2020). *Editorial policies*. Retrieved December 21, 2020, from http://web.sabc.co.za/sabc/home/editorialpolicies/policies/details?id=d2f26127-f6ac-4954-8a9a-6f13c07b5c9c&title=SABC%20Editorial%20Policy%20on%20Language

Sibanda, R. (2019). Mother-tongue education in a multilingual township: Possibilities for recognising *lok'shin* lingua in South Africa. *Reading and Writing*, *10*(1), 1–10. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/rw.v10i1.225

Sissons, J. (2005). *First people: Indigenous cultures and their futures*. Reaktion Books.

The Broadcast Research Council of South Africa. (2021). *Top 20 programmes all adults 15+ December 2021 prime time 17h30-22h00*. Retrieved February 8, 2022, from https://brcsa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/SABC1-TopProgs-Dec-2021.pdf

Thobejane, A. (1980). *Bophelo ke Semphekgo. Drama series*. SABC.

Tollefson, J. W. (1991). *Planning language, Planning inequality: Language policy in the community*. Longman.

Tsotso, K. (2020, May 22). *Interview with Kealeboga Aiseng*. Johannesburg

Van Lier, L. (2008). Agency in the classroom. In J. P. Lantolf & M. W. Poehner (Eds.), *Sociocultural theory and the teaching of second languages* (pp. 163–186). Equinox.

Weatherall, A. (2013). Language attitudes in Australia and New Zealand. In M. Dragojevic, H. Giles, & B. M. Watson (Eds.), *The social meanings of language, dialect and accent: International perspectives on speech styles* (pp. 157–169). Peter Lang Publishers.

Woolard, K. A. (1998). Simultaneity and bivalency as strategies in bilingualism. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *8*(1), 3–29. http://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.1998.8.issue-1