An African language in the public sphere – the use of isiZulu on *Yilungelo Lakho* online platforms

By

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I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work. I have acknowledged all other authors' ideas and referenced direct quotations from their work. I have not allowed anyone else to borrow or copy my work.

ABSTRACT

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) is mandated as the public broadcaster to provide news content in all South Africa's official languages. While this has been a challenge on traditional broadcast platforms, online resources, such as social media pages, present an opportunity for the SABC to support the creation and sharing of content in African languages. With relatively little national news and current affairs content available online in indigenous languages, this study investigates the way that SABC News online offerings in the isiZulu language have the potential to contribute to public debates in terms of Habermas' concept of a public sphere and its adaptation to the online domain, taking into consideration scholarly critiques of its suitability in the African context.

The SABC News Current Affairs programme *Yilungelo Lakho* serves as a case study to examine the potential for the SABC to share African-language news content online. The programme is broadcast primarily in the Nguni languages, and the online audience on Facebook often choose to respond in isiZulu or other African languages. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with three members of the production team and three contributors to the Facebook page. A textual analysis of Facebook posts across 13 episodes, with a total of 497 comments from 306 online contributors highlights the manner in which online interaction promotes or hampers the inclusion of isiZulu speakers in SABC News and Current Affairs discussions, rational deliberation on the SABC Current Affairs programme, and fragmentation and overlap across different online platforms. While multilingual interactions on the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page make for complex curation, the findings suggest the need for African language content to support public discussions and point to an opportunity for the public broadcaster to fulfil its mandate.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- CCV Television – Contemporary Community Values Television – a Black TV channel launched by the SABC in 1992 to broadcast largely in the Nguni languages. (Mapukata, 1998, p.10)
- CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMMES - programmes focusing on social, economic or political issues of immediate relevance, offering more in-depth information (than a news bulletin for example) on radio and television.
- ICASA – Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
- LSM - The Living Standards Measure is a research and marketing tool used in South Africa to classify standard of living and disposable income.
- PBS: Public Broadcast Station
- SABC – South African Broadcasting Corporation
- PanSalb - The Pan South African Language Board was established to promote multilingualism, to develop the 11 official languages, and to protect language rights in South Africa
- WHITE PAPER – The White Paper on Broadcasting Policy was a policy document published by the Department of Communications in 1998.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the context, goals, and methodology of the present study as well as an outline of the thesis.

1.1 Context of the Research

In a multilingual society, the media is vital for effective information dissemination, and public broadcasting has an even greater responsibility. The central tenet of a public broadcasting system is "its commitment to making political, religious, civic, cultural and entertainment events accessible to the entire spectrum of people in its polity" (Evans, 2011, p.32). In democratic South Africa, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), as a public broadcaster, plays a dual role: on the one hand, it is pivotal to developmental goals of unity and reconciliation, and on the other, it is responsible for the "equalisation of access to basic communications" (Olivier, 2011, p.228). These roles are pursued to a large extent through the production and dissemination of one of the most linguistically diverse ranges of news broadcasts in the world (Nwaneri, Mann, Van Niekerk, Dieperink, 2014, p.7). Consistent with the Broadcasting Act (Act 4 of 1999) and its subsequent amendment (Act 64 of 2002), the SABC broadcasts in the 11 official languages of South Africa (English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, siSwati, Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga) as well as other constitutionally protected languages, as circumstances permit. The act does not legislate specifically with respect to online content, where potential for news in African languages seems to exist.

The current South African media landscape is not reflective of the linguistic diversity of the country. Approximately 25 percent of the South African population speaks isiZulu at home, while 15 percent speak isiXhosa and 12 percent speak Afrikaans (Statistics SA, 2018). Collectively, more than 80% of South Africans have a home language other than English, although most Black Africans are multilingual (Statistics SA, 2018). The Media Facts report (OMD, 2018) listed only one daily isiZulu newspaper – Isolezwe – with Isolezwe weekend and Illanga weekly and weekend as the only other print publications in an African language. All are published in KwaZulu Natal, and all are written in isiZulu. Apart from English and

isiZulu, the only other official South African language catered for in mainstream print media is Afrikaans, with both daily (Berger, Son, and Beeld) and weekly (Rapport, Volksblad, Son, and Beeld) publications. While community radio platforms are visible and command fairly significant audiences as a collective, they are still very much localised. Television audiences outside of the public broadcaster have very limited national news and public affairs offerings available in the official African languages. While audience numbers across traditional media platforms reflect a struggle to survive and maintain momentum, these platforms also exist within an increasingly competitive industry (OMD, 2018, p.5). Although the number of newspapers has remained relatively stable, circulation has declined (Dugmore, 2018; OMD, 2018; Broadcast Research Council (BRC), 2019). South Africa had 260 radio stations in 2018 as compared to 34 in 1991. There were three hundred (300) television channels available to South African audiences in 2018 as compared to seven in 1991. There is a need to share African language public service content in South Africa, perhaps more so outside of traditional news platforms, which, even now, do not always cater to the language needs of all South Africans.

South Africa maintains one of the highest internet penetration rates on the continent (Roberts and Ali, 2021, p.25). The online space has become important for content creation and interaction (Cru, 2018, p.4) and could offer SABC News the potential to extend its multilingual African language content to those previously excluded from public discourse. Despite a general decline in both audiences and revenue for mainstream media (Dugmore, 2018), African language media platforms in South Africa have retained the strongest audiences (OMD, 2018). IsiZulu media platforms have been particularly successful. On the SABC, seven of the top ten performing radio stations broadcast in an African language (BRC, 2017), while the Nguni news bulletins on SABC television reach the largest news audiences by a considerable margin (BRC, 2018). Social media platforms could offer new spaces for the SABC to extend its indigenous African language content. At present, SABC News provides online content on the SABC website as well as YouTube, Iono fm, and via a host of Facebook pages and Twitter handles. While the SABC does not have a news website, even for a widely spoken African language such as isiZulu, current affairs issues are discussed in daily (radio) and weekly (television) programmes in the different official South African languages. An example is *Yilungelo Lakho*, which is broadcast in the Nguni languages (primarily isiZulu and siSwati) and focuses on people's rights as consumers in relation to current issues in the news.

The hour-long *Yilungelo Lakho* programme was established in 2007 and is broadcast on SABC 1 at midday on Mondays, with a rebroadcast on the same channel on Thursday nights, although several erratic revisions of broadcast times have been made over the years. The programme is produced by a small team consisting of an Executive Producer, an administrator, two Producers, and two Anchors who alternate presenting the programme in isiZulu and siSwati. There are no isiXhosa or Ndebele presentations. This team is also responsible for researching content, identifying appropriate expert guests, and developing programme promotions, including a weekly radio promotion, usually in English. With the aim of extending its audience reach, the *Yilungelo Lakho* production team has directed its attention towards social media. *Yilungelo Lakho's* online presence is limited to a playlist on the SABC News YouTube channel, a Twitter handle (6,000 followers), and a Facebook page with over 40,000 followers. Viewers are able to interact both telephonically (during the live broadcast) and via social media – before and after the programme broadcast. The focus of each programme is different, and topics generally relate to subjects that are in the news domain at the time. While online communication appears to be initiated in English to a large extent, many participants choose to respond and comment in isiZulu.

1.2 Research Goals and Methods

The present study explores the way that online interaction in isiZulu on *Yilungelo Lakho* online platforms:

1. promotes the inclusion of isiZulu speakers in SABC News and Current Affairs discussions,
2. contributes to deliberation (rational or otherwise) on the SABC Current Affairs programme/platform, and
3. reflects fragmentation and overlap across different online platforms where isiZulu is used.

A qualitative orientation allowed the study to consider the context of SABC News and Current Affairs, with particular reference to online platforms linked *to Yilungelo Lakho*. As a former Executive producer at SABC Digital News, this was of professional and scholarly interest to me. I adopted a critical approach, foregrounding the participants' understanding

through an emic perspective. Access to detail within qualitative studies provides an account of what takes place in the setting being investigated. Such detail is significant as it provides an account of how those involved make sense of issues, challenges, and opportunities. I gained an understanding of language use, perceptions, and issues through textual analysis – considering comments made by users on the programme's Facebook page as well as Twitter comments using the hashtag *#yilungelolakho*. I also conducted six semi-structured interviews, three with members of the *Yilungelo Lakho* production team and the remaining three with online contributors to the programme's Facebook page. The process allowed me to explore the participants' thoughts and feelings on the subject of multilingual broadcasting and the use of broadcast content to spur online discussion. The information obtained has been triangulated, and data from different sources was both cross-checked and integrated (Bryman, 2012, p.392).

1.3 Thesis Outline

Chapter One outlines the context of the research and its goals and methods.

Chapter Two considers the relationship between language, media, and democracy in South Africa and subsequently the role played by isiZulu language media in the country. It elaborates on the development programmes of democratic South Africa, and the impact of politics and policy on the development of broadcasting and the public broadcaster in particular. The chapter explores how digital disruption affects the already complex news production environment in South Africa and considers some of the challenges being experienced in newsrooms. Finally, the chapter reflects on existing online multilingual practices at the SABC.

Chapter Three focuses on the theoretical framework of this study, considering the interactions on the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page and the opinions of those who contribute to the discussion in light of the concept of a public sphere, as advocated by Habermas. The chapter considers its critiques and adaptation to the digital domain, subsequently discussing the aspects of inclusion, rational deliberation, and opinion formation within a unified forum.

Chapter Four considers the research methodology, detailing the qualitative methods used – the case study, textual analysis of tweets and comments on the *Yilungelo Lakho* profiles, as

well as semi-structured interviews with the production team and online contributors. It also reflects on ethical considerations and aspects of insider research, as well as some challenges and limitations of the study.

Chapter Five presents the observations of the study, providing interview summaries and highlighting key aspects from the perspectives of the interviewees. The chapter then provides an overview and discussion of the texts (Facebook comments and tweets) being analysed.

Chapter Six discusses the findings of the study in terms of the key dimensions identified in the theoretical framework, that is, the factors of inclusion, rational deliberation, and opinion formation within a unified forum.

Chapter Seven focuses on key findings in response to the research questions, reflects on the research process, and provides some suggestions for future practice and scholarly enquiry.

1.4 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter firstly considered the context within which this study was carried out. As a former SABC employee, the online use of African languages was of both professional and personal interest. In addition, the chapter sets out the research goals and methodology, and provides an outline of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter considers the relationship between language, media, and democracy in South Africa, with a focus on isiZulu media. It also considers the impact of digital disruption on news production, concluding with an outline of current online multilingual practices at the SABC.

2.1 Language and the Media

Language is linked to economic interests and power (Evans, 2011, p.18). The marginalisation of African languages in the media is not unique to South Africa. Salawu (2016; p13) links the origins of African language press directly to the spread of evangelism but suggests that they were also important tools in democratic mobilisation. Post democracy, the author suggests that a re-emergence of African language media (2016; p16) has supported a democratic participation in political events. He cites Kenya and Nigeria as examples where vernacular media "filled a gap in the discourse." Similarly, indigenous language radio platforms were used in the 1990s in Rwanda incite political activity. However, the new world order has also meant a blurring of boundaries, forcing public participation at global levels (Musau; 1999; p137). While KiSwahili was declared Kenya's national language in 1974 (Musau; 1999; p139) the country's official language is English (Sang; 2015; p3). Other local languages and their development in the media is largely relegated to lower levels of coverage, despite being spoken by a majority of the population (Sang; 2015; p6). Khan (2017; p31) cites similar experience in Pakistan where English and Urdu have become the languages of education and mass media.

Under South Africa's Apartheid regime, indigenous African languages were side-lined in favour of English and Afrikaans while the Homeland Policy segregated African people, dividing them by region and language. Language issues were an integral aspect of the struggle for democracy and remained a key priority in the new dispensation (Heugh, 2004, p.42; see also Alexander, 2004, p.115; Casale and Posel, 2010, p.6). The South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) places emphasis on the link between language, culture, and development, granting official status to 11 languages and recognising various others in an attempt to "elevate and protect" them. The decision to have several official languages in

South Africa has been referred to as a "compromise" (Evans, 2011, p.53) given the "unique and politically sensitive" role of language in Apartheid South Africa. The nine official African languages recognised in the Constitution (i.e., isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, siSwati, Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana, Xitsonga, and Tshivenda) are those that received recognition within the homeland system (Mesthrie, 2006, p.152; Malatji, 2019, p.69). Scholars such as Neville Alexander (2004, p.12) supported standardising the Nguni and Sesotho groups of languages, which are mutually intelligible to a large extent, in order to enable more cost-effective implementation of multilingualism. This idea would have entailed developing isiNguni as a single language to replace isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, and siSwati and did not muster support. Mesthrie (2006, p.152) referred to the decision of making all nine indigenous African languages official as a "politician's solution" aimed at gaining buy-in from all the parties at the negotiation talks but without any firm plan of implementation. Sachs (1994) alludes to a similar explanation, suggesting that because language rights, and the loss thereof, were directly associated with the previous regime, neither a single official language nor a combination of African languages was an option for South Africa. Amongst languages such as isiZulu and isiXhosa, spoken by larger groups, and others such as TshiVenda and Xitsonga, spoken by smaller portions of the population, disparities of status exist. While indigenous African languages are significantly linked to culture and identity, linking them to educational and economic progress might be difficult (Mesthrie, 2006, p.152). German, French, and Swahili speakers (De Villiers, 2019) can expect to earn more in South Africa than those fluent in most of the official languages.

The marginalisation of indigenous African languages under Apartheid extended to the media domain, with effects that persist today. Parmegiani (2012, p.74) opines that language is not a politically neutral medium of communication but "a social practice that determines power relations and shapes subjectivity". Such was (and to a large extent, still is) the case in South Africa. Prior to 1994, broadcasts occurred mainly in English and Afrikaans, primarily the languages of White South Africans. Broadcasting was "effectively a state monopoly" (Berger, 2000, p.2), and while newspapers were privately owned, the monopolistic nature of control by owners in the print media was notably very similar to the situation with broadcast media. Mhlambi (2012, p.4) asserts that African language broadcasting services arose only out of political turmoil and the need for sociological and ideological control. Increased pluralism and racial diversity in media ownership after 1994 could have been "more likely to correspond with a diversity of contents" (Berger, 2000, p.8) even if it did not guarantee this

on its own. Berger (2000, p.2) also suggests that transformation, in terms of an increased presence of African-language-speaking journalists and editors, did not necessarily translate into a transformation of content. In democratic South Africa, the allocation of broadcast programming in indigenous African languages remains relatively limited, although studies of transitional societies often show that despite considerable political change, social transformation has often lagged behind, and as a result, "the news media have failed to transform" (Rodny-Gumede, 2018, p.9; see also Kupe, 2014). There are numerous reasons why this might be the case. South Africa is a developing, market-driven society where commercial strategies are a matter of survival and can have a significant impact on media diversity (Kupe, 2014, p.34). Olugbonga and Owolabi (2021, p.33) refer to the media as "commodities" – a product that must be traded in a capitalist market. Kupe (2014, p.31) argues that racial discrimination in South Africa has privileged English and Afrikaans speakers and effectively resulted in a White market force, which has an impact on content choices in the media. This, in turn, impacts on the influence of the media on different sectors of the public and could, therefore, skew public debate (Kupe, 2014, p.35). In the case of the SABC, commercial imperatives have resulted in comparatively little African language content due to both a lack of funding and infrastructure (Skinner, 2017, p.26).

The media forms "one of the three primary language agents in a polity" (Du Plessis, 2006a, 85), with the others being education and bureaucracy. A linguistically diverse country such as South Africa must have linguistically diverse media in order to serve the needs of its people. Nwaneri, et al. (2014, p.4) have referred to multilingual media as "the lifeblood of effective information dissemination". It is with this understanding that the SABC operates. The broadcaster must navigate factors of parity in its content and programming in order to serve its multilingual audiences equitably (SABC Editorial Policy, 2020). This is described as "fair and reasonable" treatment (S5.19) but not necessarily equal consideration. As one of a number of solutions to some of the existing challenges with the use of African languages in South African media, Dugmore (2018; p40) writes that the SABC needs to "develop powerful websites in all indigenous languages to allow greater access, voice and participation not just in radio, but online and on social media."

While multilingualism is a feature of contemporary broadcasting (Du Plessis, 2006b, p.49), dealing with such diversity has been a challenge for the SABC, especially on television platforms where there is limited time and space and an increasingly diverse audience. The

Media Monitoring Report (Dibetso and Smith, 2012, p.19) suggests that while bilingual and multilingual broadcasting have the potential to increase audience size, they do come at a cost. The depth of context is limited, and if people do not understand both or all the languages, meaning is lost in translation. In practice, it also means that on a programme such as *Yilungelo Lakho*, not all the four languages that it is meant to target are treated with equal gravitas. Governance issues and a lack of both resources and reliable funding (Nwaneri, et al., 2014, p.8; Skinner, 2017, p.28), coupled with increased competition and commercial interests, have meant that the broadcaster has not been able to consistently meet its language mandate. The political economy of the media entails a balancing act between the public broadcast mandate and a commercially oriented business model and is possibly one reason that SABC News content in the official African languages remains largely in the domain of radio broadcasts. Kupe (2014, p.35) suggests that in South Africa, greater diversity in ownership and content generally exists on radio as compared to other media. The SABC's public broadcast radio stations are language based and better suited to serving niche language markets than television, which battles limited space, time, and resources. Radio is also a less expensive medium. Despite this, it seems that even in radio, there is often a propensity for English to intrude (Chari, 2021, p.288; Madlala, 2014, p.67) or for the broadcast language to be watered down. Syndication and code switching, as well as the simplification or urbanisation of language, have meant that even the borders of language based SABC radio stations have been permeated (Madlala, 2014, p.67; Ndebele, 2012, p.15).

2.2 IsiZulu in the Media

IsiZulu is by far the most widely spoken of South Africa's official languages (Statistics SA, 2018; Keet and Khumalo, 2016, p.4). African languages in South Africa all originate from the Bantu group of languages and are further widely subdivided into the Nguni and Sesotho groups (Snail, 2011, p.2). Nguni-language speakers – isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati, and isiNdebele – constitute the majority of South Africans (Keet and Khumalo, 2016, p.3) with a footprint across many parts of Southern Africa, from the Eastern Cape to Zambia and Western Tanzania (Hadebe, 2020). A "love-hate" relationship with English has led to increasing multilingualism (Ndlovu, 2011, p.7) in South Africa. In his study on isiZulu in KwaZulu Natal, Ndebele (2012, p.17; see also Snail, 2011, p.7) notes that most isiZulu speakers in the province are multilingual and that isiZulu is mixed with English and/or

Afrikaans and also with other Nguni languages, notably isiXhosa. This is due to the number of languages being spoken in urban areas, resulting in languages often being "diluted" in order to accommodate non-native speakers. Snail (2011, p.3) suggests that isiZulu is becoming the "language of inter-communication amongst the Africans in the urban areas." Evans (2011, p.20) describes isiZulu as a "majority" language, one that is demographically and ideologically dominant. Ndlovu (2011; p274) suggests that it is this "multi-identity" isiZulu audience, a "hybridisation of Zulu with English, but also with the increasing accommodation of other linguistic varieties such as tsotsitaal (urban township street lingo) and other urban vernaculars" that holds promise for the success of isiZulu media.

IsiZulu writing and literature has a rich history, with the publication of the first isiZulu book in 1837 (Keet and Khumalo, 2016, p.4). Despite the Apartheid policy and its impact on language development, a strong tradition of isiZulu language media also exists in the country. IsiZulu-language newspapers have historically been the most successful of all the African-language print media in South Africa and remain so today. Wasserman and Ndlovu (2015, p.3) refer to the success of the isiZulu tabloid Isolezwe, launched in 2002, which showed a year-on-year growth of 21 percent in its first five years. Illanga, a Zulu-language daily newspaper, had survived for over a century when it launched a weekend edition in 2005 (Wasserman and Ndlovu, 2015, p.3). These primarily KwaZulu Natal publications showed increases in circulation (Ndlovu, 2011, p.8) even while English-language print media were declining. Ukhozi FM has retained its position as South Africa's largest radio station, while P4 radio altered its language policy to include isiZulu (Wasserman and Ndlovu, 2015, p.9). Wasserman and Ndlovu (2015, p.9) suggest that these Zulu-language media platforms derive their popularity partly from the cultural environment in which they exist but also because "the Zulu language and sense of being Zulu are valued." That the isiZulu language group constitutes a large percentage of the population makes such platforms more commercially viable than might be the case with other African languages (Ndlovu, 2011, p.3; Evans, 2011, p.20). Ndlovu (2011, p.4) compares the success of Afrikaans and isiZulu media, suggesting that while Afrikaans consumers are pursued in terms of their existing buying power, the Zulu-media audience is seen as "aspirational". The role of private media houses in promoting isiZulu content is also notable, especially in light of public service media not always meeting expectations to do as such (Ndlovu, 2011, p.6). Despite the success of some isiZulu platforms, others have not been as viable. For example, Ndlovu (2011, p.13) highlights that isiZulu is used very little online, and isiZulu films have also not been entirely successful.

The SABC launched its initial radio service in 1936 (Evans, 2011, p.42) with African-language-based wireless broadcasts in 1942 (Hlope, 2013, p.23). Radio drama in isiZulu played a particularly significant role. Gunner (2019) suggests that these programmes often "subverted" the apartheid role that isiZulu broadcasting was meant to play and instead became a "means of accessing the self in a turbulent and changing world" and therefore, a way of strengthening identity. The SABC launched television services (in English and Afrikaans) in 1976. In 1982, television broadcasts in the Nguni languages (primarily isiZulu and isiXhosa) were first introduced on TV 2, a second channel (Hlope, 2013, p.12), which, by 1992, had been launched as CCV television. Mapukata (1998, p.9) refers to differences in content quality between English and Nguni news programmes on CCV television in the early 1990s, suggesting that the English-language channel carried more "high profile" stories. Presently, SABC 1 broadcasts in the Nguni languages and English; SABC 2 in Afrikaans, Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana, and English (with multilingual segments as well as limited programming in Xitsonga and Tshivenda); and SABC 3 broadcasts entirely in English. Although SABC 1 is multilingual, isiZulu is the dominant language. However, even on SABC television, there has been relatively limited isiZulu-language content development. There are no exclusively isiZulu soap operas, for example, or a specific television channel (Ndlovu, 2011, p.13). The Media Monitoring Report (Dibetso and Smith, 2012, p.12) concluded that only 5 percent of the SABC's television programming was in isiZulu. This was, however, far greater than programming in any of the other African languages. Nonetheless, Wasserman and Ndlovu (2015, p.10) refer to a study on television news where young Black men showed preference for news content on the SABC as opposed to e.tv, primarily due to the SABC carrying African-language content. The case of Ukhozi FM is also indicative of support for online content in isiZulu. While the station's website consists primarily of English-language content, its social media pages, with isiZulu posts, receive strong support from over 600,000 followers on Facebook and 450,000 on Twitter. Ukhozi FM's website, however, is published in English. The introduction of advertising in the Nguni languages on SABC television channels is another example of the successful use of African languages on traditional media (Kaschula, 2006, p.9).

2.3 Public Broadcasting Policy and Practice

The concept of media freedom is a cornerstone of South Africa's democracy, enshrined in S16 of the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996). Section 6, in S6(2), outlines that "the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use" of indigenous languages. The Constitution also establishes the Pan South African Language Board (1996, S6[5]) to promote and create conditions for the development and use of official languages. In 2003, the South African government published the National Language Policy Framework with the aim of effecting a multilingual ethos across all levels of government communication. Unlike in many other African countries, the intention to ensure language diversity is firmly entrenched in South African legislation and policy (Molale and Mpofu, 2021, p.76; Skinner, 2017). The Broadcasting Act (4 of 1999, preamble) defines the role of the public broadcaster in democratic South Africa, outlining that the broadcasting system "must reflect the multilingual and diverse nature of South Africa by promoting the entire spectrum of cultural backgrounds, religious backgrounds and official languages in the Republic". The act also requires that "a range of programming in the Republic's official languages must be extended to all South Africans as circumstances permit" (Broadcasting Act, 1999, Chapter 2, S3[6]).

As a result of the tension between democratic and economic imperatives, the language-specific obligations set out in S22A of the Broadcasting Act (4 of 1999) referring to television have not been fulfilled. Hlope (2013, p.35) argues that the impact of having 11 official languages and eight other recognised languages has "legislatively enhanced" the lower status of some widely spoken languages. Skinner (2017, p.87; see also Hlope, 2013, p.13) suggests that financial losses suffered by the public broadcaster as early as 1996 resulted in a reversal of some of the core diversity measures previously recommended and practised and included the "increasing of the use of English to maximise revenue." The White Paper on broadcasting (1998) focused on the need for diversity at the SABC, including "the equality of all languages and the promotion of multiculturalism" and the need to consider "implications of new technical developments." According to Skinner (2017, p.90), these recommendations were excluded from or watered down in the Broadcast Act of 1999. It was envisaged that the move to Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) would assist in strengthening content diversity on television, but this has not materialised. The 2015 deadline was agreed to in 2006 in a resolution of the International Telecommunications Union (Skinner, 2017, p.22) and aimed to cater more fully for all the country's official languages and more adequately

reflect regional and provincial issues with the addition of more channels. Skinner (2017, p.26) suggests that DTT was expected to enable the provision of up to four multiple language tracks per programme and multiple alternative language subtitles, among other aspects. In addition to this, DTT would facilitate the delivery of e-government services.

The SABC's language mandate is highly regulated. The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) was established in terms of the ICASA Act (13 of 2000). ICASA regulates broadcasting in South Africa by licensing broadcasters and subsequently ensuring compliance (Du Plessis, 2006b, p.69). ICASA licences list specific requirements for each service, including the language mandate (Du Plessis, 2006b, p.56). According to the SABC (2013; TV Licence conditions), the two public service channels, SABC 1 and SABC 2, must ensure a total of 41 hours of official language content other than English per week. Du Plessis (2006b, p.57) suggest that while retaining a focus on language, the mandate is notably very broad and leaves the responsibility of implementation to the broadcaster. The Broadcaster's Editorial Policies, updated and published in 2020, began to include digital platforms in respect of, for example, the production and publication of content on numerous platforms (applications, websites, and social media) and in various forms (audio, video, infographics, etc.). Although there is no specific reference to language use on official SABC online platforms, in the editorial policy, the broadcaster does commit to researching the "creative use of technologies to facilitate the implementation of its mandate as it pertains to language" (SABC, 2020, S6.13.13). There also exist references to the correct translation of news stories into African languages (SABC, 2020, S5.5.4) and the development and expansion of news offerings that target language-specific audiences (SABC, 2020, S5.17.2). S5.19 of the editorial policy addresses the equitable treatment of language in the news, and while there is a reference to the use of technology to support this, it seems more likely that the focus remains on broadcasting (with reference to subtitles, for example) without consideration of the available or potential online platforms. Nonetheless, while television still accounts for the largest audiences (68 percent) in South Africa, up to 72 percent of internet users search online for news content (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, and Nielson, 2019).

The SABC enforces the broadcast obligation in its language and editorial policy and exceeds the ICASA licence conditions in respect of language on traditional broadcast platforms by broadcasting in 11 official languages, as well as other languages protected in the

Constitution, across 18 radio stations, four television channels, and a growing number of digital platforms (Martinis, 2018, p.32). However, the public broadcaster still does not provide daily news content on all platforms across the full spectrum of language services. While the public broadcast radio services are language based and broadcast national news and current affairs content daily and primarily in the official African languages, they are all limited to specific regions. Television services have not been able to provide daily news services in all languages. In some instances, regarding languages such as isiZulu and isiXhosa, news bulletins are broadcast on alternate days, and in other cases, with languages such as Xitsonga and Tshivenda, bulletins are broadcast either twice or thrice a week. According to the Media Monitoring Report (Dibetso and Smith, 2012, p.12), more than 76 percent of television programmes (based on broadcast times) are primarily broadcast in English. The second and third most predominant languages are Afrikaans (6 percent) and isiZulu (5 percent), respectively. Television Current Affairs programmes, which are part of the news offerings in the various languages with different areas of focus, are usually only broadcast once a week.

At present, SABC News provides online content on the SABC News website (stories with video, and audio content, as well as other multimedia forms such as infographics, maps, timelines, links to related stories and documents etc.) and on YouTube (SABC News video content), Iono fm (SABC News radio content), and via a host of Facebook pages and Twitter handles. On Facebook, these pages include the SABC News online page (national page) as well as regional pages (SABC News Western Cape), which share content in English. There are also language-based pages, such as SABC iIndaba, which are meant to curate and share isiZulu news content. This has not been an entirely successful effort, however, due primarily to limited resources. Some attempts to share news content in official languages other than English have, nonetheless, been fairly successful. The Afrikaans Facebook page, launched in July 2019, has almost 50,000 followers, while the SABC iIndaba page (isiZulu content, launched in 2015) has over 600,000 followers. Various news programmes (Morning Live, Full View, etc.) also run Facebook pages and /or Twitter accounts, often sharing the same or similar news content. In addition, efforts to create programme sub-sites have been made such that different programmes have webpages (or sub-sites) linked to the main news website. Over and above news efforts, there are numerous online platforms administered by the various SABC radio stations and television channels that often include some SABC news content. This is not a structured approach and differs from platform to platform. The

Yilungelo Lakho Facebook page is one of numerous online platforms of the SABC where the traditional broadcast programme finds new, unexplored spaces in which to share public service content. *Yilungelo Lakho* posts are always published in English, despite the fact that the programme must broadcast in the Nguni languages. These efforts are in line with SABC News practice in respect of social media platforms.

2.4 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter examines the relationship between language, media, and democracy in South Africa. Historically, language use in South Africa is linked to economic interests. As a result of the Apartheid policy, African languages were side-lined in favour of communication in Afrikaans and English. Therefore, language was an important consideration in the new dispensation. The decision to have 11 official languages arose as a political solution to protect African languages. This intention extends to the SABC and its role as the public broadcaster. The SABC is mandated to provide broadcast programming in all the country's official languages. This mandate does not extend to online platforms, where the potential for such opportunity could exist. Balancing multilingual programming has posed numerous challenges for the SABC, especially on television, where much of the broadcaster's programming is in English, despite isiZulu being the dominant language in South Africa. The Internet and social media platforms offer a viable alternate space for the sharing of isiZulu, and other African language public service content. While even the Ukhozi FM website is published in English, the station shares isiZulu content on its Facebook page. *Yilungelo Lakho* posts on Facebook are always published in English, but many users choose to respond in isiZulu.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter discusses the original conception of the public sphere as outlined by Habermas, subsequent critiques as well as its digital incarnation. It then discusses aspects pertaining to inclusion, rational deliberation, and opinion formation in a unified space.

3.1 Definition of the Public Sphere

The public sphere can be described as an "abstract forum for dialogue" (Mustapha, 2008, p.2) with the aim of translating public opinion into political action and extending the possibility of dialogue and accountability in political interactions. Habermas' normative ideal of a public sphere envisaged unrestricted citizen participation in public affairs, that is, those concerns outside of the private or personal domains (Batorski and Grzywinska, 2017, p.1). Private citizens may gather to share and shape public opinion, thereby impacting on political decision-making. Through a historical perspective, the public sphere evolved from coffee-house gatherings to a more abstract space – involving the state, its citizens, and civil society organisations – where established media plays a key role. Newspapers, books, and other such instruments relatively independent of both the church and the state became the conduit for "rational critical debate." This, in turn, ensured the formation of political will "crucial for the emergence of democracy" (Correia, 2011, p.47). An informed public without the space to debate, however, falls short of the concept of the public sphere (Ramsey, 2010, p.8). Despite its decline, Keane (1995, p.5; Ramsey, 2010, p.5) suggests public broadcasting is a well-placed model for public sphere deliberations, providing a platform for the public to come together as a homogenous unit to debate matters of common concern (Fraser, 1990, p.3; Suleiman, 2017, p.2). Public broadcasting gives all citizens access to the public sphere in that it responds to three key dimensions of Habermas' normative ideal: those of inclusion, rational deliberation, and the principle of opinion formation within a unified forum (Ramsey, 2010, pp.3-4; see also Correia, 2011, p.47).

Despite advocating for a universal and unhampered merging of different opinions to hold the state accountable, Habermas' idealised notion of a unified public sphere has been amply criticised as "inherently undemocratic" (Dahlberg, 2013, p.26). Its "utopian potential" (Fraser, 1990, pp.5-7) was never fully realised in that Habermas' ideal is Eurocentric and

excludes groups of people from outside bourgeois society, not taking into consideration, for example, inequalities in status and gender. As only educated property owners were eligible for inclusion, Ambadiang (2010, p.5) adds affluence and literacy as additional factors of exclusion. The public sphere, as envisaged by Habermas, was also a separate entity from the official economy and an arena for discursive relations only (Fraser, 1990, p.3). Fraser (1990, p.12) alludes to "stratified societies" with unequal social groups (women, for example) and points to a host of competing publics outside of the bourgeois public. These counter publics contest the public space with dominant publics (Fraser, 1990, p.16), and it is only within the discourse that a determination can be ascertained in respect of what matters of common concern might be (Fraser, 1990, p.17). Langman (2014, p.3) suggests that the rise of competing publics has enabled a "reclamation" of the public sphere with expressions in carnivalesque forms. These publics, as the writer suggests, are relatively democratic and equal and may be aligned with the carnivale's subversion of hierarchies, envisaged by Bakhtin (Langman, 2014, p.4), according to which public discussions would be entirely collective and participatory, and where the norms of the elite were challenged. The carnivale thus allows for the expression of resistance to authoritarian repression through humour, ridicule, jokes etc either alongside or instead of logical arguments and rational deliberation.

Habermas' concept of the public sphere implies the existence of a space or forum where citizens are able to come together as a homogenous unit to debate matters of public concern (Fraser, 1990, p.3; Suleiman, 2017, p.2) and thereby, hold public authority accountable. The idea of opinion formation within a unified forum is often questioned, with various suggestions of an alternative public sphere model that allows for connections and a multitude of coexisting and overlapping public spheres (Bruns and Highfield, 2016, p.100; Reed and Boyd, 2016, p.4). Bruns and Highfield (2016, p.14) reveal the public sphere as a "complex combination of multiple interlocking elements that sometimes counteract, sometimes amplify each other, and that each possess their own specific dynamics". Habermas himself referred to the structural transformation of the public sphere and different overlapping public spheres (Bruns and Highfield, 2016, p.7). Developments in media and communications, including the Internet and social media, have "fundamentally altered" (Rodny-Gumede, 2018, p.3) the manner in which political matters are communicated in the public sphere. While there are several injunctions against it, the potential for technology to extend interactions and open the public sphere – or create new public spheres – certainly exists (Rodny-Gumede, 2018, p.15).

3.2 The Digital Public Sphere

The growth and reach of the Internet, and social media platforms in particular, have been credited with increasing the potential for anyone and everyone to access, create, and share content in order to participate in public deliberation. Schafer (2015, p.2) defines the digital public sphere as "a communicative sphere provided or supported by online or social media… where participation is open and freely available to everybody who is interested, where matters of common concern can be discussed, and where proceedings are visible to all." Access to the Internet allows citizens to discuss and debate issues in the digital space and could provide an opening for discussion and activism even when offline space is not available (Roberts and Ali, 2021, p.12). The Pew report (Anderson, et al. 2018) resolved that social networking platforms could be an important tool for political engagement, and an Institute of Development Studies (IDS) report (Roberts and Ali, 2021, p.18) notes that "online civic space" has been "particularly valuable" in respect of supporting debates previously excluded from public discourse, citing, as examples, the Egyptian Revolution, the Nigerian BringBackOurGirls campaign, and South Africa's FeesMustFall.

The rise of the Internet has also made visible the limitations of traditional appointment-based news media (Reed and Boyd, 2016, p.8) and reconfigured what information is consumed by whom, when, and where. There is also a comparison to be made between the Habermasian bourgeois public sphere, which favoured the participation of only a certain sector of the population, and the "culture of connectivity," which is characterised by pervasive and ubiquitous aspirations (Mahlouly, 2013, p.6). Present economic parameters that determine who is able to afford internet access are as likely to section the population, impacting on the quality of social interactions and citizens' ability to participate in deliberations on public matters. Despite threats of surveillance and manipulation of online activity and attempts by some governments at blocking social media and internet platforms to constrain deliberation, digital media "becomes a source of urgency, and a new analytical entry-point" in respect of thinking about publics in Africa (Srinivasan, 2018, p.6).

With close to billion available websites (OMD, 2018), the online space offers potential for interaction across the globe. Dahlgren (2005, p.151) opines that online deliberation is "completely overshadowed" by consumerism, entertainment, non-political networking, etc. In addition, what emerged initially as a free space has been subject to ever-increasing

interventions and efforts to monitor content (Anjaria, Raghuvamsi and Balaji, 2017, p.2). Nevertheless, individual profiles continue to flourish on online networks, which have also given momentum to numerous activist movements (Mahlouly, 2013, p.13). Mahlouly (2013, p.16) suggests that not only do social networks allow for widespread national communication, but they have also raised issues on the international platform. In the case of the 2008 terror attacks in India, Twitter posts played a crucial role in informing the media, the public, and authorities as well as the terrorists of on-the-ground activity (Rodrigues, 2014, p.6).

While they might have been initiated as casual, informal social networking platforms, they have evolved to serve new and revolutionary purposes, both for publics in general and also for governments and authorities (Al Zaim, 2012, p.323), lending, albeit unintentionally, a more formal and official status. Mahlouly (2013, p.15) refers to these platforms as an "emancipating public space for activists and militants," supporting the concept of "freedom of expression" even further. Run largely on social media, Barak Obama's 2008 presidential campaign revolutionised the manner in which election campaigns are conducted around the world (El Zaim, 2012, p.318; see also Lama Yolmo, 2014, p.6). In addition, Rodrigues (2014, p.14) links the highest ever turnout in an Indian election (66% in 2014) to increased voter engagement on social media platforms. Online interactions increase the attractiveness of collaborative projects and political engagement (Mahlouly, 2013, p.2) by providing users with the opportunity to uphold their individual identity while being part of a large social movement. The online public sphere, at least in theory, "provides every citizen with the opportunity to express himself publicly" (Mahlouly, 2013, p.10), despite the fact that the boundaries between private and public spaces are difficult to define (Flichy, cited in Mahlouly, 2013, p.12). The view that social and traditional media could supplement each other also exists (Rodrigues, 2014, p.9), making a case for intermedia agenda setting.

Numerous efforts have been made to promote the use of African languages online. Groups in Cameroon have been experimenting with Ewondo and Fe'efe'e Facebook pages (Djomeni and Sadembouo, 2016, p.48). A shift from "globalization to re-localization" (Kashula, 2006, p.3) suggests that the need for a global lingua franca (i.e., English) might not be as essential as might have been perceived. In Kenya, for example, the use of English as opposed to Swahili in online election communication "inevitably restricts access" to information (Ndlela, 2016, p.462). Kaschula (2006, p.10) points out that English no longer belongs to a particular

speech community and refers to the emergence of numerous "Englishes," considering the merging of other languages with English. Deumert, Panovic, Agyepong, and Barasa (2018, p.559) note various factors (education, income, age, race, and area of residence) influencing "linguistic representation and recognition" online, suggesting that one reason that Afrikaans has a strong online presence involves the status of White Afrikaans speakers in relation to these factors. Djomeni and Sadembouo (2016, p.42) note that most South African languages are written in Latin script, making them more digital friendly than many other languages originating from the African continent. Nonetheless, very few, if any, online platforms use isiZulu exclusively in their content output (Ndlovu, 2011, p.7). One exception would be the Isolezwe website (https://www.isolezwe.co.za/), an exclusively isiZulu site (Kaschula, 2006, p.152) launched in 2004, which provides news content, but which is presently not regularly updated. Kaschula (2006, p.151) suggests that it is in the news domain where offerings in languages other than English are flourishing.

3.3 Inclusion

Digital media platforms such as Facebook could foster the inclusion of speakers of isiZulu and other African languages in the public sphere (Malatji, 2019, p.69). International experience suggests that online platforms could provide a viable vehicle for the sharing of news and current affairs in multilingual contexts. While there is limited vernacular content available online in India, Singh (2016) points out that those websites that do provide such content, specifically news content, have been successful in growing online audiences. India has more Indian language internet users than English (Neyazi, 2019, p.95). The 2014 launch of Facebook in Swahili in Tanzania tripled the platform's user base within a year (Wong, 2016). Such diversification, according to Neyazi (2019, p.96), contributes to bringing about a more inclusive society, economy, and politics.

Unequal access to the digital public sphere can be understood in both physical and epistemological terms. Physical access refers to the ability to actually access the Internet (Massey, 2021), that is, have an appropriate device with an active network connection. Despite having among the highest and most rapidly growing internet access rates in Africa (54 percent according to We Are Social, 2018), internet access in South Africa is entirely dependent on one's economic conditions (Kaschula, 2006, p.3). South Africa is one of the world's most unequal countries (World Bank, 2020), with a clear digital divide between the

rich and poor, and urban and rural populations (Goldstuck, 2017). The lack of adequate infrastructure (Massey, 2021) and the high costs of data and devices (Dhawraj, 2019, p.146; Bosch and Roberts, 2021, p.133) impact on who can afford internet access and what types of information may be accessed. Internet penetration rates in South Africa are directly related to income, declining rapidly as income declines (Goldstuck, 2017). Only 47 percent of African people have access to the Internet in South Africa. For historical reasons, socioeconomic status and education levels are inextricably linked to language, with speakers of indigenous African languages being overrepresented in the lowest socioeconomic layers (Leibbrandt, Woolard, McEwen and Koep, 2010, p.25; Casale and Posel, 2010, p.19; Posel and Zeller, 2016, p.12). Inequality by geotype – the urban and rural divide – also impacts directly on internet access. Poor Africans, most of whom speak mainly or only African languages, live in rural areas and townships where infrastructure and network coverage is lacking (Goldstuck, 2017). Most South Africans access the Internet via mobile phones (Djomeni and Sadembouo, 2016, p.47; Donner and Walton, 2013, p.3; Bosch and Roberts, 2021, p.133). The costs associated with purchasing mobile devices and data to access social media are some of the highest in the world (Goldstuck, 2017), factoring negatively in the country's "digital liberation" (Deumert, et al., 2018, p.556).

Epistemological access to the Internet, that is, having the necessary skills and knowledge to use and benefit from online content, depends, to a large extent, on English proficiency. The digital divide is about much more than merely being able to access the Internet. Moyo (2018, p.1) questions whether the divide in essence amounts to a form of colonisation or apartheid. The Internet is dominated by languages from outside the African continent (see Maseko, Sam, Dalvit, Nosilela, and Terzoli, 2010, p.315), with English accounting for an estimated 55 percent of all content online (Soria, 2016, p.18; Visual Capitalist, 2021; w3techs.com, 2021). Trustiko and World Internet Statistics estimate that only approximately 25 percent of internet users are native speakers of English (Arfaoui, 2021). Conversely, only 41 percent of African adults in South Africa claim to be proficient in the language (Posel and Zeller, 2010, p.19) which limits the amount of online content they can actually understand. Africans, including isiZulu speakers, must be "traditionally and digitally literate" (Djomeni and Sadembouo, 2016, p.42), proficient in both the language and mediums in which they are communicating. Moyo (2018, p.3) refers to "cultural technology" as being cognitive and inclusive of language and culture. Diki-Kidiri (2012, p.381) suggests that technologically, there is sufficient development for the inclusion of all the world's languages on the Internet, but this has not

always been realised in practice. Online activity in African languages, even on Open content platforms, is still very slow in developing (see Scott; 2015). The online encyclopaedia Wikipedia for example, is available in 290 languages (Soria; 2016; p17) but Wikipedia Zulu (a language spoken by more than 50 percent of almost 57 million South Africans) has only just over 1300 articles, many of them incomplete, and only 28 active users. The isiXhosa page, with just over 1000 articles, has only 13 active users.

The Internet could also be considered a potentially hostile environment where further language minoritisation takes place (Soria, 2016, p.18). Soria refers to the "digital extinction" of even widely spoken languages due to a lack of language technology support. Malatji (2019, p.7) cites specific challenges for African users of Facebook. Even if users write in isiZulu, for example, the platform might not recognise the words and underline text in red. In addition, African-language speakers must still navigate the platform via English interfaces and rely on guidelines in English. This is a constant reminder of the perception that African languages are not universal and do not belong online. There are also challenges with vocabulary and the slow evolution of African languages. Companies such as Facebook, Google, and Microsoft have introduced user interfaces of their software in various African languages; however, this has not necessarily been successful (Keet and Khumalo, 2016, p.2). Keet and Khumalo refer to Google Translate's English–isiZulu translations as generating "mostly incorrect" sentences, suggesting that simple transposition is not adequate for the Nguni languages. In addition, they point out that such technology is "proprietary and inaccessible" in any case (Keet and Khumalo, 2016, p.2).

3.4 Rational Deliberation

Habermas' concept of the public sphere implies a reasoning public (Mustapha, 2008, p.3) whose deliberations guide political decision-making. Habermas (2006, p.10) writes that publics are entirely capable of forming "reasonable attitudes" towards public affairs and can do so "even unconsciously". Habermas (2006, p.10) also suggests that "people can be knowledgeable in their reasoning about their political choices without possessing a large body of knowledge about politics". This implies that ordinary people who might not have expert knowledge are able to share valid opinions on decisions that impact them. The language in which information is shared and received is key to this understanding. English is the language of expert communication and public affairs in South Africa. Proficiency in

English is regarded as an indicator of educational quality (Casale and Posel, 2010, p.19) and even as a distinctive attribute of a new middle class (Khokhlova, 2015, p.7). English is often deemed as the imposed language of the powerful (Parmegiani, 2012, p.2). It is, nonetheless, often utilised as the language of common ground (Molale and Mpofu, 2021). Molale and Mpofu (2021, p.98) suggest that there is a degree of self-subjugation in the belief that it is preferable to use English as the medium of communication. In order for African languages to be included, their speakers must want to use them online. Malatji (2019, p.65) suggests that Africans somehow do not think that their languages should be used in digital applications as they are "primitive and ancient" and not appropriate for online deliberation. As a result of colonialism, African languages and cultures were (and to a large extent, still are) considered suitable only for low-status domains and informal communication (Maseko, et al., 2010, p.315; see also Heugh, 2004; Cru, 2016). Willems (2012, p.9) draws on Mamdani's distinction between settlers and natives to reflect on different modes of public engagement, which, one may argue, extend to the diglossic relationship between English and indigenous African languages (Dalvit, Murray and Terzoli, 2008). Salawu (2017, p.6) goes as far as to suggest that the use of English post the Cold War amounts to a form of colonialism and that "for peoples to give full and meaningful expressions to the realities of their experiences, they must be able to communicate in their mother tongues."

Despite democratisation, economic and political governance in Africa has, in some ways, continued to undermine social deliberation (Mustapha, 2008, p.8). An emphasis on rationalism has "tended to narrow discourses on policy to elite circles" and therefore, to English. In addition, as Maseko, et al. (2010, p.315) elaborate, in the African context, information and communication technology accessible in the main in English has perpetuated the colonial legacy in that Africans largely access online content in foreign languages. In his discussion on the Arab Spring and the use of regional languages online, El Zaim (2012, p.318) points out that the revolution has been directly linked to the use of Arab-language content – "particularly in social media" – and that authorities have consistently viewed Facebook as a threat, blocking and unblocking the platform in attempts to contain dissent. El Zaim also refers to efforts by governments in the Arab countries to reconnect with people through these same platforms – an indicator of their crucial role in modern communication. The language used in these communications is indicative of the reach of the deliberations. In Egypt, for example, the use of the Arabic and English Facebook interface is evenly matched, while in Tunisia, over 90% of Facebook users choose to communicate in French (El Zaim,

2012, p.321). Despite a contention that social media might not encourage true political deliberation, Rodrigues (2014) refers to India's 2011 India Against Corruption (IAC) campaign, the success of which, she suggests, lies largely in the effectiveness of social media efforts in Indian languages. Such examples are indicative of an evolving public space where the potential exists for participation and deliberation on public affairs in any, or all languages.

Social networks, such as Facebook, allow users to communicate in the language with which they are the most comfortable with. They have provided opportunities for news organisations to "outsource" (Bruns, 2017, p.218) commentary and dialogue. Bruns (2017, p.234) suggests that Facebook allows for easier transitions from existing commentary functions (on websites, for example) than other social media platforms. As the largest social networking platform in the world, Facebook allows expression, participation, interaction, and identity creation (Batorski and Gryzwinska, 2017, p.8). In South Africa, Facebook has more users (18 million monthly, as per We Are Social, 2018) than Ukhozi FM, the country's largest radio station (7 million, as per BRC, 2018). Translations of the Facebook interface are supported in over 100 languages (Fick and Dave, 2019), although Facebook Inc. has battled to moderate comments in all these languages. "Community standards," the Facebook rules of engagement, are only translated into 41 languages, opening the path to abuse and making the management of offensive material and hate speech a difficult task. Fick and Dave (2019) refer to an Ethiopian example where ethnic clashes in the country were accompanied by hate speech posts in Amharic and where the rules were available only in English. While efforts have been made to alert African users in Nigeria to social media etiquette, Facebook representatives in the country have admitted that many people are not aware of these rules for users (Fick and Dave, 2019).

Ndlovu (2011; p150) asserts that "mass media has injected its own brand of images, music, cultural heroes, and values into a cultural space that is very different and sometimes at odds with that of the African audience." The tradition of oral culture in Africa does not always translate easily into written mediums, as is often required on digital platforms. Nevertheless, online language usage is often more similar to spoken than written language, and the categorisation of writing as a formal domain does not necessarily hold as true as for online platforms (Gibson, 2012, p.80). As an example, Górka (2014) refers to the use of memes and satire as an "attempt to explain the contemporary reality by means of the carnival language". Akbarov and Tankosić (2016, p.9) refer to the use of emoticons on social media platforms as

one way to represent emotion on the written platform, given that there are often visible but unspoken expressions in verbal communication. This is also the case with the use or introduction of internet slang, often in the form of vernacular or informal abbreviations (Akbarov and Tankosić, 2016, p.5), which could, in certain instances, be seen to enrich online expression. Some scholars (Bruns and Highfield, 2016; Mahlouly, 2013; Maseko, 2010) have pointed out that alternative communication forms an important component of the public sphere. Artistic expression in the form of songs, jokes, and drama, where African languages are extensively used, become important levels of communication for people who do not usually have access to more formal spaces (Willems, 2012, p.9). Ndlovu (2011, p.137) asserts that mass media has been damaging to local languages because it has displaced traditional pastimes, such as listening to stories, which are transmitted through indigenous languages. The oral and musical traditions of Africa (Mustapha, 2008, p.6) and even "infotainment" in the form of soap operas (Mcguigan, 2005, p.433) provide emotional rather than cognitive lessons. While such content may or may not represent direct and explicit political critique or public affairs commentary, it establishes a shared reality nonetheless and provides potential for deliberation and criticism of power in the public sphere (Mcguigan, 2005, p.440).

3.5 Opinion Formation in a Unified Forum

For the contestation of ideas to occur, multiple and vibrant spaces of deliberative discourse must exist. (Dahlberg, 2007, p.836). To some extent, the digital realm is emerging as "fragmented, transient, polarising, and unreliable" (Srinivasan, 2018, p.3). Reed and Boyd (2016, p.4) refer to increased personalisation online but also suggest that "there has never been a universal narrative." The case is rather that fragmented publics are simply more visible now than they have previously been (see also Riles, Pilney and Tewksbury, 2017, p.4). Limited public attention (dwindling audiences, for example) combined with an increasing number of information sources have resulted in an "attention economy" where "attracting the audience leads to achieving social, economic or political goals" (Batorski and Grzywinski, 2017, p.5). With the Internet having turned all users into potential news producers, traditional media platforms have been forced into responding. Typically, they have had to start participating on these platforms in order to retain and attract audiences. Like those at the SABC, newsrooms around the world have been creating YouTube channels, Facebook pages, and Twitter handles. Newsrooms have also begun integrating these online products into the traditional news space. Bruns (2017, p.309) refers to the embedding of live

blogs and polls on existing news websites. He explains that the contemporary media environment now supports an interplay between "primary conventional news spaces, secondary alternative news and factual content spaces, and tertiary social media spaces serving as the intermediary channels that connect them", making the news production and distribution environment more complex than it has ever been.

Despite the ability to co-produce and publish content, thereby shaping online information, users do not control the infrastructure through which these online social practices take place. Such practices are often, in turn, dependent on exclusive ownership, technical infrastructure, and access costs. In studying deliberative quality on news platforms, Esau, Friess and Eilders (2017, p.327) refer to the importance of design in the online arena. They suggest that while social networking sites might not necessarily offer optimal quality of deliberation as envisaged by Habermas, much depends on the moderation and facilitation process. The social media platforms of *Yilungelo Lakho* are a case in point. In an attempt to extend their audience, the production team has integrated Facebook and Twitter contributions into the traditional broadcast programme, creating what amounts to a "wild flow" of messaging (Bruns and Highfield, 2016, p.14). Social media platforms associated with programmes such as *Yilungelo Lakho* must aim to strike a balance between adherence to editorial policy and journalistic practice (Bullard, 2013, p.17) and the generally more casual level of interaction supported by online platforms.

The quality of online debates is highly dependent on the diversity of the participants. On the one hand, the Internet targets specific audiences (Mahlouly, 2013, p.11), and in turn, audiences themselves can choose in which spheres to participate, possibly making the range of views somewhat dubious and focused more on individual rather than societal interest. Malhouly (2013, p.13) writes that social media "leads individuals to share and develop their personal identity publicly" and that "an individual's social life is considerably shaped and determined by the way they manage their online public image." In light of the normative theory, investigations must also question whether there is an exchange of opinions or simply a conversation between people who share similar views. Batorski and Grzywinski (2017; p20) consider that fragmentation derives from homophily (where people who interact with each other on a social network are more likely to be similar and share common ground) and selective exposure – where people avoid exposure to information that contradicts their beliefs and choose rather to engage with information that confirms them. Through the use of

algorithms and programmatic advertising, for example, social networks are more likely to support the ability of people to find others with whom they have something in common, creating homogenous communities (Batorski and Grzywinski, 2017, p.5). As people gravitate to groups and conversations with similar people who share their views, it becomes easy to avoid opposing opinions or, it may be argued, to be completely unaware of them. There is potential on the Internet, therefore, to create "deliberative enclaves" or "echo chambers" (Batorski and Grzywinski, 2017, p.6). Conversely, the Internet also offers the opportunity to investigate and engage with a multitude of subjects and opinions. In their study of Polish Facebook users, Batoski and Grzywinska (2017, p.14) found that participatory activity increased online as political activity increased offline. They point out though, that it might also be true that Facebook users prefer to discuss political opinions in private groups as opposed to public groups.

The advent of the Internet providing marginalised communities with a voice is complicated by the fact that such communities usually have limited access to such technology (Reed and Boyd, 2016, p.10) and that any access might be impacted by companies employing algorithms, controlling what content may in fact be accessed. The authors argue that while there has always been editorial gatekeeping, the idea of an algorithm providing such control over access to information must be questioned. Essentially, there are two types of online interaction – that between citizens and the media and that between citizens themselves (Batorski and Grzywinski, 2017, p.5). Batorski and Grzywinski suggest that in the normative model of the public sphere, as proposed by Habermas, "citizens of opposite views engage in a common debate about public matters." A lack of such interaction results in fragmentation in public discourse. Bruns and Highfield (2016, p.10) suggest that this reduction in size and reach may indeed improve the quality of the deliberation which takes place in such public spherical, as "a certain level of shared interest and knowledge amongst participants may be assumed." They also refer to "issue publics" that form around shorter-lived issues or events and emerge for varying durations before dissolving – election campaigns, for example.

Language continues to fragment audiences and dictate the public interest of cultural groups in South Africa (Gassner, 2007; Mesthrie, 2004; Dalvit, et al., 2008), although this is true in other parts of the continent as well. In discussing the use of African languages online, Ligidima and Makananise (2020, p.4) suggest that while English is the language of posts and status updates, responses often occur in other languages. They also mention that African

languages are not sufficiently promoted for online communication and dialogue (Ligidima and Makananise, 2020, p.9), even though their use is popular on more personal interactive platforms such as WhatsApp (Malatji, 2019, p.227). Due largely to the prominence of the European language spheres, those who are limited to the African languages only, or those who code-mix, are "kept invisible" in the public space (Ambadiang, 2010, p.3). Nonetheless, Deumert, et al. (2019, p.555) indicate the existence of over two dozen African languages on internet websites. They suggest that these are particularly prominent on networking sites even though "linguistic repertoires" might not appear as "bounded entities." Rather, African languages appear as "fragmented linguistic resources" (Deumert, et al., 2019, p.555) in the form of phrases, words, and expressions. Code-switching and code-mixing are widespread phenomena in South Africa (Ndebele, 2012, p.15; Malatji, 2019, p.60), where most of the population is multilingual. The practice of code-switching, the alternation between languages or codes within a single conversation, also lends more easily to the less formal online domains. It also reflects a degree of expertise in the languages being mixed (Ndebele, 2012, p.15), with those who practise it likely to be more urban and "technologically sophisticated".

Cultural proximity (Ksiazek and Webster, 2008, p.4) could explain the tendency for people to choose media close to their own culture. Despite foreign programming dominating television airtime, domestic programming is often more popular among locals. Ksiazek and Webster (2008, p.4) explain that the content and the viewer must exist within the same "cultural linguistic" or "geolinguistic" space. Therefore, content produced in a specific language will resonate with speakers of that language. The popularity of programmes such as *Uzalo*, *Generations*, and *Muvhango* in South Africa is an example (Labuschagne, 2021) of the popularity of local language programming, as is support for Ukhozi FM or Isolezwe. Whilst language is not the only variable, it is, nonetheless, an important one. With the growth of the Internet, even cultural borders have been severed, and there is a need to traverse cultural and language identity. Ksiazek and Webster (2008, p.16) refer to a "multicultural fluency" wherein audience members were able to move between media in different languages (English and Spanish). In a study on the online use of Eton, a Cameroonian language, Rivron (2012, p.161) suggests that the advent of social media platforms has prompted the development of numerous online communities. The existence of discussion groups resulting from the African diaspora has also proved to be a popular networking genre. Deumert, et al. (2019, p.558) refer to the success of *Burundinet*, connecting Burundians in the diaspora and *Nairaland*, which

has become a "meeting place" of Nigerian locals and members of the Nigerian diaspora, as particularly successful examples.

3.6 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter considers Habermas' public sphere theory as the framework of this study. Critiques suggest that the normative ideal is flawed in that it is inherently undemocratic and exclusionary. However utopian the ideal, the media, and public broadcasting in particular, has been considered an effective vehicle in supporting dialogue in the public sphere. The Internet and social media platforms have been credited with increasing the potential for everyone to access and create and share content. It has also transformed the manner in which traditional media platforms operate. The rise of the digital public sphere has not only impacted on news generation and distribution but also disrupted the structure of public dialogue. While on one hand the Internet potentially provides access to everyone, there are also limitations. In South Africa, where infrastructure and access are not always available, large portions of the population are excluded from participating online. Nonetheless, as connectivity levels increase, there is potential for the inclusion of parts of the population that have been previously excluded from public discourse. Although English is the dominant language on the SABC programme *Yilungelo Lakho* and all social media posts are in English, many contributors on the programme's Facebook page choose to communicate in isiZulu and other African languages. They do this despite the perception that African languages are not suitable for such domains. However, there are many examples of social media platforms being successfully utilised to support networking and discussion in languages other than English. The smaller, more niched communities supported by social networks could also result in dialogue of better quality, and more invested individuals.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Drawing on the concept of the public sphere and its critiques, the present study seeks to explore how interactions in isiZulu on *Yilungelo Lakho* online platforms promote the inclusion of isiZulu speakers in SABC News and Current Affairs discussions, contribute to deliberation (rational or otherwise), and reflect fragmentation and overlap among isiZulu speakers across different online platforms. This chapter discusses the methodological aspects of the study. It starts by outlining and justifying the research approach, discussing the data collection methods and process, and finally reflecting on challenges and limitations.

4.1 Research Design

This study is predominantly qualitative in approach, using non-statistical inquiry techniques and processes to gather data about social phenomena (McNabb, 2010, p.248). Quantitative aspects are limited to numbers and percentages relating to social media contributions as a background to their qualitative analysis. Qualitative methods may be used to test areas where not much information is available or known. Such methods are often used as preliminary investigations (Rosenthal, 2018, p.20). Much has been written about the SABC in respect of the language mandate as well as broadcast audience measurement, mainly in the form of reports. Relatively little is known about the role of African languages on SABC online platforms. Merriam (1998 in Skinner, 2017, pp.61-62) suggests that "reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds". The focus of the present study is not on "objective" truths but rather on the perspectives of people familiar with the topic. Merriam suggests that there is an assumption that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. "Most investigations that describe and interpret a social unit or process necessitate becoming intimately familiar with the phenomenon being studied" (Merriam; 1998, in Skinner; 2017; p62). As a former SABC News employee, I am familiar with structures and processes at SABC News. This study however extended my understanding of complex situation and provided me with entirely new perspective on matters of language and the navigation of the language mandate.

Qualitative research can be grouped into three broad categories – "explanatory," "interpretative," and "critical" (McNabb, 2010, p.227). Explanatory research aims to develop a causal explanation of a social phenomenon. McNabb suggests that such research aims to build theories that may then be used to predict future events or behaviour in similar circumstances (McNabb, 2010, p.250). Interpretative research aims to achieve an understanding of the actions of people in social situations (McNabb; 2010; p252). This entails not only describing or explaining a phenomenon but also attempting to interpret what such behaviours might mean (McNabb, 2010, p.252). The critical approach aims to expose harmful or alienating social conditions, with the aim of emancipating people and eliminating the cause of their alienation. McNabb (2010, p.276) suggests that the role of the researcher in this model is to function as a "guidance resource" – with the aim of introducing a change in behaviour. McNabb (2010, p.277) references the feminist and empowerment models as types of critical research methods. He explains that the empowerment model is usually concerned with individuals and minority groups who are excluded by a majority, usually on the basis of their demographic characteristics or because of some other physical or emotional difficulties. While isiZulu speakers are a numeric majority in South Africa, in terms of socio-economic status and prestige or instrumental value of their language, they can be considered a minority (Rudwick; 2005; p107).

Within critical research, there is an occupation with power relationships, where the power lies, how it is maintained, and how it might be changed (Grbich; 2013; p64). There are challenges in this approach. Grbich (2013; p65) questions the emancipation factor, suggesting that it might not be realistic to expect of researchers the promotion of any major social transformation. While some suggestions in respect of a way forward are envisioned, this study aims primarily to unmask the power relationships that impact on the use of isiZulu on SABC online platforms.

The case study may be considered when the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions that are relevant to the phenomenon under study, or when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clear (Baxter and Jack, 2010, p.3). The present study considers the case of *Yilungelo Lakho*, a television programme, which shares its Nguni (mainly isiZulu) language content online via social media platforms. The use of isiZulu is inextricably linked to the SABC and its African language audience. The manner in which the

programme is produced, and the way in which it is structured cannot be considered separately from the use of isiZulu as a language of communication. Therefore, the context within which *Yilungelo Lakho* operates makes it ideal for a case study. According to Yin (2003, p.4), a case study design should be considered when the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions in a situation where those involved in the study cannot be manipulated. On Facebook, the *Yilungelo Lakho* online audience act independently on a platform external to the SABC. At the same time, they volunteer their contributions to the programme. Facebook allows the individual the ability to construct a profile within a "bounded" system and articulate a list of users with whom they share a common connection, enabling them to view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Batorski and Grzywinska, 2017, p.8). Users have relative freedom of expression within a group where there is a common interest.

A case study involves the investigation of one specific aspect in order to be able to understand the subject (McNabb, 2010, p.104). The choice of *Yilungelo Lakho* online platforms allows for the investigation of the relationship between African languages and inclusion, rational deliberation, and opinion formation within a unified forum as factors in online public affairs discussions. *Yilungelo Lakho* is an established SABC News programme and has a regular and fairly strong presence online, particularly on Facebook. It is also a multilingual programme, broadcast primarily in the Nguni languages (isiZulu, siSwati, isiXhosa, and isiNdebele), that must also take into consideration the numerous other African languages. In several respects*, Yilungelo Lakho* can be considered a microcosm of the larger SABC online experience. The goal of case study research is to conduct an in-depth analysis of an issue within its context "with a view to understand the issue from the perspective of participants" (Harrison, et al., 2017). Harrison, et al. (2017) write that a case study is capable of providing "comprehensive, in depth understanding" and suggest that there is an "overarching methodology" that shapes case study design, which can be either quantitatively or qualitatively aligned. The realist approach that they consider is underpinned by a strong motivation for discovering meaning and understanding experiences in context.

4.2 Research Methods and Samples

In a case study, multiple sources and methods of data collection can be used, although interviews and observations are the preferred data collection methods (Harrison, et al., 2017). The most common types of interviews are the structured interview, the semi-structured and the unstructured interview (Cohen and Crabtree; 2006), Cohen and Crabtree (2006) also refer to informal interviews and focus groups as types of interviews. Structured interviews result in the researcher asking the same set of questions to all participants. It is not necessary for the researcher to acquire any degree of rapport with the interviewee, and the data collected as a result of such interviews is consistent and may be compared across the respondents. Such interviews are more typical in quantitative research studies. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) suggest that unstructured interviews with only a plan or goal are usually more suited to initial or preliminary investigation. Semi-structured interviews, directed by an interview guide, allow for greater probing into the interviewees' points of view (Bryman, 2012, p.470; Cohen and Crabtree; 2006) than structured or unstructured interviews. This allowed the current study the flexibility to probe individual points of view and explanations as well as the thoughts and experiences of each individual. In the study, six semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the production team and users of the *Yilungelo Lakho* online platforms. In a qualitative study, the methods used are relatively open as "the relevancies and special needs of the persons being interviewed or observed must be taken into account, and these persons must be allowed as much freedom as possible to arrange the situation as they wish" (Rosenthal, 2018, p.14). The interview schedule in Appendix A was used as a general guideline during the interview process to ensure that aspects relevant to the research questions were covered while allowing the interviewees the freedom to extend their answers, give personal viewpoints and accounts, and provide rationales. The interviewees were purposively selected.

Bryman (2012, p.416) discusses purposive sampling in qualitative research, highlighting that the goal is to sample cases or participants in a strategic way such that those sampled are relevant to the research questions. The *Yilungelo Lakho* production team is small, consisting of an Executive Producer and two Producers. While there are also two Anchors and an Administrator, who play important roles in respect of the broadcasting of the programme, online content sharing is the responsibility of the three production team members who decide not only what the posts should entail but also how comments are utilised on the live

broadcasts and when and how to respond to comments. All three members of the production team were interviewed. The Executive Producer facilitated the initial introductory process. Although all the production team members are established journalists, I was also aware that they were the subjects of the interviews and that I should consider their views and statements critically. An assumption that they all equally understood the key issues around broadcast policy and practice was a factor that I had to re-examine during the course of the research. Not everyone was equally knowledgeable on the language framework within which they produce their programme.

I interviewed three online contributors; two whose mother tongue is isiZulu and one who speaks Sepedi. In purposively selecting interviewees from the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook users, I initially attempted to balance their actual use of an African language, the frequency of their contributions, and their availability. Rosenthal (2018, p.78) addressed theoretical sampling, where the sample is determined according to theoretical assumptions that are formed in the course of research. Based on a preliminary analysis of online posts, I tried to identify people who displayed different uses of African languages (e.g., posts fully expressed in isiZulu versus extensive code-switching with English). This approach was not successful, however. I initially identified and contacted nine users who had regularly made comments across several programmes or commented extensively on one programme. I sent initial invitations via Facebook messenger, introducing myself and inviting responses via Facebook, WhatsApp, email, or telephone. I received no positive initial response. I then reconsidered my approach. With the assistance of the Executive Producer, a general invitation to participate was then published on the Facebook page in order to reach other potential participants. In this way, I identified three people who accepted the request to be interviewed. Two of the interviewees were contributors to the Facebook discussion and have been identified as "Top Fans" – that is, people identified by Facebook as active members of the page.

Purposeful sampling aims to achieve information-rich cases, with participants who have the required status or experience to provide the information being sought (Lopez and Whitehead; 2013; p125). Samples in qualitative research studies tend to be small (Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe and Young; 2028; p2; see also Crouch and McKenzie; 2013; p483) supporting in-depth case-oriented analysis. However, the question of sample size in qualitative research remains under scrutiny (Boddy; 2016; p426; see also Lopez and Whitehead; 2013). Boddy

(2016; p428) suggests that the idea of generalisation brought about by data saturation might not necessarily be the ideal method of examination in qualitative studies. The concept of generalisation has been criticised because of the context specificity of all scientific findings (Boddy; 2016; p4280. Smaller, even single cases or participants may provide reliable evidence, and deep understanding of the research matter (Boddy; 2016; p429). What is important however, is that the sample size is representative of the population under consideration. Lopez and Whitehead (2013; p125) suggest that a sample size of four in a medical research study, although small, in keeping with encouraging the "detailed richness" of experience was in fact appropriate. The aim of the interviews must be to generate data providing "authentic insight into people's experiences," (Crouch and McKenzie; 2013; p485). The present study considers the contributors to the Yilungelo Lakho Facebook page, and as such the sample is a significant representation of those users. The three users interviewed display in-depth knowledge of both the programme and landscape, as well as emotional insight into reasons for the use (or not) of isiZulu in their online communication.

Rosenthal (2018, p.42) refers to the situational definition of the interview, suggesting that the context in which an interviewee perceives the interview to occur ultimately impacts the result of the interview. All interviews in this study were conducted telephonically, recorded, and transcribed at a later stage. Although telephonic interviews are often regarded as being more suited to quantitative research (Novick; 2008; p1), there are some advantages. While it was not my initial intention to conduct telephonic interviews, it became the preferred option once I had identified who to interview. People were located in different provinces and speaking with them over the telephone was a convenient and cost-effective option (Bryman, 2012, p.488; Novick; 2008; p3). I conducted two telephone calls with each interviewee prior to the actual interview, which was also conducted via telephone, to ensure that the interviewees were comfortable with the medium and to establish a level of rapport. This was due to the fact that, apart from one person on the production team, I had no prior knowledge of any of the interviewees. I also needed to ensure that the online contributors in particular had reliable access to a telephone for an extended period of time (see Bryman, 2012, p.215). I recorded interviews so that I could transcribe them for later use. Bryman (2012, p.215; Novick; 2008; p2) suggests that the quality of data collected telephonically might be inferior. Whilst I would have preferred to conduct sit-down interviews with at least some of the participants, I do not believe that I was particularly disadvantaged by the format. I was able to have in-depth discussions with all the participants.

The interviews were complemented by a content analysis of online interactions on *Yilungelo Lakho* online platforms. I considered posts, comments, and responses on Facebook over a three-month period from June to August 2019. This included 13 episodes, with a total of 497 comments from 306 online contributors, providing sufficient data. I chose the starting date for two reasons. Firstly, the content in the period immediately prior had, to some extent, been influenced by the 2019 general elections in May. This was not always in line with the general consumer driven focus of the programme, Secondly, although the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page had been established in 2014, its style and posting had been erratic up to then. I also considered Twitter comments under the hashtag @*Yilungelo Lakho* and quantified tweets in respect of the language used. Generally, the production team does not use Twitter, and preliminary investigation suggested that much of the substance of the tweets were promotional. The *Yilungelo Lakho* production team generally only publishes one Facebook post a week, in relation to a specific topic. It is a call to action, an invitation to participate in the broadcast discussion. People interact on Facebook in three ways – they like, comment on, and also share posts. While liking and sharing may yield quantitative findings, this study mainly considers the comments as a passive analysis in Eysenbach's (2019; p2) terms, that is, "the study of information patterns observed on Facebook or the interactions between users in existing Facebook groups." Mayring (2000; p1) suggests that the aim of qualitative content analysis is to "preserve the advantages of quantitative content analysis" and to transfer and further develop them to qualitative inquiry. There is often use of computer programmes and software in qualitative content analysis. This study considers one specific area, the use of isiZulu, and other African languages on the Yilungelo Lakho Facebook page, within the specified time period, and therefore comments have been tracked on a spreadsheet.

Content is important in textual analysis (Mckee, 2001, p.14), and an analysis of comments and responses on social media platforms linked to *Yilungelo Lakho* allows for a greater understanding of the audience, the language use, and the interaction between online users. In content analysis, it is possible for the researcher to use similar concepts as in quantitative studies (Bengtsson; 2016; p8), an option that is not accepted when performing analysis using other qualitative methods. Textual analysis can also be "symptomatological," an indicator of other aspects such as cultural or social structure (Bauer, Bicquelet and Suerdem, 2014). Thus, comments made on the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page could indicate other aspects of social, cultural, and political life that could have an impact on the results of this study. For example,

some online contributors code-switched with English. I also considered the interaction between some online contributors. Although only occasional, it is possibly significant of a growing sense of community. Beyond the text, the genre (e.g., social media as opposed to a formal news programme) and the wider public context in which it is circulated must also be taken into account. I collected all posts, including punctuation, emoticons, and pictures, and identified those pertaining to an African language, and isiZulu in particular. I then analysed both sets of data (from the interviews and content analysis) thematically and grouped the findings according to the three broad categories of inclusion, rational deliberation, and fragmentation in the digital public sphere.

4.3 Ethical Aspects, Challenges, and Limitations

The present study received ethical approval from the Rhodes University Ethics Committee.

Rosenthal (2018, p.82; see also McNabb, 2010, p.72; Taylor, Bogdon and DeVault, 2016, p.109) refers to the aspect of research ethics, where the interviewee must be fully informed of the research and context. Upon making contact with each interviewee, and then again in the initial discussion, I explained fully the background to, and context of, my research activity. This was done to ensure that I received informed consent from the participants and that their participation was voluntary. Each interviewee was asked in advance to consent to the audio recording of the interview. At the time of the interviews, I again reminded each interviewee that the interview would be recorded. Their express agreement was sought. I did not manage to get signed or written consent, as logistically it was not feasible. The interviewees, especially the online contributors, were located some distance away and not always able to receive or send such documents. All interviewees were adults and volunteered to be interviewed. In an attempt to guard against any possible harmful consequences for the participants (Bryman, 2012, p.136), I did not refer to any of them by their real names and instead allocated pseudonyms. I refer to the online contributors as Andile, Busani, and Dineo; and to members of the production team as Zolani, Yamkela, and Xoliswa. I do not refer to the latter's job titles in the presentation and discussion of the findings. In the textual analysis supporting documents (Appendix E), which illustrate comments made on the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page, a public platform, I have hidden the names of all contributors. On the Twitter data set (Appendix D), I have hidden all Twitter handles.

All the interviews were conducted in English as all the interviewees had suggested that they were comfortable speaking English. While language is used to convey meaning, it is also integral to how meaning is constructed (Van Nes, et al., 2010, p.314), and therefore, taking into consideration the subject of the study, I recognised this situation as somewhat problematic. Due to not being able to communicate in isiZulu, I also initially needed to gauge the English-language competencies to ensure that the interviewees and I would be able to communicate effectively in English. I further needed an opportunity to gain the commitment of each participant and reach agreements regarding the interview details, approximate duration, etc. All the interviewees spoke English as a second language, although all primarily spoke English at work. Undoubtedly, my inability to speak isiZulu did place some stress on the participants, who all made concerted efforts to accommodate a researcher unable to speak any of the Nguni languages. In approaching the textual analysis aspect of this research study, I employed the assistance of a translator. A Producer from the *Yilungelo Lakho* team assisted me with translations involved in the textual analysis. Temple and Young (2004, p.163) consider whether and how translation could impact or introduce bias in the analysis. They point out that the translator forms part of the process of knowledge production and therefore, "assist[s] in constructing" meaning (Temple and Young, 2004, p.164; VanNes, et al., 2010, p.2). The translator in this study attempted, where possible, to also identify the language in which the comments were written. In certain instances, the translator also advised in respect of where a word or words had been abbreviated, for example, or where a slang word had been used. This assisted me to some extent to contextualise the comments and provided valuable insight in attempting to consider the questions that this study aimed to answer. Having to employ the assistance of an interpreter did place me at a slight disadvantage. Because I do not know the language (or languages) myself, I was entirely reliant on the translator's interpretations.

This study is, to some extent, reflective (Bryman, 2012, p.393) in that I have considered my direct relationship with the subject. As a former Executive Producer at SABC Digital News (employed from 2014 to 2019), I simultaneously held the roles of researcher and the one being researched (Greene, 2014, p.2), having been involved first-hand in the training in and the administration of some of the social media properties of SABC News (i.e., social media pages administered by SABC Digital News). These included the editing and publishing of content to the SABC News YouTube channel, SABC News Online Facebook page, and

SABC News Twitter handle, for example. There also exists a professional interest in extending such properties to include African-language content. Greene (2014, p.4) points out that there are both pros and cons to insider research, with the pros being knowledge, interaction, and access. An insider researcher is familiar with the subject matter and will not need orientation. She suggests that interaction with key role players will presumably be easier. This was my experience. I am familiar with the subject matter and have been able to access key role players within the SABC easily. As colleagues, they have been supportive. The programme's Executive Producer assisted with getting permission from SABC News management to access information on the programme and conduct interviews for example. Asselin (2003, p.100) cautions that the tendency to believe that one knows the culture could limit a researcher's ability to probe for deeper understanding. While my position enabled me to enter this study with some knowledge of the subject matter, my interaction with the data in this study furthered my understanding and knowledge, bringing new perspective. Chavez (2008, p.3) suggests that "the outsider-insider distinction is a false dichotomy" – as both outsider and insider researchers usually have similar methodological issues with which to contend. To some extent, this factor too was applicable in this study. The challenges that I experienced, especially in not initially receiving responses from online users, and having to re-evaluate the research sample, would probably have been applicable to anyone conducting similar work.

Matters of trust were also of importance. I notified all the participants that while I was an SABC employee at the time and had permission to focus on *Yilungelo Lakho*, my study was independent of the broadcaster. The Executive Producer was initially approached in respect of approving this study. His support extended to obtaining permission from SABC News management as well as agreeing to post an invitation to participate in the study on the official *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page. I was, nonetheless, acutely aware that members of the production team might be wary considering my position. It did help that by the time the interviews were conducted, I had already resigned from the organisation. Even though the selection of a topic indicates a personal interest, I was wary about projecting my own views on the participants or the data analysis. Asselin (2004, p.101; see also Taylor, Bogdon and DeVault, 2016, p.83) refers to the perception of the researcher as an educator. I tried to temper this by avoiding value judgements or expressing agreement/disagreement during my interactions with the participants. At the same time, I did share insight in some instances, especially I believed such information would encourage a more detailed response. This

specifically occurred in the interviews with members of the production team, who for example, were not always aware of the existence of other SABC isiZulu online platforms.

Reliability and validity are important in research. There is often uncertainty around the measurement of such criteria in qualitative research (Bryman, 2012, p.389). Each participant in a qualitative study could construct an entirely different reality. Lincoln and Guba (in Bryman, 2012, p.390) propose that trustworthiness and authenticity areas are the primary criteria for assessing qualitative studies. It might not be possible to replicate the results of a qualitative study, and therefore, it is necessary for qualitative studies to be evaluated differently to quantitative studies. I have attempted to ensure that I adhere to good practice in respect of this study and to track and keep records of each step of the process. I employed multiple sources and methods so as to not rely entirely on a particular source or method. Triangulation operates across research strategies, with the aim of achieving "greater confidence" in the findings (Bryman, 2012, p.392). In addition to using semi-structured interviews with different participants and groups of participants, I included an analysis of online interactions and a minor quantitative component to verify them against the qualitative findings.

4.4 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter outlined the research methodology. Primarily a qualitative study, the research took a critical approach. IsiZulu is a language spoken by the majority of South Africans, and yet the SABC does not share any isiZulu news content online. I considered the *Yilungelo Lakho* programme as a case study and focused on the textual analysis of comments made on the programme's Facebook page as well as tweets using *#Yilungelo Lakho*. The textual analysis constituted a quantitative background for the qualitative investigation. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with Facebook users and contributors to the page and members of the *Yilungelo Lakho* production team. That I was not able to speak or read in isiZulu was one challenge in the research process. I was able to facilitate telephonic interviews in English, but for the textual analysis, I employed the assistance of a translator. Every effort was made to protect the identities of all participants, who participated voluntarily in this study. Even though my personal circumstances altered during the study – I am no longer an Executive Producer at SABC Digital News – I do believe that the insight I gained

as an employee placed me in a stronger position to more fully understand the parameters within which *Yilungelo Lakho* operates.

CHAPTER FIVE: OBSERVATIONS

This chapter presents the observations of the study, starting with the interviews with the production team, followed by the interviews with users, and finally, a textual analysis of online content. Transcripts of the interviews are available in Appendix B and Appendix C. All names have been replaced by pseudonyms. To the largest extent possible, I have tried to organise the presentation according to the dimensions of inclusion, rational deliberation, and fragmentation.

5.1 Interviews with Members of the Production Team

Xoliswa is a siSwati-speaking woman in her thirties who has worked on the show for six years. She notes that even though the programme focuses on the Nguni languages and that the production team comprises Nguni-language speakers, all production communication happens in English. While presenters are selected on the basis of understanding and being conversant in Nguni languages, they are also required to be fluent in English. Xoliswa speculates that the African languages spoken by the presenters may contribute to attracting viewers, who also feel more comfortable commenting in those languages. She notes the larger response to the isiZulu-speaking presenter as compared to the siSwati-speaking one. Xoliswa says that the situation becomes complicated when comments are made in a language that the presenter does not understand. She notes that speakers of languages other than isiZulu sometimes feel excluded or marginalised, often questioning the prominence given to isiZulu in particular and Nguni languages in general. Xoliswa states that there is an assumption that the audience is multilingual and that everybody understands at least some English, as this is the language of public affairs and written communication. She argues that people try to speak English in order to seem better informed and sound more authoritative, particularly if they believe that their comments will be read on air. She states that while some members of the audience may feel more comfortable communicating in African languages, they often use non-standard varieties or code-switch with English. Xoliswa maintains that at this time, the team's main focus is on the broadcast, with relatively little support for the online platforms. While online contributions are selected for use during the broadcast based on their content rather than the language used, this often depends on what the presenter is able to understand and translate. While conceding that Facebook users may be entirely

different to the television audience and depend solely on the online conversations for information, Xoliswa maintains that the online users are similar to the broadcast viewers. She states that the online participants take their cue from the initial Facebook posts and usually respond in English because it is the same language as the post. Although responses in African languages are expected and accepted, she believes that everybody "will come on board" as English allows Producers to accommodate everybody, even those who speak languages that are not Nguni. She believes that there is no overlap of content with other SABC online platforms and was not aware of resources such as the SABC News iIndaba Facebook page.

Yamkela is an isiXhosa-speaking man in his forties who is also fluent in isiZulu. He remarks that while the programme aspires to broadcast in the Nguni languages as mandated, in reality, members of the television audience and guest experts speak numerous languages and can only be accommodated by using English as the common means of communication. He also notes that a language such as siSwati, though Nguni, is spoken by relatively few people and mainly in Mpumalanga, and its use may exclude speakers of other Nguni languages. Furthermore, it is difficult to write a full post without English borrowings. He says that using the standard variety of a language such as isiXhosa would exclude even many isiXhosa speakers. The online platforms create opportunities for members of the audience to post in languages such as isiZulu, often code-mixing with English, as is the case with radio stations broadcasting in African languages. He remarks that the multilingual character of the programme places additional strain on already constrained resources. Posting in isiZulu may be more lengthy and less clear than in English. It would also exclude non-isiZulu speakers and face limitations such as a lack of technical terms, despite PanSaLB's efforts to extend the lexicon. It also follows that if the announcer or the guests are isiZulu speakers, it is probable that responses will be in isiZulu, but the same is also true for English. Yamkela notes that only a certain type of person can access a platform such as Facebook, which may alienate older people, or people who prefer to use telephones. Online and on air, alongside a core of loyal viewers and online contributors, new topics and the use of social media contribute to attracting new people. The online spaces also provide an opportunity to further elaborate on topics beyond the constraints of the broadcasting schedule. While there is a discernible online community, some discussions on air are more attractive to the online audience than others. In Yamkela's opinion, most comments are in English and only approximately one-third are in African languages. He confirms that the selection of posts to be used on air depends on their relevance and conciseness but acknowledges that a lack of proficiency shown by the

Presenter or Producer in a particular language may result in the exclusion of posts in that language. Yamkela maintains that online contributions reflect the informal and sometimes ungrammatical and incoherent use of language on social media, often amounting to a series of claims and statements rather than a dialogue. Yamkela says that while he has seen some references to other African-language SABC News pages, he has not truly taken the time to consider them.

Zolani is also an isiXhosa-speaking man who is in his fifties and has worked on the programme since its launch in 2007. He explains that while the Nguni languages must be the basis of the broadcast programme, it is the audience that dictates the multilingual reality. He states that the *Yilungelo Lakho* audience is formed from the lower Living Standards Measure (LSM) groups, but that while they might have rural roots, they are urbanised, and have a degree of English, and even Afrikaans literacy. They might speak these languages at work, for example, or they may have learned them at school. He acknowledges the effort to broadcast almost entirely in Nguni languages and recognises the need to avoid "deep" varieties, suggesting that there are differences between language use in rural and urban areas that may exclude some viewers. He also points out the difficulties encountered by specific presenters for whom some Nguni languages, such as isiXhosa, would have to be translated. While highlighting the importance of complying with ICASA regulations, Zolani expressed concern regarding the additional layer of complication that this adds to the already burdensome production process. Zolani believes that the same people follow the show on air and online as he recognises specific people who post and call in. He says online platforms provide opportunities to sustain interaction, expand on topics, and complement on-air discussions. When posts in English and a Nguni language are comparable in terms of content and relevance, the latter is preferred. Zolani agrees that the online space creates additional opportunities to use Nguni languages, in which many, if not most, users express themselves. At the same time, he realises that English is the main language online and plays an important role as a lingua franca. He says that additional capacity and focus on a single language and/or topic would enable better representation of a language such as isiZulu. Zolani mentioned *Fokus* (the Afrikaans Current Affairs programme) as an example. In addition, he notes that while the original aim of the former flagship programme *Asikhulume* was to discuss issues primarily in the Nguni languages, it became a multilingual vehicle to reach a wider and more diverse audience, as seems to be the case with *Yilungelo Lakho*. Zolani states that his team works in isolation from other news programmes at the SABC. He thinks it would be helpful

to increase collaboration and coordination with other current affairs programmes, particularly with respect to online platforms, but he is not aware of any effort in this regard.

5.2 Interviews with Online Contributors

Andile is an isiZulu speaking man in his thirties. He is from rural KwaZulu Natal but lives in Katlehong, a Gauteng township, and works in Johannesburg. While he is fluent communicating in isiZulu, he uses both isiZulu and English when posting comments on Facebook. When communicating in isiZulu, he feels compelled to code-mix with English and rely on English borrowings for the benefit of those who do not speak "deep" isiZulu but also for fear of seeming uneducated. He regrets that even speakers of African languages, including isiZulu, have negative attitudes towards their own mother tongue. At the same time, he is not entirely confident speaking English, especially in front of a wide audience, as it is not his mother tongue. His language choice depends on the language of the presenter or the question/initial comment and also on whether speakers of multiple languages are involved, in which case he opts for English as a common language. He cites a Katlehong community page where everyone contributes in English as an example. Andile claims that it is easier to write in English than in isiZulu but recognises that his expression in English is limited by his vocabulary. He regularly contributes to the programme via telephone, WhatsApp, and particularly Facebook, where he can make a contribution as soon as a post is published, usually even prior to the start of the programme, such that he can concentrate on watching the show. Andile states that it is definitely easier for him to contribute to *Yilungelo Lakho* via the online discussion, and he is glad that the programme accepts comments in isiZulu, unlike other programme pages on which he posts comments. While he agrees that there is room for the use of African languages on social media, he admits that he would not follow a page in Tshivenda, a language that he does not understand. Andile says that he is an active participant on Facebook pages on which only isiZulu content is published, but he remains adamant that *Yilungelo Lakho* should continue to publish posts in English in order to accommodate everyone. While he communicates with his friends online in isiZulu, on more formal platforms or in more formal conversations, such as those involving the SABC, he uses English unless the programme is language specific, such as the isiZulu news.

Busani is an isiZulu-speaking man in his forties from KwaZulu Natal. He lives and works in Durban, and although he does not actively watch the programme, he does follow the online

discussion. He states that while isiZulu is his primary spoken language, when writing, he finds it easier to share his views in English. While he agrees that African languages are not used enough online, Busani argues that the Internet is a global platform where not everyone will understand isiZulu. He believes that African languages are also under threat because children speak and are taught in English; his preference would be to use isiZulu in online communication. Busani says that when he does use isiZulu words and phrases online, they are usually puns and slang in more casual interactions. At work, when he needs to act business-like and authoritative, he speaks English. He explains that he does look out for online conversations in isiZulu, especially if they are of personal interest to him. In such cases, he is also more open to responding in isiZulu. He points out that people on social media can be critical of the language used to communicate. He cites an example of an Afrikaans comment on the *Yilungelo Lakho* page that received very little recognition and suggests that people need to interact with the posts as opposed to only viewing them. Busani states that when they feel included, people are able to relate to the multilingual programme and that there is buy-in. However, he stays that with multilingualism, exclusion would also be present. He highlights that in South Africa, isiZulu will always dominate. Busani is of the opinion that the SABC relies on English to the detriment of people who do not speak the language. He states that while Facebook makes it easier to access *Yilungelo Lakho*, not everyone has online access. Older or rural people might also not be as familiar with the online option as younger people. Busani says it is sometimes very difficult to differentiate between real and fake comments online.

Dineo is a Sepedi-speaking woman in her twenties who is able to communicate in a number of other African languages. On Facebook, she writes in English, Sepedi, and isiZulu. She began speaking isiZulu because it is the common language spoken in Hillbrow, where she has moved for work. She states that she is at ease learning and communicating in many languages. She can also understand and speak Xitsonga and Tshivenda to some extent, as well as Setswana and Sesotho. Dineo says that the basis of her online conversations remains English. She agrees that there should be more use of African languages online because, according to her, Black people fail to benefit from important information as they do not understand the English content. She approves of the multilingual nature of the *Yilungelo Lakho* programme because people feel comfortable participating. She states that the use of a number of different languages and the multilingual contributions make for stronger discussions. She cautions against using a single language and points out that there are very

few single-language interactions. Most people use a mixture of an African language and English in order to communicate. Dineo is of the opinion that if programmes such as *Yilungelo Lakho* used African languages more, especially on online platforms, people would find it easier to access information. Dineo has contributed to *Yilungelo Lakho* through both telephone calls and online communication, and she is satisfied that her online comments have received similar attention to the on-air ones. She prefers Facebook to other social media platforms and says that she is very comfortable using African languages to communicate online. She says that while it does take a longer time to write in the African languages, this does not necessarily pose a personal challenge. She mentions that she does not give much thought to what language she uses and when but will generally respond in the language in which the post was made. Even when speaking to friends offline and via text messages, she responds in the language of the original message. She also agrees that not many single-language discussions remain, even in spoken conversations. She also refers to the online platforms of *Daily Theta* (another SABC programme), where only English contributions seem to be incorporated, and says that she prefers contributing to the multilingual discussions of *Yilungelo Lakho* and *Leihlo la Sechaba*.

5.3 Textual Analysis

Over 13 weeks, those who commented on the Facebook posts usually responded directly to the subject matter under discussion. While the invitation to participate was written in English, there is an understanding that responses in all languages are admissible. Approximately one out of three comments on Facebook, 148 from a total of 497 comments, were made either totally or partially in an African language (mainly isiZulu and isiXhosa, but also seSwati and siTswana). There were 85 isiZulu comments, 35 isiXhosa comments, and 14 in other languages, including siSwati and siTswana. Altogether, 106 comments were entirely in an African language, with a minority of comments (42) code-mixed with English. While there were fewer tweets than Facebook comments, the Twitter content was substantially different to that from Facebook, with the majority of tweets focusing on sharing promotional-type information. Forty-eight (48) of the 100 tweets were written primarily in English and published by the corporate and marketing divisions of the SABC (not SABC News) or guests appearing on the shows and inviting people to watch the programme. The remainder (52 comments) were in respect of the programme, although many were casual comments and enquiries and not specifically related to the subject under discussion. Only 18 of the 52 were

written entirely or partially in an African language. Although there was no significant difference in the number of African-language comments on the two platforms, the content differed substantially. The comments on Facebook were usually made directly in response to the topic under discussion, whilst on Twitter, there were more casual and general comments, although at least 18 comments referred to a discussion on the programme. Comments on Twitter were generally also shorter (in keeping with Tweet formats) that those on Facebook. Comments on both platforms illustrated that users were comfortable communicating on the platforms, often addressing presenters directly as "Sis Alicia" or "broer," commenting on their beauty and professionalism, for example. There is also a sense of familiarity, perhaps a degree of ownership in comments such as "couldn't have picked a better person to represent our people," for example. On both platforms, people asked questions and advice in respect of their personal situations. In some instances, both on Facebook and Twitter, participants also responded to each other with guidance and advice.

Online communication was generally formal in nature, but some instances of informal discussion between the online audience members were present – on both Twitter and Facebook. Generally, comments were relevant and related to the topic under discussion. There were a small number of incoherent comments (or comments that did not make sense). With the assistance of the translator, I was able to identify only 6 from a total of 497 comments in which some words could not be understood. At least three of these lost their meaning in translation. There was also minimal use of slang, emoticons, and memes, both with English and isiZulu, although there were at least two instances where pictures were added for illustrative purposes. Many users chose to use abbreviations instead of writing out the full words. This could also have been due to most users being second-language English speakers. The user who made the most comments, 46 comments in a single programme did not actually participate in the online discussion. Rather, she used the opportunity to solicit her business. She was an employee at a legal firm dealing with Road Accident Fund (RAF) claims, the subject under discussion. She communicated in isiZulu and English, usually reacting to comments in the language that they were posted.

Interaction between the users was relatively scarce, with only two incidents noted on Twitter. However, at least 24 incidents were noted on Facebook. These were all comparatively casual and informational in nature, for example, alerting someone that their comment had been read on air, or advising about when the programme would be re-run. Familiarity existed between

some members of the online audience and perhaps even a developing sense of community – "We are together @mtata" (22 July 2019). In one interaction on 08 July 2019, one contributor advised another that their comment had been read out on television. The other responded, "oh my God, I went out," implying that they had missed seeing it on television. Many users were invested in the programme and the discussions, often alluding to not being available to watch the programme or wanting to view a re-run at a different time. On Twitter, there are references to people finding the programme informative and educational. The potential for discussion seemed to be present, if not growing. This is significant considering that the administrators do not actively promote discussion. There were only a few instances where the administrators volunteered additional information during the period being studied, providing details relating to the broadcast programme – that is, schedules, information on re-runs, online availability, etc. – and contact details for guests. One example is the post of 24 June 2019 when *Yilungelo Lakho* responded to questions in respect of contact details for guests and details of repeat programmes.

5.4 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter observed the responses gauged in the interviews and textual analysis. In the interviews, both the online contributors and members of the production team agreed that due primarily to the multilingual nature of the programme, the use of English is simple and efficient. The textual analysis suggests, however, that not all viewers are comfortable with the use of English and that they often choose to communicate in the African languages as well. IsiZulu emerged as the clearly dominant and favoured language. While Twitter was used largely to promote the programme, those comments that do refer to the topics under discussion, are similar in nature to the comments on Facebook, albeit shorter. It appears that most users want to contribute to the discussions, and despite some degree of abbreviated and slang words, the comments made are generally of substance and in response to the topic. Users are also acutely aware of the language dynamic, even if they are not always conscious of it, and aiming to be inclusive of non-Nguni language speakers. There seems also to be a growing interaction between users, usually at a more informal, familiar level. It might also be true that the *Yilungelo Lakho* audience finds the online space less constrained than that offered by television. Online users were particularly enthusiastic about having an alternate platform to contribute to the discussions.

CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the findings in light of the different dimensions of the digital public sphere - those of inclusion, rational deliberation and opinion formation in a unified forum.

6.1 Inclusion

Yilungelo Lakho is a multilingual Nguni-language television programme that aims to educate and inform people regarding consumer issues in the four Nguni languages. In an attempt to be inclusive of a broader audience, *Yilungelo Lakho* is "forced" into a space where the Nguni languages are often side-lined in favour of English as the lingua franca. One reason for this, as Zolani explains, is that the programme is structured around consultations with guests and experts who often do not speak any of the Nguni languages. In addition, the audience is also diverse, speaking numerous other official South African languages as well. In order to be more inclusive, it is necessary to find common ground. Zolani states that in a multilingual environment, it would be "counter-productive" to adhere to a single language. This practice is common in many post-colonial countries and as suggested by Magagula (2015, p.44), was, at one stage, a political decision taken in South Africa to discourage the potential divisions that could arise out of the unequal development of all African languages. Zolani suggests that the programme's target audience is sufficiently capable of accepting English as the common language. He says that the audience involves people who have a level of education, despite belonging to the lower-level LSMs. He explains that they have jobs: "they may be employed by a Baas, and they speak Afrikaans or English with the Baas."

On the programme's Facebook page, all posts initiated by the production team are written in English. Xoliswa states, "We didn't sit down and decide that the posts are going to be in English." It becomes clear from the interviews that the programme Producers believe that they will include more people by writing in English, especially on an online, global platform such as Facebook. Dineo is appreciative of this effort to include everyone: "I think they go all out you know, when it comes to the languages, they accommodate all of us." Andile and Busani suggest that they behave similarly in their personal capacities, speaking in isiZulu but switching to English when writing and communicating online. Busani says that the language he uses depends on the person to whom he is speaking. He mentions that he considers at

whom his status is targeted: "…if I want everybody to understand, then the whole status will be in English, the writing will be in English." Not everyone is comfortable communicating in English, though. For the majority of South Africans who speak an African language, English proficiency is limited. Collectively, more than 80% of South Africans speak a home language other than English, and many in the audience seem to be more comfortable communicating in an African language. Xoliswa rationalises the decision of the production team to publish posts in English, pointing to a culture of code-switching: "I don't think there are many people who speak Zulu entirely. I think how we communicate nowadays is that we mix languages." Yamkela explains that this practice is common even on language-specific public broadcast radio, where English is often interspersed with the African languages. Andile also alludes to this practice, suggesting that even popular music in the other African languages will not succeed unless they contain English or isiZulu lyrics.

Even though *Yilungelo Lakho* is a Nguni-language programme, it is largely dominated by isiZulu. Twenty-five percent of South Africans speak isiZulu as a home language, and even non-Nguni speakers allude to having to learn to speak isiZulu in order to better communicate in a multilingual environment. Dineo is a Sepedi speaker who states that Sepedi is not spoken in Hillbrow, the urban area where she lives and works. She has had to adapt and has learnt to communicate mainly in isiZulu. This dynamic is reflected both in the *Yilungelo Lakho* live programme and online, where 85 of the 148 comments on Facebook were either entirely or partially in isiZulu. Xoliswa says that the other Nguni languages are often overlooked in favour of isiZulu:

> It is very rare… in fact, on Facebook, I have never seen a post in siSwati. And it is very rare to get a caller who is speaking siSwati. Sometimes you do pick up that this person is likely to be siSwati speaking, but because Zulu is a more dominant language, they would rather try to accommodate the presenter or everybody else who is listening in that more dominant language…

Xoliswa states that navigating the multilingual space occupied by a programme such as *Yilungelo Lakho* is a challenge, and isiZulu becomes the common thread: "I always keep my fingers crossed that the case study I get understands isiZulu at least, because if they speak in Sotho, they are going to throw me off… it is worse when it is Venda or Xitsonga." Yamkela describes the situation of constantly having to balance the language content as "unfortunate." He says that Xhosas might understand spoken isiZulu and vice versa, "but if you write in siSwati, which is one of the Nguni languages, there's a lot of people you would be excluding

– because siSwati is not as strong in South Africa." This is confirmed by the fact that only three of the analysed comments on the Facebook page were written in siSwati. Even within the production team, the dominance of isiZulu is clear. Xoliswa states the isiZulu presenter receives many more contributions than the siSwati presenter and is also usually more likely to find common ground in conversations with people who call in to the live broadcast. She explains that she would rather comment online in broken isiZulu than proper siSwati, as more people are likely to respond. In addition, while speakers of other African languages are willing to compensate with isiZulu, isiZulu speakers are not necessarily happy to make such allowances for other languages. Andile is vehement that the programme should only use isiZulu or English. He likens Tshivenda, for example, to Chinese, suggesting that it is very difficult for him. Despite isiZulu being the dominant African language, Busani warns against one language dominating a multilingual programme: "People will tend to say this is a Zulu thing… or this is a Sesotho thing, and then you lose the person that might be interested."

In order to foster broader inclusion, the isiZulu language used on *Yilungelo Lakho* has been "watered down." Zolani explains "If we were to be broadcasting in Xhosa A or isiZulu A, I think we would lose viewers." He states that the *Yilungelo Lakho* audience would not understand the type of high-level traditional isiZulu that would probably be spoken in rural KwaZulu Natal. Magagula (2015, p.37) refers to an "urban isiZulu" and writes that there is a clear distinction "between the lexicons of speakers living in more traditional rural environments and those living in urban areas." Zolani perceives the *Yilungelo Lakho* audience to be "aspirant," people who are urban, literate, and understand the pop culture that characterises city life in Johannesburg. They are employed and can afford smartphones. Many will not speak or understand traditional or rural isiZulu. The Producers choose to use "conversational vernac mixed with English" on the programme platforms in order to be more inclusive of their target audience. Perhaps ironically, those who do speak "isiZulu A" – those poor, rural, less educated isiZulu speakers – are once again excluded from the public discourse, despite the brief for the SABC and *Yilungelo Lakho* to specifically include them.

African-language speakers must be digitally literate in order to participate fully in online discussions. They must be able to navigate the Internet, access browsers, or register on platforms such as Facebook. Poor people in rural areas struggle to access the Internet due to a lack of infrastructure and the costs associated with the Internet. Language proficiency also impacts on what content they are able to access. Xoliswa suggests that "people who are

online are people who can operate smartphones, so you think there is some sort of level of English understanding." That they need to understand English in order to access the Internet remains the challenge. Yamkela states that there is also a lack of vocabulary in the African languages: "You are going to have to run to English words because there are few words in Nguni that have been developed." While none of the interviewees referenced actual access to the Internet as a challenge, Yamkela does point out that social media platforms are more suited to younger people. Busani refers to the use of English communication on SABC television as "talking to the youth" and "leaving out older people."

Despite the high levels of language diversity in South Africa, or perhaps because of it, there remains the need to include people in public sphere deliberations. Facebook offers *Yilungelo Lakho* audiences new and different opportunities, as intimated by Reed and Boyd (2016, p.8), to contribute to discussions that impact them, overcoming some limitations of television. Andile states for example, that calling in to the live programme is very stressful: "They tell you to wait, you listen to the show on your phone… and then the show is still on the TV, you don't concentrate, waiting for them to pick up your call." He says that Facebook is the better option because he can turn off his phone and continue watching the programme, knowing that his contribution has already been made. Andile explains that he has often been left on hold until the programme has come to an end in order to make his contribution, meaning that he would have spent the better part of an hour on the telephone, which could be costly (although he explained that he had access to a telephone contract that allows him to do this at no additional cost). This could be a challenge for others, though.

Yamkela states that social media has played a "very powerful" role in extending the broadcast audience and also in extending the type of discussions on the programme: "I think we have never seen something like it before." He cites examples of discussions around timeshare and investments, suggesting that they invite a different type of contributor, usually English speaking. While the *Yilungelo Lakho* audience might be growing, this growth typically falls outside the Nguni languages. Zolani states "people want to participate, even if it's Nguni… They want to have their voices heard; they want their messages read". He points out that people want recognition: "Remember the viewership – it can be as trivial as wanting to see your own face, your own message, hearing your own voice on the radio or TV."

For an audience previously excluded from the public sphere discourse, the freedom to participate in isiZulu (or other African languages) is significant. The online option offers the SABC a means of extending its reach. Andile notes that even on general SABC programming, "languages like Shangaan and Venda do not get enough time." Nonetheless, he also agrees that greater use of isiZulu would be positive. Andile says that as a Zulu speaker, he would be happy with any of the Nguni languages but that he would not be happy with online communication in other languages with which he is not familiar: "this Venda language is Chinese to me – very Chinese… It's very difficult." Andile and Dineo are satisfied that the comments that they make online are recognised and included in the programme regularly. Although Zolani argues that online contributions are as important as on-air contributions, Xoliswa points out that the inclusion of Facebook comments constitute only one element of the show. Largely due to broadcast time constraints, online comments very often become last-minute additions "if time permits".

6.2 Rational Deliberation

English is the language of business at the SABC. It is associated with official written messaging, and Xoliswa explains that the use of English is the norm in written communication around the *Yilungelo Lakho* production process. She states that:

> When you are sending an email, you are going to send it in English. When you are writing anything at all, you are going to send it in English. When you are communicating with your EP (Executive Producer), even though it is a Nguni show, you are going to communicate in English. When you are sitting in a diary meeting, it is going to be in English, even though at the end of the day when you do your insert, you are going to be using siSwati (her mother tongue).

As the language of written communication, the programme's Facebook posts are always written in English. The majority (70 percent) of responses received on Facebook in this study are also in English (349 from a total of 497 comments). Xoliswa states that this is because people take their cue from the posts. The majority of people respond in English because the initial post has been written in English. She states that this is similar to how the broadcast audience responds to the programme presenters. An isiZulu speaker receives more responses in isiZulu, and a siSwati presenter receives more responses in siSwati, but both usually receive English responses when they speak English. Dineo explains that the responses are "automatic"

If the post is in English, I respond in English, and if the post is in Sotho, then I go to my Pedi because Sotho and Pedi are almost the same so… I never even thought deep about the languages… So, if they post in English, I reply in English, that's how I do it.

Another reason for the prevailing use of English online is that it is considered quicker and more economical to write in English. Despite isiZulu being a written language, Busani states that "in Zulu, a sentence is very, very long". Andile refers to English as a "shortcut," more suitable for the concise, speedy environment of a platform such as Facebook. Despite this belief, isiZulu and other African-language comments on Facebook are not necessarily much longer than English contributions, although words are often abbreviated, much as with English script. Busani admits that he also falls back on English in his daily online communication: "If you've seen my posts, all my posts, then you will see that most of them are written in English… lots of my friends, especially the Black friends, we communicate in English." He explains that even though he speaks to his children and friends in isiZulu, when he communicates with them on Facebook, he writes in English. Apart from the economy of the language, Busani explains that many people cannot write in isiZulu. He states that young people are being educated in English and cannot be expected to write in a language (isiZulu) that they do not know, "a language they only speak at home."

Despite the dominance of English online, 30 percent (148) of the contributions on the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page were written either fully or partially in an African language. Although initial responses to the posts are almost always in English, participants often introduce African languages in their communication. Usually, once a single isiZulu word or comment has been introduced, others follow suite. One hundred and six (106) or 21 percent of comments on the *Yilungelo Lakho* page were written entirely in an African language (85 in isiZulu), while 42 were code-mixed with English. Although the nature of the tweets studied are different, approximately 20 percent are either completely or partially in an African language.

There is no perceived difference in the substance of comments based on language, and both isiZulu and English comments are considered valid contributions to the programme. Xoliswa states that it is the relevance of the written comment that is important when considering its use on the programme. Yamkela agrees, "You end up going for the one [post] that takes a

little time to read on the programme but makes the point quicker... If someone expresses the point beautifully in their language, they are not excluded, but it is a question of which one has more impact."

The use of English in relation to comments on *Yilungelo Lakho* is perceived to be linked to education and status. Andile explains that despite being taught in English at school, it is not his mother tongue, and he is "ashamed" to speak it in front of other people. He states that he only uses English words in his Facebook posts such that he can prove to other online contributors that "hey, this one he's been to school". Xoliswa states that there is a perception that English is of a higher status: "If you are able to articulate yourself well in English, then I guess that gives you some points towards you being more intelligent or you being in touch with where the world is going as opposed to someone who is going to respond only just in an African language." Her rationale is supported by Andile, who fears that he will be labelled "illiterate" or a "domkop" if he writes only in isiZulu. Busani supports this as well. He also believes that he is taken more seriously when he communicates in English and refers to experiences at his workplace, where he would rather chair meetings in English because it is deemed to be more authoritative.

Although the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page offers more immediate and possibly more casual access than television, it is still viewed as an official SABC News platform. Online contributors consider it to be a formal representation of the broadcast programme, even though it exists on a social network. Andile and Dineo both believe their contributions are taken seriously, even though they are not always in English. In addition, comments on the Facebook page were largely relevant and in keeping with the subject under discussion. However, there is also some degree of less formal communication, more in keeping with the social media context with the addition of pictures, emoticons, memes, and even slang, on occasion (Gibson, 2012, p.80; Górka, 2014; Akbarov and Tankosić, 2016, p.9). Yamkela describes this as "today's language," which, he states, is common on social media:

> It can be casual, it can be careless, without demeaning them but by being careless I mean being grammatically careless or something like that, or by saying things incoherently so you have to piece together actually what has motivated this person to write in the first place.

6.3 Opinion formation in a unified forum

While the mandate of the SABC is to share content in the African languages, this is not happening as effectively as it should be, especially on television and more so online. The experience on *Yilungelo Lakho* is a case in point. The programme brief is to share consumer news in the Nguni languages, but the multilingual identity usually forces a fallback to English. *Yilungelo Lakho* is not the only African-language SABC News programme that experiences this challenge. Zolani cites the example of the former SABC News flagship programme *Asikhulume*, also a Nguni-language programme that became primarily English. He states that *Asikhulume* was "influenced by the issues and the type of people who come onto that platform to contribute." He explains that it is always easier and simpler to produce monolingual shows. The Afrikaans programme *Fokus*, for example, does not experience such challenges. Despite this, there are numerous content streams within the SABC creating news content in isiZulu and the other official languages. IsiZulu dialogue on the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page illustrates the potential for isiZulu content and could support the convergence of these different content streams into a single unified forum. Zolani explains that "work is done in a silo-like fashion" and that "there is no planning in respect of integration or possible content sharing." Producers of *Yilungelo Lakho* work independently of other isiZulu-content producers, despite often carrying repeated or overlapping content. Xoliswa states that it is often the case that a potential guest will not want to appear on their programme because they have already spoken to the SABC via a different programme. This is particularly problematic given the scarcity of experts and guests who speak isiZulu. There are also other online platforms sharing content, including, for example, the Ukhozi FM Facebook page and the SABC iIndaba page, which both primarily share content in isiZulu. Even though the iIndaba page is a news-specific page, no one from the *Yilungelo Lakho* production team was even aware of its existence. A more structured approach to online production, and perhaps a combined effort from other SABC isiZulu platforms, could potentially create a strong platform and bring together a new audience for isiZulu SABC News content.

Although contributions in isiZulu (and other African languages) are "welcomed" by the *Yilungelo Lakho* production team, it is noteworthy that the expectation is for these comments to be in English. The online platform is not impacted by the language mandate requirements, and therefore, there is an understanding that English contributions are the norm rather than the Nguni ones. Yamkela suggests that there are no language quotas online and that they are

not forced into meeting Nguni-language targets as they are with the broadcast. Xoliswa rationalises their decision regarding the use of English online, pointing to a culture of code-switching. She explains that in a multilingual environment, people seldom only speak a single language but rather incorporate a number of languages into a single sentence or conversation, for example, adding Zulu words to English comments or English words to isiZulu conversation: "I don't think there are many people who speak Zulu entirely. I think how we communicate nowadays is that we mix languages." Dineo explains how this occurs in her conversations with her friends:

> [M]aybe I'll start to speak, you know in English… then I come with my Pedi Dumelang, then we carry on with my Pedi… I have friends from all different languages, so myself, like as I said, I like learning other languages, if it's my Xitsonga friends, then we can start with the Xitsonga, but if the conversation is getting deeper, then I will be like huh huh it's getting too deep now, I don't understand, let's speak in a language that we can all relate to… which is English, and then we carry on.

Yamkela adds that code-switching is a common practice, even on language-specific public service radio where English is often interspersed with the African languages. As mentioned earlier, Andile alludes to this practice in popular music, suggesting that songs in other African languages will not succeed unless they contain some English or isiZulu lyrics.

Online communication in isiZulu is both necessary and convenient (because it is the language spoken by most South Africans) but also a means of bringing together isiZulu communities across the country and the globe. Andile cites examples of two other Facebook groups to which he belongs that support groups of people with specific interests. In his Katlehong community group, there are people who speak different African languages; thus, communication is mostly in English. He explains that he also belongs to an Nquthu community group, his hometown. Because people from Nquthu are Zulu speakers, they communicate only in isiZulu, despite being scattered around the country. Andile is able to remain updated regarding happenings in his community and also receives support from them when he is away, all the while maintaining ties to his place of birth. Busani states that he also follows a number of other online conversations in isiZulu, although he does have reservations about strictly isiZulu communication online. Dineo, who has no qualms about communicating in any language, is, on the other hand, enthusiastic in stating that she would follow a news page in her mother tongue, Sepedi. That her African-language comments are accepted as legitimate contributions is one reason that Dineo specifically chooses to

contribute to this programme. She cites *Yilungelo Lakho* and another SABC News programme, *Leihlo La Sechaba,* as the two programmes that she follows diligently because she is allowed to contribute in isiZulu or Sepedi.

Social media platforms such as Facebook have evolved from networking platforms into spaces where even formal and official communication may be accessed. It is not out of character, therefore, for a news organisation such as the SABC to have a presence here. Discussions focus on consumer news and issues that impact people in their daily lives, personally or as part of the public. Topics on insurance (03 June 2019), the road accident fund (10 June 2019), home loans (24 June 2019), and medical aids (19 August 2019) suggest that members of the public are able to effectively contribute to the discussion on Facebook even when they do not participate in the broadcast programme. Online contributors come together around a specific idea that impacts on all of them. Although the Producers do not always respond to comments or encourage more in-depth discussion, there is potential for this to happen. Xoliswa states that she had not returned to Facebook to "ask what people thought of the topic, what they took away from it." Yamkela reflects on the manner in which the production team manages its social media obligations, suggesting that the lack of extended or more intense online interaction is primarily a capacity issue. Another criticism of social media platforms as a model for the public sphere concerns the use of algorithms and other such technology to determine what content might be accessed. That people are "guided" in respect of what stories they receive could impact on whether they are fully participating. This could also mean that an isiZulu speaker would be guided towards isiZulu content and thus, be able to participate in isiZulu discussions on a particular subject, while he might not previously have chosen to search for it in the first instance.

6.4 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter considered key findings of the study in respect of the factors of inclusion, rational deliberation, and opinion formation in a unified forum. It considered, firstly, whether people who contribute in isiZulu to *Yilungelo Lakho's* Facebook page are in fact included in the deliberations underway. Even though English remains the lingua franca online, isiZulu undoubtedly dominates the other three Nguni languages. While African language comments are welcomed, and considered in respect of their substance, it is also apparent that those who speak traditional or urban isiZulu might in effect become excluded. The study then considers

whether isiZulu comments on the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page allude to the potential for rational deliberations in isiZulu. The comments (on Twitter and Facebook) suggest that English remains the language of business on the programme. It is associated with education and status. Despite isiZulu being a written language, many find it to be a language that is tedious to write. However, most comments relate directly to the topic being discussed, despite the social media platform generally being associated with more informal and casual interactions. Finally, the chapter considers issues of fragmentation and the spaces in which deliberation occurs. As an organisation, the SABC offers numerous and separate spaces for deliberation. Digital spaces such as Facebook offer an opportunity to curate content in isiZulu (and potentially other languages) in order to bring together similar communities. For users, such platforms could also offer the option of discovering isiZulu language content, where they might not previously have been aware of such.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

In this Chapter I summarise some key findings of this study, I also reflect on challenges in the research process, and put forward some suggestions for future practice and research.

7.1 Key Findings

Language use on *Yilungelo Lakho's* online platforms plays a key role in terms of inclusion/exclusion. As noted by members of the Production team and confirmed by the profile of online contributors, the target audience for the broadcast programme are urban or peri-urban speakers of Nguni languages from the lower LSM. This is reflected in language practices such as code switching and mixing as well as in the preference for specific language varieties, both reflected on the social media channels. The concern that using standard varieties of isiZulu, for instance, would exclude many isiZulu speakers, was shared by both sets of interviewees, and is confirmed by actual language use in the Facebook comments. Despite *Yilungelo Lakho* being an explicitly Nguni language programme, and isiZulu being the most widely spoken language in south Africa, interviewees expressed concerns about speakers of other African languages feeling excluded if only or mainly isiZulu were to be used. As a result, English is often employed as lingua franca, even within a production team composed exclusively of speakers of Nguni languages. For those who follow the programme on television, and who speak an African language, online platforms offer an opportunity for additional interactions and active participation. The possibility of commenting in a language such as isiZulu was explicitly mentioned as increasing access and making contributors more comfortable. It should however be noted that the most marginalised among isiZulu speakers, that is the poor and those living in deep rural areas, are the least likely to benefit from such opportunity. Concerns about the exclusion of non-isiZulu speakers or of isiZulu speakers who do not have access to the Internet reflect an established critique of Habermas' ideal conception of the public sphere as reproducing social inequalities and divisions, including online.

English is considered the most suitable language in high-status domains. Like speakers of other African languages, isiZulu speaking interviewees are favourable about using their

language online in principle. However, they feel that using English, or at least code mixing makes them look more educated, intelligent, and authoritative. Such belief is consistent with the relative scarcity of isiZulu speaking experts among the programme's guests. Online interactions include exchanges of information, complements to speakers and presenters, and alternative forms of expression (for example, images, emoticons, etc), which, while not necessarily exemplifying rational deliberation in the Habermasian sense, could be recognised as forms of public participation and engagement. Interviewees emphasized that online comments to be used during the programme are not selected based on the language in which they are written, but rather on their content and relevance. It must also be noted that initial Facebook posts are published in English and as is the case during the programme, people tend to respond in the same language. Against this background, the fact that approximately one in three comments is written in an African language attests to a willingness by speakers to use these languages in public discussions.

Yilungelo Lakho is part of a relatively limited media space wherein African languages in general and isiZulu in particular find expression. While examples of online portals functioning mainly or entirely in isiZulu exist, members of the production team, and to a lesser extent, online contributors, appear to be largely unaware. Such spaces are recognised as bringing together isiZulu speakers in different geographical locations around a common interest, topic, or on the basis of a shared background. Examples like *Asikhulume* are referenced to support the claim that multilingual Nguni programmes are inevitably destined to revert to English as the lingua franca. In comparison, the monolingual Afrikaans example of *Fokus* points towards the possibility of a successful online initiative in a language other than English. The survival and further expansion of digital public "sphericals" in isiZulu is likely to depend to a large extent on socio-economic factors.

7.2 Reflections

During the course of this study, I encountered several challenges. First of all, as an experienced professional with prior grasp of the context, I had to lean to "distance myself" from the research. Facing my own bias and preconceived ideas was a necessary step to engage with my topic from a fresh perspective and remain open to new and unexpected

insights. Secondly, having been absent from academia for many years, I had to learn to shift from a journalistic to a scholarly style of writing. This proved to be almost as difficult as learning a new language. Thirdly, while this study remains solidly grounded within Media Studies, in keeping with my own areas of professional and academic interest, I had to familiarise myself with basic concepts in Linguistics. I tried my best to do justice to my topic without stepping into a separate discipline of which, I must admit, I know little about. Finally, as noted in Chapter Four, I do not speak isiZulu. While I could rely on competent translations which were double-checked by one of my supervisors, my lack of proficiency posed some limitations to the depth of analysis of the online content, and possibly the rapport with some of my interviewees.

The (Digital) public sphere is a well-established concept which has been abundantly applied and critiqued. As a result, I had to engage with an extensive body of scholarly literature. I found operationalising different dimensions of my theoretical framework somewhat challenging as some claims, for example, those about English as a lingua franca, appear to relate to different aspects. As I believe the discussion in Chapter Six clearly suggests, I also found it difficult to isolate findings pertaining to isiZulu from those about other African languages. While isiZulu plays a particular role as the most widely spoken language in South Africa and as a lingua franca in particular contexts, in many respects the speakers of isiZulu share similar challenges to those of other language communities.

7.3 Recommendations

As a suggestion for future research, investigating online contributors on *Yilungelo Lakho's* Facebook page as an online community may provide some insights into the relationships and interactions between contributors. A researcher fully proficient in isiZulu would also have better access to the nuances of the language and could perform an in-depth content analysis. A researcher fully proficient in isiZulu could also perform an in-depth content analysis to better understand types and quality of online deliberations. The present study could be replicated for other African languages and different online platforms. In light of the point noted above, it would be interesting to consider and possibly compare different African languages instead of focussing on just one. Alternatively, based on my experience, I would suggest identifying and focussing on a monolingual case which could be studied

comprehensively and in detail. The relationship between policy and practice, which formed only a minor part of the background to the present study, deserves more scholarly attention. As an example, members of the production team indicated that in the absence of a specific guideline, they could use English in the initial Facebook posts. Closely linked to the issue of regulation is the aspect of appropriate funding and resources. As a practical suggestion emerging from this study, the SABC should consider more integration and collaboration between online platforms where isiZulu is used to exploit possible synergies and avoid duplication. The appointment of a single, highly motivated person responsible for promoting the use of isiZulu across different platforms would go a long way in this respect.

The root of this study lies in my former position as an Executive Producer at SABC Digital News. English news stories would be published on the SABC News website hourly, and a number of programmes would be shared on the SABC News YouTube channel, as would be inserts, live broadcasts, etc. This was done in the course of the standard operating procedure. However, a large portion of the SABC's news content, African-language content, was absent from radio and television bulletins and current affairs programmes. There was no website to publish these stories and a lack of editorial capacity to do so. While the language mandate remained at the core of many discussions around content creation, no targeted direction existed in respect of the online space.

Online platforms offer the possibility to share content relatively simply and economically. They also offer the flexibility to experiment with content types and different platforms. Content that might be suitably shared on Facebook, for example, might not necessarily be appropriate for Twitter. It could be a worthy experiment for *Yilungelo Lakho* to begin sharing their topics and extending their online discussions in isiZulu and possibly other Nguni languages.

The introduction of digital platforms to SABC newsrooms have, in some instances, meant increased content production and resources for minimal financial return. However, a more considered approach in respect of content curation and moderation could potentially offer increased returns. Attempts can be made to merge content from different sources (such as news departments and radio and television platforms) into social media pages with a monolingual focus. Such an exercise could also reduce resources to a single strand – an

example would be a single online administrator to curate isiZulu content from isiZulu news sources, as opposed to each source working independently of the others.

Online platforms are fluid in nature and necessarily amenable to intense regulation and monitoring. However, they could provide a viable opportunity to extend and increase news coverage and sharing in the official African languages.

IsiZulu is the most dominant of South Africa's official languages. However, this does not imply that the other African languages are not viable markets for the SABC. Replicating such a study to consider the potential for the use of these languages online could yield important results in respect of how the public broadcaster refines its approach to online content generation in future.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

STUDENT NUMBER:	16B8037
NAME:	AASRA BRAMDEO
DEGREE:	MASTER OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT:	SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STUDIES
THESIS TITLE:	An African language in the public sphere – the use of isiZulu on Yilungelo Lakho online platforms.

PROPOSED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

General Information to share with all interviewees

- Thank you
- Explain who I am
- What am I doing – context
- That I have approval but do not represent the SABC
- That all information shared will be in confidence
- That they consent to being interviewed
- That the interview is recorded

Questions for administrators

Goal 1

- Is English a gatekeeper - the primary language of current affairs?
- Is there space for African languages on online platforms?
- Do you consider your online audience as a part of a larger audience – or are they separate to your broadcast audience?
- Does the fact that Yilungelo Lakho is a public broadcast platform impact on what language is used for online discussion?

Goal 2

- How do you decide what language to use on online platforms?
- How do you think the online audience input impacts on discussions of your programme?
- To what extent do you encourage and/or support such discussions?

Goal 3

- Yilungelo Lakho broadcasts in the Nguni languages. Do the online discussions provide a true reflection of these languages?

- Does the multilingual nature of the programme impact on how online audiences participate in the discussions?
- To what extent do discussions on Yilungelo Lako online platforms overlap with isiZulu discussions on other SABC online platforms – like SABC Indaba?

Questions for audience

Goal 1 – inclusion

- What language do you generally use in your online communication?
- Is there space for African languages on online platforms?
- Does having access to Yilungelo Lakho on online platforms make it easier for you to access/contribute to the programme?
- How do you feel about using an African language to interact with the producers of Yilungelo Lakho?

Goal 2 – rationalisation

- How do you decide what language to use to comment?
- Do you feel more able to contribute meaningfully in isiZulu?
- To what extent do you think/feel that your comments or suggestions are taken into account?

Goal 3 – fragmentation

- Does the multilingual nature of the programme impact on how you contribute to the discussion and in what language you do so?
- How do you decide in what language to comment?
- Do you also follow / contribute to other similar online isiZulu discussions?
- Would you prefer online discussions in only a single language? Which one? Why?

APPENDIX B: TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH PRODUCTION TEAM

XOLISWA

A: How long have you been with YL?

X: Since 2014

A: Okay, so it has been a while that you have been a [refers to job title] there?

X: Yes, it has.

A: The SABC is mandated to broadcast in all the official languages.

X: Yes, that is correct.

A: But when the legislation done, obviously the online platforms did not exist, so the mandate doesn't officially relate what happens on online platforms. And in the last few years there have been numerous attempts to extend our coverage to online. So, we have now an official news website. We have numerous social media pages and so forth. But by and large all the SABC offering have been in English. So even the Ukhosi FM website is published in English with very little Zulu content on it. So, I started looking at the use of African languages online and what it could mean for SABC News content. And one of the things I intend doing is looking YL Facebook page as a case study or an example of that. YL as you know has a very big audience online, especially on Facebook. You have a fair amount of commentary or a multilingual program. You have a fair amount of non-English content on your Facebook page as well. So, just looking at it in terms of the program, how the production team works. And how you we go forward with content that is in a language outside of English.

X: Okay. I think the challenge really starts with us because when we post messages hoping that viewers are going to comment on those messages, we post them in English. And I am sure the viewers gets a cue from us. So, then they are tempted to respond in English as well. Because also the challenge is that although the mandate is to broadcast in all the official languages, not all of us understand those languages. For example, I speak SiSwati. The SiSwati people are a minority in in South Africa. So, every time I think of posting in SiSwati, I'm

thinking of all the Zulu people who are not going to understand. All the Xhosa people who are not going to follow what I am trying to say. That is why we always lean now on the business language which is English. I don't know how we could change that.

A: But essentially English is the gatekeeper, right? It is the primary language because of all these issues, right?

X: Ja. We are assuming that everyone does understand, understand English although you've correctly pointed out the mandate is to have these languages on board, but it is a little bit tricky because they get the cue from us.

A: Now, as a broadcast program, when you are looking at your live program on television for example, you provide public broadcast news content and in that instance, you are mandated to broadcast in this case in the Nguni languages. How does that impact on the discussion that happens online? You know, do you encourage the interaction in African language for example?

X: Look, I think that when we are having a live show and people are following by participating on Facebook, they usually get the cue from the presenter. So, if you find that the presenter is presenting in Zulu. For example, we have two presenters. A Zulu presenter and a SiSwati presenter. If the presenter is presenting in Zulu, then you will get a whole lot more responses in Zulu than you would any other language. If the presenter is presenting in SiSwati, then you find the responses are more inclined to the language of that presenter.

A: Do you think that's because in South Africa we are just such an easily multilingual country that we can switch from one to the other or do you think that you are actually getting different audiences on the different days?

X: Look our audiences are mostly one and the same people and I will tell you why because even our callers are almost predictable. We always know there is a guy from Joburg who is going to call. Or a lady from Newcastle who is going to call. I don't know hey. I don't know what the answer to that will be. But I think that there are also issues relating to how English in general is perceived. If you are able to articulate yourself well in English, then I guess that gives you some points towards you being more intelligent or you being in touch with where

the world is going as opposed to someone who is going to respond only just in an African language. That is what I think it is.

But for me, I really think the audience is the same because even when I take messages, I have noticed that it is more or less the same people who are likely to respond. Yes, even the callers that we get, like I said, you can almost know that if it is not this guy from the Eastern Cape then it is going to be this lady from Hillbrow or that guy from Newcastle. Rarely do you get, er, new people because our show sort of like, tries to solve consumer issues, so the only time you would get a new person is only when that issue we are discussing on that particular day relates to them. But most of the time the people who call in are people who are just participating sometimes not just because of the topic but sometimes because of the presenter. I will make an example of a certain guy from Newcastle who would call in every time Alisha was on air just to make a comment. Not any positive comment but just to say look I am following the show it is a nice show.

A: You speak about the same people who will call. Do you find there is a different audience on Facebook than on the broadcast for example?

X: Certainly yes. I do feel that on Facebook we have youngsters who depend solely on the topic that you post just before you go on air. Just before we go on air, we always post telling people what the topic is going to be about. I don't feel that the majority of the people who go onto the Facebook page actually follow what is going on, on air. They don't follow the discussion as it unfolds. They just look at whatever you have posted and instinctively they respond to it.

A: So, you are essentially running an almost different discussion online than you are on your program?

X: I believe so to some extent. I do believe so to some extent. Not to say all the people online are not following the show as it unfolds on television. But I do feel there are some who don't watch the program at all. But, because they are following us and they have something to say about what we have posted, whether it is something they have experienced themselves or it is just a random comment you know because everybody is allowed to comment in whatever way they do.

A: But it seems like your Facebook audience seem to be their own community, right?

X: Yes, yes, I do. Look, I've never really gone back to Facebook to ask what people thought of the topic, what they took away from it. I've never done that. Perhaps if I had done that then I'd be able to give you a conclusive response. But what I have observed, especially now during the lockdown, is that maybe in a week in advance you would tell people that such and such day this is the show we are going to have on air and immediately you would have responses. So, it is before the show has gone on air and already people are participating. On the day the show is on air, and you don't post anything, you know reminding them that we are talking about this, when you go back to Facebook you find there is not even a single comment about what was on television. So, it's almost like people wait for us to post and then based on what we have posted, then they comment. If we don't say anything about the topic on the day, then we will get zero responses on Facebook. At least that has been my experience now, between March and now.

A: All your posts on Facebook are in English …

X: Unfortunately, yes they are.

A: You say unfortunately but like you were saying there are reasons why. It is not something you just do. It is a well thought out process. You as a team sat and decided we are going to do our posts in English, right?

X: Honestly, no. We didn't. We didn't sit down and decide that… that the posts are going to be in English. But I think the reason we do it is because English is a business language. So, we think everybody is going to come on board even though we expect the responses to be in Zulu, or SiSwati or Ndebele or Xhosa but we post in English because I think we try to accommodate everybody because, as much as our target are the Nguni language, there are also people who speak Sesotho and other languages who are also a part of our Facebook page.

A: You are pretty regular in terms of how you post, when you post, what kind of post you put up and things like that. Do you think that your Facebook audience are more encourage now to

use or to comment in African languages than they were initially? Are they more comfortable to do it now, perhaps?

X: Er … are they more comfortable to do it now? What do you mean? From which period to which period?

A: From when you first started to where you are now.

X: Okay, let us say from when I joined up until March because what is happening now is that in much as we are posting messages on Facebook, we don't read them during the show. And we have communicated that to viewers that don't expect that we are going to read your messages on Facebook. And from my individual posts what I have gathered is that between March and now people respond in English because they know that they are not going to be read out on television anyway. But prior to that because some were watching at the same time then those are the people who would respond in Nguni languages. I think yes, I think it has improved. There is improvement.

A: Do you think generally there is a space for African languages on online platforms?

X: Jo! Look, the people who are online are people who can operate smart phones, so you think there is some sort of level of English understanding and now, to be honest, I don't think there are many people who speak Zulu entirely. I think how we communicate now a days is that we mix languages. Unless it is video and voice messages. But written, I think instinctively a person feels they must express themselves in English. I think it comes naturally.

A: Why do you think that?

X: Because that is the language we were taught in. That's your business language. Even when you go for a job interview, you can't say wait guys the project I am going to be doing is in SiSwati. They expect you to respond in English. They measure you in English knowing that you are going to be doing a Seswati program.

A: that is interesting but as you say, English is a business language, the Gatekeeper.

X: Yes

A: So Xoliswa, as an [refers to job title] and you are one of [refers to job title] on the show, right?

X: Yes

A: When you do use Facebook posts on your program, how do you decide what language to use or which ones to use?

X: Honestly, from us, the [refers to job title] we use English and that is standard. That is not something we sat and agreed on. It is just a norm. When you are sending an email you are going to send it in English. When you are writing anything at all you are going to send it in English. When you are communicating with your EP, even though it is a Nguni show, you are going to communicate in English. When you are sitting in a diary meeting, it is going to be in English even though at the end of the day when you do your insert you are going to be using SiSwati. The presenter who is presenting the show is going to be in SiSwati

A: But when you are putting those comments on air does the language it is written in make a difference?

X: Yes. When the posts are being read on air, they are actually sifted on Facebook but not sifted entirely. I don't think the language is the first thing we look at. What we look at is the relevance of the post. I think that is the deciding factor. How relevant is this comment to the topic that we are talking about, and the language is really secondary because you could have a hundred people posting in isiZulu, but you think, look they've really missed the mark about what we are talking about. And then two people posting in English, and you feel these ones are following the program. Then those are ones you are going to read on air. And it is up to the presenter really because another presenter will … the presenter will normally practice those messages. They glance at those messages during the break so another presenter may decide I am going to translate this message, yes, it is written in English but then I am going to translate it into Zulu or whatever but most times they don't do that. They just read it as it is.

A: I suppose that would also depend on the guest because sometimes they might need to translate from an African language to English because of your guest as well?

X: Yes, if the guest has to respond to that particular comment for example if it is written in Zulu and they have to respond to that particular comment. But the guest that we have as well, if a Facebook comment is in English, 100 percent of the time they understand it.

A: To what extent do you think the online audience input, the input you get from your social media to what extent does that impact on the discussions on your program?

X: Look, to be honest, that is a by the way. To go to Facebook, it is like one of the elements of the show - so now we are going to read your messages on Facebook and that is it. So, we can have an entire discussion in whatever language and that also … you just raised something very important now … the guest … that is also now influenced by the guest. If you have got two guests and both of them are English speaking, the presenter is forced then to do the show in English. So when we go to Facebook honestly, it is by the way.
It is very seldom that you would see a message on Facebook and ask the guest to respond to that because another thing, our show is an hour long so by the time we go to Facebook we've already touched on a whole lot of things that people have been asking from the beginning of the show. So you find we have already tackled some things that someone is asking on Facebook. So, we are just reading it (comments) as by the way.

A: Do you think, though that there is potential to perhaps use your Facebook audience in a more impactful way?

X: Yes, there is. What I normally do is that I ask them for example for story suggestions for topics. Sometimes I get them. Sometimes what I get is not useable. Sometimes if I am not sure because another thing that drives us is that we are supposed to have a viewership … you know it doesn't make sense to go on air and nobody is watching because they are not interested in your topic. So, sometimes when I have a topic, I am not sure how it will do, I post it on Facebook and based on the remarks I get on there, I am able to measure whether it is a strong topic that is worth discussing or not.
But certainly, I do feel that we need to be maximizing our use of Facebook. Right now, I don't think we are. I really don't think we are that much. There was once a suggestion that if

we ask our viewers to come up with their own topics which they post on Facebook then we would credit them by saying this topic is inspired by so and so and perhaps show their picture. But that was never implemented. So, we do have these ideas, but I think a challenge for now is implementation. You know why, because we are just two Producers and then we have got an EP and we were not so long ago joined by a coordinator but who is on maternity leave currently.

A: It is interesting. You are still then, even though you might not during a program, go directly to Facebook but you are using your Facebook audience as a means of finding new ideas and starting new discussions and originating ideas.

X: Not so long ago we had a program on what youth spend their money on cos just now it was June, and it was Youth Month so that is a question that I posed and we had a lot of responses, most of them were in English and what I picked up from that is that the majority of our viewers said alcohol. So, then I based my topic on alcohol and finances. So, just yesterday I posted about Whatsapp gifting, like a Whatsapp stockvel and almost immediately I got not so many responses, but I did get some were people are talking about whether it is a scam. They've tried it. It hasn't worked out but again the responses are in English and the reason that they are in English is because I asked the question in English.

A: Do you think if you asked a question in isiZulu or Seswati then you might get more responses in those languages?

X: I believe so.

A: Because I have also been interviewing some of your Facebook audience and a lot of them say that. They say we respond in English because the post is in English.

X: But I agree fully.

A: But also, I have been looking at some of the comments and it is interesting how people will respond in English and all it takes is one person to comment in a vernacular language and then everybody starts commenting … they pick up on the vibe almost and then the entire

conversation switches. So, it is interesting what the language of origin of the post is and how it impacts on what follows.

X: And yes, what I have observed is that when we are having a live discussion on television and somebody is following, they will get a cue from the presenter. You know why I am saying that? Because when they start their post, they address the presenter directly. One of our presenter's name is Alisha. Her surname is Jali so they would say Ma Jali and then their comments in Zulu or they would say Sis Alisha and then they comment in Zulu because she is speaking in Zulu. But if she were speaking in English then they would comment in English.

A: Now that you mention it do you think this is possibly extending your on-air content to online. You said earlier that you don't necessarily follow up or respond or whatever, but do you think this might be a way to do that on your online platform I mean?

X: Like what are you asking?

A: You said like somebody would comment and they will address the comment directly to Alisha or Simphiwe and during the program you may not have time to deal with it. Do you think this gives you an opportunity to later on respond or put some sort of additional content online to make it available to those people contributing?

X: Look, we always try to do that but then again you know that after a topic is done then you have moved on to the next topic. So, yes, sometimes we just scan through the comments, or we end up saying, thank you for watching. And that is where it ends. Or we leave contact details of the guests we had in studio but certainly, look, I really think that maybe we are giving our viewers a bit or a raw deal. Maybe we should engage with them a whole lot more in the languages of their choice.

A: But that would mean you as an [refers to job title] would need to speak in one or two or three or all of those languages or anyone else that was on your production team as an example.

X: We already have Alisha who speaks isiZulu, myself I speak Swati. We've got [names someone] who speaks Xhosa and Bra V who speaks Xhosa and then we've got Hlengi, our coordinator who speaks Sotho so I think we would be able to do that if we wanted to, I guess.

A: There is some sort of opportunity.

X: There is.

A: This whole thing about having broadcasting or sharing content of a multilingual nature, do you think that these discussions we have, whether on air or online, do you think they provide a true reflection of these languages?

X: Look, my language, which is SiSwati, I don't think it is adequate. Okay, I try my best to represent it although I am limited in doing so because I am just a [refers to job title]. So, the only way I can make that effort is through my inserts. So, it is very rare, very very rare, in fact on Facebook I have never seen a post in SiSwati. And it is very rare to get a caller who is speaking SiSwati. Sometimes you do pick up that this person is likely to be SiSwati speaking but because Zulu is a more dominant language, they would rather try to accommodate the presenter or everybody else who is listening in that more dominant language because perhaps they are thinking maybe these people are not going to understand me quite clearly if I speak my language.
Personally, would I write using SiSwati on Facebook, I don't think so because I don't think I would get as many responses as I would want to get. I would rather write either Xhosa or Zulu but first would be Zulu because I believe we've got a huge Zulu audience.

A: Well, I think well 85 percent of South Africans speak Zulu as a spoken language.

X: So, I would rather have Zulu, yes. Even broken Zulu. I would rather put that than my SiSwati because there is a chance that I might not even get a single response. You know we've got Simphiwe, our presenter, who speaks SiSwati, but I don't think he gets as many responses as Alisha does and I don't think it is because of the topic. I think it is maybe just the language.

A: So, the fact that I mean the multilingual nature of this program does this impact on how your audiences then participate in the discussions whether it is during a live broadcast or online. The fact that it is a multilingual program doe impact on how people participate.

X: By multilingual are you just sticking to the four Nguni languages which is your SiSwati, Zulu, Xhosa and …

A: Well, Nguni languages may be one group of languages but there are differences but what I mean it is not a Zulu program. Your presenters speak a number of different languages.

X: Simphiwe is from Swaziland, so Simphiwe speaks SiSwati and English. Sometimes we get a caller who speaks Sesotho and sometimes you find that Simphiwe needs to probe first of all he is going to struggle to probe. Number two, you find that there is a guest that now Simphiwe now needs to translate whatever the caller was saying because this guest does not understand Sesotho so what we normally do is we leave that question, the caller's question, we leave it up until we return from the ad break. Did I read that correctly? So, we continue with the discussion pretend like, look it didn't happen, the call didn't happen until we go to an ad break and then during the ad break that is when we get someone to translate quickly so that Simphiwe can understand, and the guest can understand and then we go back to that question. So, I really think it is a challenge. It is a challenge working for a multilingual program because when I go on interviews as well, I always keep my fingers crossed that the case study I get understands isiZulu at least because if they speak on Sotho, they are going to throw me off. So, language is a big issue. It is worse when it is Venda or Xitsonga.

A: You know, like I was telling you earlier, I have been interviewing some of your audience and one of the gentlemen I interviewed said to me at some stage … he said you know Aasra, they can do all the other languages but they mustn't do Tshivenda because I don't understand it and I said to him but I suppose if I was speaking to a Tshivenda person they would say no, you must do Tshivenda.

X: Yes, and you know people get offended when you say can you please accommodate me in English. People get offended because people want to express themselves in their languages. They say if you can allow isiZulu why then do you say to someone can you please speak in English.

A: Absolutely! Xoliswa, one more thing, the SABC as far as I know does not have a structured means of communicating online. So, they have a news website and what have you but essentially all your social media platforms have just mushroomed. So, each program will have their own platform and each announcer will have their own page and that kind of thing. Is there any effort or any way to coordinate the efforts news is doing in respect of languages? Like I know there is a very successful SABC Indaba page for example. Is there any coordination between you guys? Any sharing of content? That kind of thing?

X: I feel we work in silos. I will tell you why. Because there could be a guest, let us say for example, someone from the department of education, for example on Morning Live and then after Morning Live *Yilungelo Lakho* goes on air and we call that same guest to participate. But this guest will say, I've already been. I was on SABC. I was one of your SABC channels, why don't you take than interview and put it on your show? But we need to say no, we still need you to come to our show because this is not Morning Live. This is *Yilungelo Lakho*. So, I really think we work in silos. We don't know each other even. We don't care what the next program is doing. You just focus on what your program needs to do. I am just wondering as well out of that … I don't hey …

A: I think my experience from that kind of thing … so the reason I use Indaba is because it is a page I am familiar with from when I worked there and like you say it is one of those things because it is meant to be SABC news content that goes out in isiZulu. So, the isiZulu content comes from a number of different places so we can content from Ukhozi FM, and we can get content from the Zulu bulletin desks, and we can get content from a program like yours, right? I know a lot of the time resources are a problem because there is no one to pull the common threads together. There was some other program, I can't remember what it was, actually I think it was the RSG, the Afrikaans news Facebook page, and so RSG was contributing, and the Afrikaans news desk was contributing but they were sitting in different places so to actually get that coordination working was a problem. I think there is so much content available but a lot of it is getting lost because there is not that common thread to pull it together.

X: Yes, we are all doing our own stuff, but I think there is a lot of potential to do more hopefully. Someone was even suggesting there should be an office at the reception where all the

people who walk into the SABC are directed to. And then they give their stories to whoever is in that office and that person must shift those stories and channel them to different programs because what we have now is that you get a random call and there is somebody sitting at reception. They got a story and when you go there it is not even something that you can use because it is not in line with your program. There isn't a lot of coordination, but I think things will improve with time.

A: Yes, we are still very much learning, and it is a very complicated situation. Xoliswa thank you so much.

YAMKELA

A: As you are aware I am doing my master's Part time through Rhodes University, and my thesis looks at the use of African languages on online platforms. Now, there is very little official use of any African language on online platforms, on any online platforms. The SABC has a mandate to broadcast in all the official languages, but that mandate doesn't officially in any way extend to online platforms, right…
So, we've had at the SABC a number of online platforms developed, I mean there's the official News website, there are numerous Facebook pages, and Twitter handles and what have you that have some degree of African language use, but not too much on an official basis at all.
So, on an official basis the SABC has no real mandate to put up African languages on online platforms, but we have been doing it, almost in an informal way, for quite a while now. So, I am using the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page as my case study to consider the effect and the impact of the use of African languages online and what it could mean for SABC News going forward.
Of course, you are also aware of some of the work that I have been doing because you helped me do the translations as well.
So first of all, Yamkela, just tell me what is your role on the *Yilungelo Lakho* production team?

Y: Okay – as a [refers to job title] I kind of develop content that is useful for informing our audience about their rights and responsibilities as consumers and advise on how to pursue any violation that might or has or may have occurred while consumers were active in their capacity as consumers of goods and services. So, I do that by inviting experts to pronounce on issues of legal steps, legal rights, legal responsibilities and also how institutions can assist consumers in their fight to assert their rights.

A: Okay, so the programme goes out once a week, right?

Y: Yes – every Monday we broadcast from 12:00 until 13:00 – and then every Tuesday and Thursday evenings it gets repeated… so the topic that was talked on Monday gets repeated on SABC 1 on Tuesdays and on Thursdays.

A: So, there are two repeats

Y: There are two repeats for now, in the past there used to be one repeat on Thursdays, but we see now in the past few months our discussions get repeated even on Tuesdays.

A: Okay, that's interesting hey… any reason why, or what led to that?

Y: Well, it just happened without an explanation. It was never like communicated – we just saw it happen, but the rationale for it might be lying elsewhere but myself as a [refers to job title], I've got a line manager who might be privy to the reasons for that kind of decision.

A: Sure, sure – not definitely. So Yamkela the programme is broadcast once a week, and it is broadcast, it's a multi, a multi-language broadcast, right?

Y: Yes, it is

A: So how does that work?

Y: Well, as much as we aspire, desire to have it broadcast in Nguni languages that is isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele and siSwati but the South African reality means us not achieving that goal because we've got people who speak other languages, but they can only be

accommodated if they speak English. So, we end up seeing people speaking English, using English as well as other languages.

And also, the key aspect is because we rely on experts in their fields to come in and talk on the discussion… so you will find that an organisation gives us a person who does not speak Nguni but speaks only English

A: yes

Y: So, but we will try and accommodate that person because some of our viewers call in on the programme or express their views on social media in languages that may not be understandable to the viewer, sorry, to the guest, but our presenter will try and translate that so that we can keep the discussion flowing without any language interruptions

A: And tell me about the presenter – do they speak a specific language, or do they go from language to language or how does it work?

Y: Well, our presenters are selected on the basis of understanding Nguni language – well, it can be any one of the four that I have mentioned… and of course, English. So, we have got a Zulu presenter on one week and then we have got a Siswati presenter on the other week.

A: Who are your presenters Yamkela, just by the way…

Y: Okay – Alicia Jali is our Zulu speaking presenter and Simphiwe Ncongwane – he speaks Siswati. And the common thing about them is that they can both understand English, which is kind of critical in that case, yeah…

A: And they alternate presenting the programme, right?

Y: Yes, they do – yeah, they alternate

A: So, English is essentially the gatekeeper right, because even though primarily you are supposed to broadcast in Nguni languages, a lot of it is being pulled together in English

Y: Yes, yes that is true

A: And do you… I know that when you broadcast you used to have telephone lines for people to call in as well, right?

Y: yes

A: You still do that? So, people can call in to your live broadcast on Monday?

Y: Yes, that is right

A: Okay and how else are people able to contribute to the programme?

Y: Well, let's say up until the lockdown people used to use Facebook, and they used to send sms. And sometimes they would communicate via Twitter…. And in other instances, they would send emails to the programme Producers in the hope of getting their problems solved. But yeah, during the live broadcast we would receive Facebook messages a lot, and telephone calls a lot

A: So, do you consider your online audience as part of your larger audience or are they in a way separate to your broadcast audience?

Y: Well, we look at them in the same lengths you see, because, it depends on who has got access to Facebook or not… you find that there is a certain type, I don't expect an 85 years old listener to be conversant with things like Twitter and Facebook – maybe they will pick up a phone and call the show and either express themselves in English or in an Nguni language – but they also take the cue from the type of guests who are in the studio… those that are able to express themselves in Nguni are not prohibited, they do, but you find that if there's a tendency of English in the programme then people tend to take the cue from that and communicate in English as well.

A: Yes, okay… and so you have an *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page – what other online platforms does the programme appear on?

Y: Well, we've got the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page, which is the main one; we have got people who contact us via Twitter, and also via the SMS line – I don't know how that one works, because it is a technical thing, sometimes we would have it running as a strap, but the

main thing online is Facebook. That's where a lot of posts are received and that's where we select messages to respond to during the show.

A: And it's by far your biggest online platform, right?

Y: yes, it is… it is by far the biggest, yeah

A: Okay, before we move on, tell me about how you do your posts on Facebook, because as far as I know, you do it once a week, yeah?

Y: Yes... yes, well we place a particular topic, yeah, we do that in English, I mean I have not come across a situation where us Producers, myself included would post something in isiZulu or in isiXhosa or isiNdebele or iSiSwati. We always put it like that in English. I think, if I can rationalise it, if I write it in Xhosa, in my deep Xhosa, I run the risk of, kind of, not alienating but of missing certain viewers who's understanding of Xhosa could be limited…. And now if I put it in English there's the possibility of catching more viewers than if I were to limit it to isiXhosa. So that is the kind of situation, unfortunately in South Africa okay you can say if you write in isiXhosa the Zulus will understand you and the Ndebeles will understand you, but if you write in isiSwati which is one of the Nguni languages, there's a lot of people you would be excluding – because isiSwati si not as strong in South Africa, it's mainly in the Mpumalanga province, but it is classified as one of the Nguni languages. So that is the situation we find ourselves in that is why we try to balance things between English and a bit of Nguni – we would, say for example introduce the topic in a Nguni language and then in the second part just put in a line or two of English which captures the essence of what we will be talking about on the day.

A: Okay, so you put up a post on the day of your programme, right?

Y: Yes

A: And then you ask people to contribute and then you use some of those comments on your programme?

Y: Yes

A: So do you think that because the SABC, or *Yilungelo Lakho* is a public broadcast platform right, do you think that the language that you use on your Facebook page, do you think that it impacts at all or do you think you need to carefully consider how you post it because I know you've said when you use English it is open to more people. Is that because of the public broadcast mandate or if you had a choice would you post in a particular African language perhaps?

Y: It is a combination of factors. Our mandate requires that we appeal, that we meet the needs of various indigenous groups in terms of content access. But we try as much as possible to get things done in African languages. But we feel that sometimes it can limit our reach. We are glad that people are able to respond that is phone in for questions and post queries when we conduct things in a particular language, but I think the benefit we have in South Africa is that English tends to be everywhere. So, we are not particularly concerned by the fact that we use English sometimes because we don't have a Zulu speaking guest. But we are striving to have Nguni as the primary means of talking to our audience. But we can only do so much as far as achieving that is concerned.

A: Do you think there is space for African languages on online platforms, on social media for example?

Y: Well, I think that there is but there is no taking happening cos if you look at social media there are people that express themselves in Nguni languages, but the tendency is to mix that with English and there are very few people okay, if you look at things like Twitter, people see English as a quick way of putting a point across. It can be read by anyone irrespective of their language whereas if you put it, in let's say isiZulu, I think there is a possibility of putting off those who are not interested, who are not committed to getting things in another language which is a South African reality.
I must tell you because you will see even in radio stations across the country, the Nguni ones, it is very few occasions that you would find in the vernacular only times these guys strive is when they do adverts because advertising is a different ball game. They want to reach the audience in a language they understand whereas from A to Z. Somewhere you see, and the with news and current affairs content there is not that pressing need. If English were to do here, let's go for it because if you are handling a discussion on medical issues, you are going

to have to run to English words because there are few words in Nguni that have been developed. That is one of the issues that the Pan African Languages Board is grappling with.

A: In fact, in my research that is one of the things that have come up, that the language has not evolved for technology, for example. But also, in all the interviews I have done, with people who contribute to the YL Facebook page, one of the things they have been saying to me is that it takes a lot of time to write in the African languages anyway. So, one sentence in isiZulu is extremely long so it is much quicker to write it in English.

Y: That is the thing, you see. That is true. So true.

A: So, Y, when you get people commenting on your Facebook page and your program is on air how do you decide which posts you are going to use on the program and who decides this in the first place?

Y: The Producer who is familiar with the content decides. I must say this, it is on the basis of how relevant a point is rather than what language is being used. So, I must confess as far as this is concerned if a person expresses a point very well in English chances are I will put that out and have the presenter read it publicly than if a person takes, like a paragraph, to say something very small in isiZulu or isiXhosa so there is that element. It is a balancing kind of game. You end up going for the one that takes a little time but makes the point quicker. That is the thing. If someone expresses the point beautifully in their language, they are not excluded but it is a question of which one has more impact.

A: So, you then don't have, I don't want to say an equity policy but you don't say we are only going to put up English posts, so we are going to put up three posts in English and three posts in the vernacular or something like that. You just do it based on content?

Y: Yes, and fortunately we have got that leeway, and no one gives us quotas to fill because we are driven more by how relevant the message is to the topic and I know there is the requirement for language here and it can get very difficult and tricky, but it is not a headache. It is just that if you find it you put it without question but there isn't you are not going to say someone has put it so beautifully just because it is in English, no let me go and grab this one

in isiZulu because I want to make the numbers. No, that is hardly at the back of our minds. Okay, I am speaking for myself because it is always an individual choice.

A: Absolutely

Y: So maybe another Producer will come to a different way of looking at it.

A: And I suppose it also depends on which Producer is looking for the topic for the day because if I were doing your production, if I were your Producer for that week, perhaps I am only going to put up the English ones because I don't know any better. If you were doing it then you may only put up the Zulu ones for example?
Y: For example, ja, you are spot on.

A: So, how many people are on your production team?

Y: Well, *Yilungelo Lakho* has two Producers, one full time producer and a freelancer, (Names person) . So, that is how small we are. We used to be more than that. In the past we used to be assisted by people looking to do extra work. They would come in on certain days when they were able to assist us. But the core of the team is two people, a female and a male Producer.

A: And you have got your Executive Producer and your Anchors?

Y: Our EP, [speaks name], yes.

A: We were talking earlier about Facebook being your strongest online platform. To what extent do you think this online audience impacts on the discussions that occur on the program?

Y: They do have an impact in the sense that whenever they post comments or queries, they help add to the discussion, like for example, if someone is baffled by something then the presenter will put the question to the guest and the guest would talk around that. So, if you have as many callers submitting their queries, they just add to the talking points that we as [refers to job title] may have overlooked which is something we welcome because if people base their concerns on real situations, it serves our purpose very well because it means we are

a good platform to respond to, to community and consumer needs because I cannot capture every issue under the sun alone. So, any contribution by a viewer based on his or her experience serves to cast us in a very positive light in terms of executing our mandate which is to inform consumers about their rights and responsibilities.

A: And have you ever taken this discussion which you have had online because your broadcast is a very limited time and there is only so much you can do when you are live on air. Have you ever taken your discussion online, perhaps, and extended it there? The reason I ask is that I often see people who comment on the Facebook page kind of start having their own discussions sometimes one will answer the other one or whatever the case might be. Have you ever considered extending your program online in anyway?

Y: Well, that is a good idea actually. If it was considered, not from my side. But I admire it because, because we do different topics each week, so you will find that points that are raised which are pertinent to a particular topic will die in that week because there is another topic to be looked at. But there is so much content that we receive from our views in terms of their comments on Facebook as well as when they write to us, when they email their situations to us. But the nature of our show is such that we have to produce content for the next week so it would be interesting to expand on issues which were not touched on during the topic but are relevant to that particular topic. I wish that capacity existed because a lot of stuff falls through the cracks which is very useful but, unfortunately, we don't have time to attend to it.

A: I am just thinking now considering you now have two rebroadcasts that it might be something to explore.

Y: Well, the thing is, it would be like extending because our topics are one hour it means that we could look at extending it beyond that because one hour is not enough.

A: And do you think, I mean you have got a big enough, a viable enough audience online to be able to extend it, right?

Y: Yes, we do. As I said capacity is at the heart of our challenge here because we try when we have got free time to respond to people's queries without committing the broadcaster but in terms of your problem needs to go to this particular door, this is what the guests said blah blah blah. But that needs time and capacity. If we had capacity, then we would have a

dedicated social media person who would take those things forward, that is to add more value to our customers or to our viewers. That would be great.

A: That was going to be my next question. To what extent do you guys curate the information or do you respond to comments online and you are saying you do at certain stages but it is a capacity issue?

Y: Yes, it is. We would like to do it but we are two. Right now, I am producing for next week Monday. My colleague must come in after me. So, she is spending her time looking for a topic she can offer for that week. So, there isn't really time to kind of stray and say guys, let us look at this and this, and that as well. So, it is so tight if we had capacity we would not worry about that.

A: do you ever look to the feedback online or do you ever get ideas from the comments that are made online for your topics?

Y: Yes, we do sometimes. When we are looking at what is it, we are missing that people are talking about and we kind of take ideas from there. That is both via emails as well as Facebook because on Facebook people tend to respond to that particular issue that is being discussed whereas with emails, they bring issues that we have not discussed that maybe they would like us to look at.

A: We spoke about YL being essentially a multilingual program broadcasting primarily in Nguni languages but do the discussions that happen online provide a true reflection of these languages? I mean, I know that people respond but do they respond primarily in the Nguni languages. Do they use other languages and to what extent? I mean it is very casual. It is slang or do they respond constructively?

Y: They are using today's language which is common on social media which can be casual, which can be careless without demeaning them but by being careless I mean being grammatically careless or something like that or by saying things incoherently, so you have to piece together actually what has motivate this person to write in the first place. So, they throw in points, not in kind of a debate but in a way where they say there is a problem with this and this and that. Or, how about doing this and this and that. So, it is not like it is a

coordinated virtual debate or discussion, but everyone throws their points. If for example, there is one topic to be handled, for example, should the Covid-19 relief be extended to December then that would bind people's thoughts and discussion to that issue. But others would bring in a side issue … my mother was … So, you can't coordinate it. It is really kind of it can be hap hazard. But you will see where it is going. And it is very unique. People express themselves in English. Let us say 60 to 70 percent English. And then, Nguni will kind of be 25 to 30.

A: But it has brought you, I mean this online presence, has brought you not just an additional audience but a totally different audience to what you get on the broadcast?

Y: Yes, absolutely. The type of audience you get for YL is quite diverse. And it was interesting sometimes, even if a discussion was held in a bit of English and a bit of Nguni you would have people who would speak English contributing. You see, asking particular questions.

I think mainly because they are attracted by the topic that was highlighted at the beginning of the show or which they picked up on Facebook because if someone has a particular interest, let us say in a time share you know what type of viewership you can expect there. If someone has a particular interest in let us say, investments at the stock exchange you know what type of viewership you can expect there. So, it is quite important. I think we have never seen something like it before. Social media has played a very powerful role.

A: It is very interesting to see how it has evolved. One of the audience members I interviewed was saying to me that even in those discussions people can be quite critical of each other leave alone the program in terms of like say something like … oh you are using this language incorrectly or write in English and not in Zulu or write in Zulu and not in English. That kind of stuff. So, they do seem to also be forming an online community almost in many ways.

Y: Of some sort yes. It takes a life of its own.

A: Yes, and some discussions more so than others, right?

Y: Yes, yes, definitely. Something to do with finance will attract more viewers

A: The one other thing I have been thinking about, so I know that SABC news does not necessarily have a coordinated or a formally coordinated approach to social media and when

you guys created your page, for example, you just went in and created your page as your program. You did not do, as far as I am aware much consultation with SABC News management in terms of how it should be run or anything like that.

Y: I would suspect that because that predates me, but I can see from how it has been right that yes, you are quite right.

A: So, there are a number of other pages, for example, there is an isiZulu News Facebook page. Are you aware of it?

Y: No. I only see these things when they are on air. But I never take the time to kind of visit their pages to see what people are saying.

A: Because I just wondered. There are all these other pages. I am presuming or have there ever been as far as you know discussions to overlap with some of these other pages like the SABC Indaba page, for example which could very well carry some of your content or you could carry some of theirs, or whatever. Have there ever been any of those kinds of discussions as far as you know?

Y: No, I have never seen that. Actually, that was one thing I was desirous of because you will find that work is done in a silo like fashion. You can break something on *Yilungelo Lakho* but it doesn't mean the news will take that and run with it. So, there is no like integration in terms of content sharing. One is doing something for themselves and for their program and the next one and the next one. Sometimes we would receive letters to our show, and we would say, no man, this thing belongs to a particular show and don't think that that show is going to grab it and run with it like crazy. They've got their own processes and their own things so there is no like some kind of overseer of content that gets produced but it falls off the table like Lazarus (crumbs?)

A: Because like you say, there is so much potential to extend what you are doing especially with online which means right now it is not going to cost any extra money or anything. Maybe some resources but there seems to be a lot of potential to do that kind of thing.
Y: Yes, actually there is one guy George Allagiah. He used to be a BBC reporter and wrote a book on that because he said … sorry, let me not eat into your time.

A: No, that is perfectly fine, I want to know.

Y: He wrote a book. I think it is a passage to Africa. But he is an Indian guy. He grew up in Ghana and he used to travel the world and his scripts would require him to write, let us say 200 words and the rest of the content that he gathered on his special assignment would fall into the dustbin. So, he said no, there is so much important stuff here that doesn't make it on air, let me turn it and put it into a book. So, this is what I kind of desire the SABC to do because a lot of information goes to waste.

A: yes, definitely, even at my time at the SABC I think there is a lot of potential to do that kind of stuff and when you look at African language information the SABC has an amazing amount of African language information that could be used quite effectively.

Y: Very very much a lot.

A: And like you say, we all work in silos, and it sometimes goes to waste. So, Yamkelo, when you are working on your book in English, I am going to help you. Thank you.

ZOLANI

A: Zolani, first of all Thank you… Thank you so much for making time for me.

Zolani you do know some of the background, but let me fill you in … This interview is in relation to my master's study, which I am doing through Rhodes University, and what I am looking at specifically is the use of African languages on SABC News online platforms. Now you will remember that when the mandate of the SABC was being drafted, we didn't have online platforms…. So that mandate specifically refers to broadcast platforms, but a lot of the programmes and platforms have been sharing news online, even though we are not mandated to do it… And there is a lot of potential, but there is also a lot of hiccups as well, in respect of how we put content online, and what have you.

Z: yes yes

A: So that is essentially what I am looking at, and I am using your programme, which is the *Yilungelo Lakho* programme, as a case study – and I am specifically looking at your Facebook page because it is by far your biggest online platform.

Z: Yes

A: So Zolani, just a general chat, nothing formal… if you think that there is something that you can bring to my attention that we have not done or not chatted about in the course of the interview please feel free to do so.
I have… Thank you for introducing me to your team – and I have spoken to them as well. So, we have been chatting a little bit about the programme, and of course I have also been speaking – as you are aware – to some of the people who contribute to your programme, the audience that contributes as well.

Z: Super

A: So just some introduction Zolani, you are the [refers to job title] of *Yilungelo Lakho* right?

Z: Yes, I am

A: And how long have you been in this position?

Z: Since 16th April 2017… sorry, it will be 2007.

A: Oh wow, okay – was this when the programme was launched that you became the [refers to job title]? Or did you join in after somebody else was there before you?

Z: No – it was at its launch that I became [refers to job title]

A: So, you have been the [refers to job title] of the programme since inception?

Z: Yes, since its conception and launch

A: And how did… when you conceptualised the programme Zolani, what was the initial brief for *Yilungelo Lakho*… I mean the broadcast brief.

Z: The broadcast brief was that we put together an Nguni show, a show that will target Nguni speakers and these would be isiZulu, isiXhosa, isNdebele and iSiswati – so we have had a number of presenters since the programme was launched, representing these languages… we have had presenters come and go… isiXhosa we have had, isNdebele we have had one, we have had an isiSwati presenter, we have had IsiXhosa speaking presenter – Sisanda Jonas, I don't know if you remember….

A: Yes

Z: And we had again Siswati – the person of Jonathan Lungu, who has now moved to Nelspruit… and we now have Alicia Jali doing isiZulu… so we now have two alternating presenters currently, one catering for iSiswati speakers and that will be Simphiwe Ncongwane, and Alicia Jali will cater then for Zulu speakers.

A: Zolani, since the beginning of the programme, when was it… Okay, first of all, you go out every Monday at midday, right?

Z: AT midday yes… well the programme has changed slots a number of times – you will remember we had a Tuesday slot, but it was really struggling, and we were moved from that slot to Monday. Monday was even worse… the repeat programme performed better in terms of attracting… we had more viewers watching our repeat programme because of the slot, the slot was just not working for us, the Monday slot, so then we moved to Friday, we did our lives on Friday… also it was a difficult slot because then people, you know… and its 12:00…

A: The weekend mode

Z: Yes – and nobody is watching except for housewives, hey… and it got very, very difficult, and we were now moved to Monday… Monday, and then what they did now to test where we can get more audiences, they created two repeat slots for us, the first repeat slot was hopeless, that was Thursday 23:00 – everybody is sleeping at that time, or people are preparing for the next day so very, very low number of viewers and then now they have created Tuesday as

another repeat slot. The Tuesday slot is much better surprisingly, I do not know what the explanation is, but it is doing better than the Monday slot.

A: Then your live broadcast?

Z: We are now doing live on Monday; repeat slot 16:30 on Tuesday, and I think, what brings the numbers, if I may speculate, I think it's the 17:30 news that starts – so I think we will have viewers there idling, waiting for that slot… waiting for the News, and yeah, so that brings us the numbers, the Tuesday slot, I think it's because of where it is positioned. The time, I would like to think, maybe that's what brings us the numbers…

A: And Zolani, off the top of your head, can you give me an idea of what your broadcast audiences are like in terms of numbers

Z: We are sitting at… the latest figures were like 2 ARs… sometimes it will go to 1.8. Ad we're talking between 600 and 700 thousand viewers, and when it's good then it will go up to 900.

A: And that's not taking into account your repeat slots, right?

Z: Uh, yes, let's see… yeah, we get different numbers for repeat slots

A: Yes, yes – so that's still quite a big market share, considering, right?

Z: yeah, yeah yeah, so we are sitting at about 600 and something – going to 700… that's our viewers

A: So Zolani tell me, in all the years, how, or when did you decide that you needed some kind of online presence?

Z: It was… you see, when we started in 2007, we had greater viewership but then it started to decline, it went to 2.6, 2.4 and all that… and now we are sitting at 2 and sometimes, 1.8 and 1.6 currently… so we started off very, very well, and what we cannot achieve now is the number that we started with, the 3 ARs. So, we now sitting at about 2, something…

A: What do you think is the reason for this Temba? What do you think is the reason for your ARS… you said, we can't achieve…

Z: It was the changing of slots very frequently… even the viewers would not be notified… But, I will give you an example, one time we were sitting, posting that people watch our repeat at a particular time, I think it was on a Monday, Mondays was repeat slots because we were live on Fridays… and we noticed after some months that actually the repeat slot had been changed, but on the obviously DSTV bouquet, on the schedule, it shows that *Yilungelo Lakho* plays at a certain time, but the channel had long changed it.
The other time we had guests and everything to go on air, for a live show at 14:00… the show was starting at 14:00 and we contact FCC (Final Control Centre) about ten to, five to, to say Hey … and ten FCC says no, this programme is not on air. It's now, the slot has now been changed to 14:30…

A: Oh my god!!

Z: Those kind of stuff being done by channel… we lodged a complaint and all those kinds of things of stuff, so we had those kind of things happening there you know, haphazard slot changes, sometimes without notification and all that kind of stuff… what we did to try and bring up the numbers was to try and come up with very strong themes, very strong guests to… and then of course we looked for presenters who could drive the show, who have got traction, who have got a following, you know? And we thought we were okay with that, and another layer to that was then social media, we thought let us try and maximise the use of social media to try and get us those numbers.
We started doing promos, not only TV promos, but we also did radio promos and that keeps us going as far as keeping the numbers up.

A: So, you decide that you were going to go onto Twitter and Facebook?

Z: Yes, but we realised that with the following that we have got, remember that it is the lower end of the segment…

A: Your LSMs?

Z: Our LSMs yes, and those are people who write longer messages, and all that kind of stuff… Twitter we found it was a bit limiting and everybody was, we had most people preferring to use Facebook. And we stuck with Facebook.

A: Okay, so Zolani tell me how you go about using Facebook. I know that generally you put up a post every week before your programme, and it's essentially an invite – inviting people to participate, right?

Z: Yes, but not only to participate... But we give them the kind of topic that we are doing, that this week *Yilungelo Lakho* will be focussing on 1, 2, 3… research indicates 1,2,3… situations about consumers, and today we are discussing that that particular topic. So yes, we give a background to the topic, what we are doing, the kind of guests we will be having on the show, and yeah, we ask people to tune in and participate.

A: Do you, do you expect your online audience to participate as well?

Z: Yes, they do… we read their messages on air, they post Facebook messages and we read them on air, and we exchange information that we cannot put on air, and we indicate to viewers on air that such kind of information or contact details of our guests or whatever, or a particular number where viewers would get recourse would be on our Facebook page – so that's how we use it, we use it in conjunction with the live show.

A: So Zolani, *Yilungelo Lakho*, being essentially a multilingual broadcast programme, and the fact that it is on a public broadcast platform, how does that impact on what you do online? I mean, I know for example that your broadcast is essentially in the Nguni languages – but your Facebook page post for example, is always in English.

Z: Yes, always in English… I'll tell you why… you see, our viewers, we take it that yes, we are serving primarily Nguni speaking people, like I indicated, the lower LSMs, but these are people who have a level of literacy, we cannot say that they are completely unable to speak English, they do understand a level… so we speak the kind of English that ordinary people use… it's conversational, but we make great emphasis on isiNguni on the live show… but posting in English allows us to reach those… remember this kind of viewership is the kind of

viewership you find on SABC 1, that platform, they may be rural people, they may be vernac people, they may be people who have got their roots in the rural areas, but obviously they have a level of urbanisation, they are aspirant viewers, in as much, I will give you an example, a guy may be coming from Kwa Mashu or Lusikisiki but he probably works and lives in Johannesburg which is a place with a multiplicity of languages.

A: Yes

Z: Yes, they may have a level of education, at least your Standard 5, is it Grade 7 now?

A: Yes…

Z: So, they may have that level of education, they may be employed by a Baas, and they speak Afrikaans or English with the Baas, there may be very strong rural roots, they may have pole ceremonies in Nkandla or whatever, but they are aspirant viewers who probably wish to live in Sandton, they are literate they understand a level of music, pop culture and what characterises urban Johannesburg.

A: Yes

Z: So, these are the people, so they are not people who cannot understand or follow English. They speak a mixture of English and their respective languages… so that's how I can sum up perhaps the profile of the kind of people I think we speak to… They may live in Sandton, but they still travel on holidays down to the countryside, and perform ceremonies, they understand the roots of the language very well… as much as they, you know?
And the opposite of that, if we were to go, like broadcasting in Xhosa A or isiZulu A, I think we would lose viewers… those kind of people would not understand that kind of isiZulu, they will not – we will lose those kind of viewers… so we chose to go conversational vernac mixed with… so that we can enjoy, we can draw in the UJ student whose roots are in KwaMashu, who is probably here for academic purposes. So we post in English on Facebook, to facilitate that, to reach that kind of viewer… kind of vernac viewer, so the kind of viewer we, I'm trying to say, the kind of viewer we service on *Yilungelo Lakho* is not a totally illiterate viewer; they are people who speak their language very well, who are proud of their language, who understand the kind of English spoken…
We do not even pitch our topics at a very high level, we pitch them at that low level as well…

A: When you say that they are literate, you mean that they are literate in English, because in terms of vernac they…

Z: No, I am saying they are not completely illiterate

A: yes, in English…because…

Z: yes… they have a level of English that they understand, that's the one we use…

A: And that's the common ground?

Z: That's the common ground yes,

A: So, English is your gatekeeper, it's your primary language or the language that brings everyone together, all your audiences together under one…

Z: On Facebook, when we do it on social media, but on broadcast, for broadcast purposes we do try and achieve a higher percentage, even 100 percent isiNguni. But the kind of isiNguni will not be the deep type of isiNguni that will not be understood by the kind of people we serve

A: Right

Z: Remember that you may speak siSwati or whatever, but the kind of siSwati differs from the one spoken deep down in the countryside…

A: Absolutely

Z: …as opposed to the one that you would find in Soweto or your urban settings

A: Zolani do you consider your online audience to be a part of your larger audience or are they separate to your broadcast audience for example. Are you talking to two different audiences or are you essentially talking to one big audience that sees you on two different platforms?

Z: We are talking to the same audience; I'll tell you why... Because sometimes we post ahead of time, and indicate that please watch this show, we will be talking about...and that... and then on broadcast days you will find people saying we are watching, or I will be watching or I will be home in the afternoon or I will be home at this time to watch it, or I missed the show, when is the repeat? So, we see that it indicates that it is the same people – and remember these same viewers phone in during the live programme, and we would have constant names who appear on our Facebook page and would have also phoned.

A: Yes, you know interestingly, one of the people that I spoke to, one of the contributors said to me that the one thing he likes about Facebook is that he can still watch the programme while he is posting something, but if he has to phone you on air but if he has to phone you on air, then it means that he misses out on what is happening on air while he is holding on – and sometimes it takes a long time for, you know, when they're holding on, it takes a long time before you get to them... so he was saying that that is one reason he likes to contribute online

Z: Precisely, precisely – and that is what motivated us to constantly, after every show, have it posted not only on You Tube but to have a link posted on Facebook so that people, those who missed it enjoy the show afterward.

A: How do you think the audience input, and I am talking about now the Facebook audience, the online audience; how do you think their input impacts on the discussions on your programme?

Z: Well, we get tips sometimes, and ideas of our topics from the postings, from what people post and sometimes that inspires the next topic.

A: And to what extent to they contribute to the actual discussion happening on the show on a Monday, Zolani?

Z: Well, the contribution mainly, on the live show it will be people making comments on the topic, but largely it will be people seeking recourse – people will be saying can your guests help us with 1, 2, 3... or where do I go with such kind of a problem, or how do I contact that particular agency for assistance, and so forth.

And this is why we, after the show, if we feel it's necessary, like with agencies, or guests representing bodies, that provide public assistance, we post the helplines – the bodies that assist people with some kind of public service… we'll post their details there… but sometimes we have guests, private sector or speaking for their firms, and sometimes we don't want to be seen to be directing traffic that side and we will perhaps just post the website address, and perhaps just the email address of that guest as opposed to numbers that may not be manned… so we will post numbers where, and email addresses where people can actually get assistance after the show or interact further with the guest.

A: I was just going to ask… to what extent do you do that kind of thing… do you encourage the discussion or like you're saying you do support the discussion because you provide the answers if you can... but to what extent do you actually encourage that additional discussion that takes place often outside of your programme or after your programme is done even?

Z: It's a bit difficult because we have capacity problems. I only have two Producers… well three… one is permanent, one is freelance, one does additional work. So those are the people who contribute content, who put together inserts graphics, and all that…. Line up guests and do the whole drill for the broadcast. So, we do not have a dedicated social media person and what I did, I got everyone of the Producers, including the production coordinator to have access to the Facebook page, so that they are able to post. The danger with that is that sometimes, editorially, stuff can slip through, that is not controlled, that… but I try to check what everybody is going to post, like if [names himself] is going to post something there, he says I am going to post this and this and this… they give me an idea of what they are going to be posting there beforehand…

A: Hmmm

Z: If we had a dedicated person they would be answering individually to our viewers, giving the kind of assistance that viewers need.

A: Do you think that online platforms generally, and SABC News platforms specifically, that there is room or space for African languages?

Z: Certainly, I think there is… for African languages hey? Yes, there is… there is room. Because some of our viewers, if not most write in Nguni. But you see, let me say, let me say maybe half of them because I have seen a lot of postings in isiNguni – some wouldn't, like if there is Simphiwe, Simphiwe speaks isiSwati and then he has to read on air Facebook messages, we screen them… Because if it is isiXhosa, he is going to trip on air with reading isiXhosa messages, so we first check them out and during the break maybe we read them out back to him and explain what more or less it is… so yes, we do have a number of people writing in isiNguni – and asking questions, yeah…

A: So the online discussions, right, and like you say there's a lot of people who respond in Nguni languages, and sometimes even other languages, I know, I mean I remember when I was looking at some of the comments and somebody said to me that's a Pedi comment, if I remember correctly, and what have you… but do these discussions provide a true reflection of these languages, as in, so you have, your programme is an Nguni programme, but you have multiple contributions in, I am presuming, all the different languages right?

Z: Well largely isiNguni and from time to time you do find Sotho or Pedi or whatever… even during the live programmes, you find a caller coming through and telling you can I please speak in SiSotho, can I please speak in siTswana or something like that. In that case, what we have to do is screen the call… more or less what the viewer wants to say, and then we put the call through… and if we notice, as we have in the past couple of times, noticed the presenter getting stuck because of the language, and we would get one of our guys in the studio to sort of paraphrase what the person was saying and tell the presenter.

A: Right, so… on one hand it's a great advantage because everybody feels free to contribute but on the other hand it does hamper certain things because for example you have a Producer that might speak one or two or even three languages, but not all the languages…

Z: Not all the languages, and then a viewer comes in insisting that they want to speak their own language – but we do manage it as it comes.

A: Yes – and do you think that the fact that *Yilungelo Lakho* is a multi-lingual programme, that that multi-lingual nature, does it encourage audiences to participate or is it something that perhaps causes audiences to not participate as much?

Z: They want to participate, people want to participate even if it's Nguni or what because it is consumer rights issues that are affected… we get messages coming through, sms's that say why do you guys only speak to isiNguni speaking, why don't you speak English? And we respond to people either who phone or write messages to say no, but the programme is primarily an isiNguni programme – but people will be wanting to participate because they are interested in the topic – they're interested because it's a UIF issue, they're interested because it's a consumer rights issue that they have got an interest in. We have had people who feel like they have been excluded and that they should be enjoying the topic because they are consumers and they want to know what is happening, but unfortunately the language sort of limits that.

A: It's very interesting because social media in particular has changed very much how we approach our traditional work.

Z: Yes

A: I mean, where before you would have your guests on your set, and you would discuss stuff, now you have an additional audience that you have to think about.

Z: Yes – that also wants to participate. They want to have their voices heard, they want their messages read, because remember the viewership… it can be as trivial as wanting to see your own face, your own message, hearing your own voice on the radio or TV. And that's why people sometimes… that's what gets people sometimes interested in participating. Also because of the topic, because of the theme because they are interested in the issue that you are discussing

A: So Zolani how do you decide when, I mean you are the [refers to job title], how do you decide which of the online comments go on air, what is the kind of criteria that you use to decide which of the online comments or questions will go on air.

Z: Its questions that are likely to benefit other people, to benefit not only the person who is asking the question, its questions that are not a repeat of what has been covered already, questions that we may find interesting…

A: And does the language in which the questions are written make any difference to whether you use them on air or not?

Z: The language?

A: Yeah – so I mean on Facebook for example you might have twenty comments in English and thirty comments in isiZulu… does that mean that you are going to need to have more isiZulu comments on air than you're going to have English comments? Does the language in which the comments are written matter at all when you are broadcasting?

Z: Yes, it matters… the language matters, but like I said if the issue has been covered before then we may not, but if I have the same comments, I have two comments in English, I've got two Nguni, saying more or less the same thing…

A: Yes…

Z: I will take the Nguni ones, okay? But if there is something that the Nguni comments do not cover and the English comments maybe covers, we will put the English comment

A: Yes - And then, can I ask… Have you ever considered what the impact would be if you were to post your weekly posts, if you were to post them in isiZulu, or any of the other Nguni languages?

Z: I think they may, they may sort of exclude the other groups of viewers we may want in the show.

A: Right…

Z: The Nguni has got four languages that use the same route, that's the Nguni group of languages…

A: Yes

Z: That is isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiSwati and isiNdebele… now, reading isiNdebele for a Zulu speaking person may be difficult, and vice versa, like getting your Ndebele speaking person to read a message in isiXhosa it may be inhibiting…

A: yes

Z: Okay? So, English becomes your best bet…

A: Yes, the one that's available to everyone…

Z: Yeah – but when it comes to live, we try and emphasize isiNguni because we have got a mandate to broadcast in isiZulu and Icasa is looking at us as well in the fulfilment of those quotas. So, we make sure we maximise isiNguni… that we have at least more than 50% of isiNguni in a show.
Another thing that makes English to be hard to get rid of… we are a live discussion, studio based show, the guests we invite to the show, we cannot dictate to institutions who they must send, sometimes they will tell you no, only the CEO can speak… like we want to do a story on the filing season at SARS… SARS may have… the only person they may have available may not be Nguni speaking…

A: Right….

Z: So that forces us into a multi-lingual space, and that's how we got into the kind of format that we are in, in terms of language; so then we cannot be expecting a Pedi person if Statistics South Africa sends a Pedi speaking person, that person we would have to allow them to speak in English, but we have to warn them and my Producers do that… they first ask the institution, can't we have an isiNguni speaking person, and when everything else fails we settle for what we have – because we put the weight to the topic, the importance of the topic, so we then allow….
But then we have balancing, maybe with the other Nguni speaker (another guest) … Now, then the presenter now plays the role of making sure that no one is left behind.

A: Right – no, that makes sense

Z: We rely on the presenter to do that because we cannot control the calibre of guest coming through… so for instance, if, in a segment we are talking about home loans and… or debt collection or something like that we will have, maybe when we are going to the break, the presenter, we will require the presenter to sort of summarise what was said in that segment, something to the effect… okay viewers we have heard that if you want dah dah dah dah… you do that dah dah dah dah, my guest so and so has emphasised the need for consumers to do 1, 2, 3, and then they link to break…

A: Right…

Z: So, we do that to make… and in between the discussion, the presenter, we make sure that we remind the presenter sort of paraphrase certain things in between in a sentence or two, and going to breaks and coming from breaks to say… The previous segment we had… my guests were saying 1,2,3… they will say that on camera, and then continue the discussion

A: That obviously makes a lot of sense, but now that you're saying it, but let me put this question to you like this… if you had a programme that was only in isiXhosa, would that have impacted on how you do your Facebook posts?
If you were only doing a single language discussion?? Or discussion in a single language, should I say…

Z: It would, it would have impacted… I would have kept the entire programme true, just like you would possibly find in Afrikaans programmes like… should I say Fokus, or any other programme that's got largely Afrikaans speaking people… I would assume…

A: Yes… yes….

Z: …. that they would post only in Afrikaans

A: Yes, that is exactly the kind of example that I thought of…

Z: Yes, I would do the same thing of the Nguni was, I mean if the programme was truly… we were not having problems like I alluded to earlier on… about guest who may speak a language different than the programme speaks… if I did not have something like that… I was

guaranteed every week Nguni speaking…

Like for instance, let's say I was doing a cultural programme, an isiXhosa cultural programme that talks about cultural issues, I would never get near English, because I am dead sure that kind of people are regular Nguni speaking people and particularly when you deal with issues of culture and all that kind of stuff it would force you to stick to that language. So, yes, I would… if the programme was truly, 100 percent isiNguni, I would…

A: Makes sense…

Z: …But because the kind of viewer on the SABC 1 platform is the viewer I described earlier on, is not like your 100 percent… like for instance take a place like, like the population in Johannesburg, in Johannesburg you may find a person who is Xhosa speaking but they are fluent in isiSotho and all the languages that are spoken… so it makes sense then to go a bit multilingual

You know, like the format of Asikhulume… Asikhulume was a truly, truly Nguni programme, but clearly you could see that it became multilingual, influenced by the issues and the type of people who come onto that platform to contribute… So, the same with *Yilungelo Lakho* – primarily we want to make consumer news make sense to ordinary people, we want them to participate, we want to empower those viewers to participate in the marketplace fairly, to understand the relationship between them and the service provider, so sticking to isiXhosa would be counter-productive for a setting like that, isn't it?

A: Yes… absolutely…

Z: We couldn't do, because of the kind of issues… it's consumer issues, the kind of consumers are not, they, they…

A: It's across the board so you need to deal with it across the board…

Z: Exactly, exactly… Like I am saying, we do get callers, even, we do get callers deep down rural Eastern Cape – I mean, how do those people follow the programme? When we have, when they are interested in it and will not miss it because of the issues, and obviously the language also, we have made it to be user friendly, to be accessible to those viewers…

A: yes…

Z: We make sure in our scripting we get rid of technical jargon, of obscure English words –
that are not like your everyday speak – we try and remove them… so we have to rescript and
re-simplify because we know we are a multi-lingual show and that those viewers must be
able to reach us.
And of course, we call on the presenter all the time to assist in that…

A: I am sure….

Z: In bridging that gap… so that no-one is left behind… that's what makes us what we are

A: Zolani, as an SABC News programme, right, is there any overlap or any attempt to work
with any other Nguni discussions happening on other SABC online platforms? The reason…
one of the things for example that I have taken note of is a Facebook page like SABC iIndaba
– where there is some sort of crossover in terms of the language. Has there ever been any
attempts to kind of network on an online basis with other pages like this?

Z: No, I haven't, I haven't networked with pages like that… and I am sure it would help…

A: Yeah – because I am presuming you know, if there were four different Nguni news pages,
and you were sharing your content with those pages, that it would, might expend your
audience for example…
I'm not… I mean I know it hasn't been done but it, that kind of thinking is making me
wonder whether something like that might be feasible.
Z: There is value to that – I am sure there is great value to that, now that you're saying it… I
never thought of it…

A: … And now you have (laughs)

Z: Yes, yes

A: And then, just to kind of round up our discussion, I mean you have been at the SABC for
many, many years, you've been through a number of different kinds of transitions as well, are

there any moves or developments in place to extend your language mandate to online platforms?

Z: Repeat the question again?
A: So, are there any moves in place by SABC News to extend the broadcast language mandate that exists now, to extend that language mandate to online platforms?

Z: I haven't had discussions of that nature take place, but repeatedly, what we have heard from our viewers… I'm sorry if I am digressing, what we have heard from our viewers, why would a programme like *Yilungelo Lakho*, that deals with our consumer rights, with bread-and-butter issues, why would it be once a week?
So, we have had that question repeatedly… so we have put a case, some time ago, to say let us be more than once a week, but obviously with the capacity we have we can't, unless they allow us to employ more people, but you know now that there is a moratorium... that is just a wish that will not be fulfilled…

A: Yes, yes…

Z: But even our colleagues, Mwaba [Mwaba Phiri is Acting Head of SABC News, Television Current Affairs] repeatedly says but why would *Yilungelo Lakho* not be a daily programme… so you would hear such kind of things – yes, people want to benefit from what we have to broadcast, they love consumer rights news and there is more appetite I believe for such kind of issues.

A: Zolani, Thank you so much… for your time and for all your cooperation. From the time that this was only an idea in my head, I remember speaking to you a few years ago,
Z: Thank you so much…

APPENDIX C: TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH FACEBOOK CONTRIBUTORS

ANDILE

(December 2019)

A: Hello Andile… I'm going to start – to explain what I am doing, and what the process will be. Like I said to you, I am a student at Rhodes University, and I am doing my study on the comments on the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page.

AM: No problem…

A: So, I do have permission from the SABC, and what I will do is… I have a copy of the letter giving me permission, so I'll send that to you via email, so that you can have a look at it as well. And what I'm going to do now, is we're going to have a short conversation, just like I explained earlier, and I am going to record the conversation so that I can make comments and look at it later – and stuff like that.

AM: All right – no problem; Let me put (the phone) to my other ear, I am using a hearing aid… in this ear there is no hearing aid – so I just put my phone in this… I'm using the hearing aid…

A: yes – does it help you though?

AM: Yes – I can hear you – even in this ear, but I thought to move my phone from this ear to the other ear….

A: So, Andile, the reason that I wanted to speak to you especially, right, is because I see that you often comment on the *Yilungelo Lakho* page… and I just wondered, I mean I presume that you like the programme and that you watch the programme as well?

AM: I do watch the programme every… every morning….

A: Every day – every week?

AM: Every morning … every week … at ten past twelve on Monday

A: Every Monday you watch it? And how long have you been commenting? How long have you been following them on Facebook?

AM: I don't know if it's sure, but it's been a long time, I don't know…

A: A long time….

AM: I think, Yeah, it's been a long time… because I even now know …that lady Jali… so Sinzo…So I know them now

A: yes, yes, yes… you've been watching all of them…

AM: yeah – no it's been a long time… I don't want to lie… it's been last year… a long time

A: Because, you know, according to Facebook you are a fan… you're a top fan, which means you are one of the people that watches, or that contributes to the Facebook comments the most…

AM: Yeah, yeah, I do… Sometimes I do make a call… but I don't want to lie, I'm not (impressed) with their calls, because sometimes we wait there for maybe thirty minutes,

A: Really?

AM: If you are in a call for thirty minutes, you're missing what's happening… you only listen to it on your phone…

A: Yes, yes.,

AM: … And then you don't concentrate – waiting for a response… yeah, that's my experience

A: Yes… so do you think it's a good idea that you can comment on the Facebook page?

AM: It's a good idea, because… I've got a contract with Telkom, so I'm calling… for me, I don't waste any money calling the show,

A: Yes –

AM: … But it's stressful to call and wait for almost thirty minutes… the show is almost ending, your call is … they tell you to wait, you listen to the show on your phone and then the show is still on the TV … yeah you listening here on your phone, you don't concentrate, waiting for them to pick up your call… at the same time, if it's almost quarter to one they tell you that the lines are closed – and they don't say bye bye or something like that, they just vanish…

Yes – most of the time they just vanish so let's say maybe, I think they must improve that. That's why me now I don't call… I think I've got… I've got 2000, 3000 minutes, Telkom to Telkom minutes,

A: Okay… yes…

AM: …But now I don't even waste that because when I call, I am missing a lot in the on the show…

A: Yes…

AM: I can't listen to my phone and the TV at the same time

A: True true- so you think it is easier that you can access it so that you can comment on Facebook?

AM: Facebook is better – I think it is better because when you comment on Facebook you wait and check whether your question or something is going to appear

A: Yes

AM: Because my phone is off… Then you put your phone off, then you wait on the TV, you wait then your comment is going to appear… But when you call, you always, I don't know, because that …. Or something they tell you to wait on the line

You don't have two minds, you just concentrate

On my phone you find that the presenter is still on my phone. At the same time I am watching TV – so I can't … that… It happened that I am losing almost 30 or 45 minutes watching – but I am just staring, I don't concentrate at the same time – It's better to be on Facebook, Twitter or something like that but I know *Yilungelo Lakho*, they don't like Twitter, they only on Facebook – so if they can improve on their telephone, it will be better because to be on a call for almost thirty minutes

A: yes – will be better

AM: You losing, you don't hear anything… that's my experience and futhi I wanted to share that with them, but…

A: I'll speak to… in fact I will share what you are saying with me, I mean you know, if you give me permission, I will share it also so they are aware of what people are saying you know…

AM: Because… Yes, because they must know you busy on your phone... when you concentrate on your phone and you watching TV so its… you don't concentrate – you only have one mind

A: Okay – now tell me, when you are on Facebook and you're making comments, I see that you always, you comment in Zulu, and you comment in English… how come you do that?

AM: I do that because there are, there are words in English that I don't know, you see...

A: Yes, yes…

AM: …it's easy when I express them in Zulu because Alicia Jali – she knows Zulu, just like me and you, she's from KZN because she is from KZN and Senzo she's from Mpumalanga – she knows Siswati and something like that – but it's easy when I express with my Zulu language

A: yes…

AM: I'm just putting a little bit of English so that if it's not them who are reading my comments

A: Yes

AM: …that one there they must get it translated or something like that

A: …yes – so that somebody like me can also understand what you are saying?

AM: yes, yeah – because when I always talk English it is not easy for me to express what I am trying to say

A: yes yes

AM: Because English it isn't my mother tongue, you know, I just learn it while I was at school so it's not my mother tongue…

A: So, what is your mother tongue Andile?

AM: My mother tongue is Zulu

A: Zulu … so you from KwaZulu Natal?

AM: yeah …

A: Where about are you from?

AM: That's my mother tongue, it is Zulu… if it's about talking in Zulu… I find it – But my problem is that I find it very embarrassing to the other viewers – when I only write in Zulu – they say hey this one is illiterate or something like that

A: Are you serious? They say that. Do you think they say that?

AM: Yeah – you know people, sometimes, Ay!!! They talk whatever they want… maybe you don't know, I'm… let me say, let me put this way… I'm not popular but… I always comment… Ukhozi FM I'm there, they know me, SABC News

A: Yes

AM: Yeah, I'm there mostly, SABC News – now they've got videos, I'm there – in their shows I'm there – whole of SABC they know me, … in Nqutu …. They know me very much... if I only talk Zulu, they will say hey this one is illiterate, hey domkop or something like that - they know me

A: Okay – so they want you to speak English then?

AM: So, I try, put a little bit of English, put a little bit of English so they see that hey this one he's been to school or something like that…

A: But you know that more people speak Zulu than English anyway –(laughs) – more people will understand you

AM: But if … they mix, they mix Zulu and English so I must mix as well…. So that people will recognise, but what I will tell you is that … in fact, sjoe, us people, we are degrading our languages.

A: Yes…

AM: We, we don't take our languages serious, what I want to say is… we take our languages for granted, yeah

A: Yes – No I, I agree with you in some ways because…

AM: More especially Zulu, us Zulu

A: Zulus only?

AM: Mostly Zulus – you know Zulu I think it's a second or first language in the vernacular languages

A: Yes – it's the biggest language, it's the first language, it's the first language

AM: Even, even a farmer and come in and even say Sawubona, because this is their language, because that that's the language that everybody knows but when I try to talk English, but then I mix a little bit of that words, they will laugh at me…

A: Laughs… so, every week when *Yilungelo Lakho* put the post up, their post is in English, right?

AM: Yeah, the post is in English

A: Now – do you think they should be doing it in Zulu?

AM: Mmm (hesitates) I won't say so… because *Yilungelo Lakho* is not a Zulu show

A: It's mixed, yes

AM: Yeah, it's bilingual, it's not a Zulu show because you find… I think it's right when you put a little bit of Zulu maybe – me I put 50 percent of Zulu 50 percent of English, 50/50 – yeah not other languages – yeah – put Zulu and English, but I think…

A: Do you think it's better when people speak in vernac then on Facebook then for example, when you're online to post comments in vernac then because you were saying before, it's easier for you to understand, and to find words, right? Do you think it's also easier for people to understand if you post in vernac?

AM: Okay, you trying to say, when you are putting a question

A: Yes

AM: So, what are you trying to say, when you putting a question, is it right to put it in Zulu?

A: yeah – should people be using vernac more when they are on online platforms like Facebook?

AM: I think… what I do think is that when you on TV, you know, SABC, putting a question, its either the Producers or something or whoever, especially in social media, when it's the head or something, must put it in English – then don't mind me when I respond in my Zulu – don't mind anyone who responds in other languages... in Shangaan or Xhosa or something like that because I've experienced a lot of, I don't know but in other shows, I've experienced a lot of shows whereby they put their topic in their languages… then I respond in my Zulu language,

A: Yes….

AM: You won't see them showing my input there - because I have spoken in my language… but when the … is right

A: So, you saying, that when you put an answer in English, they use it but when you put it in vernac they don't use it?

AM: They don't use it… they want me to put in the language that they posted on tv…

A: Is it?? Okay – that's interesting…

AM: Yeah… and they put most of the time like – us, us us Zulus mostly, I'll talk about Zulus mostly, I don't know about the others, I say about the Zulus because I am a Zulu… most of us, we laugh at each other

A: yes…

AM: When someone, when you ask me in English, then I answer in Zulu… for…. Now, even now, I'm not fluent in English but I do try and talk English, but now, I'm alone, I'm alone right now, if I was (with someone) I was going to tell you to call me back after an hour because I am ashamed to talk English in front of other people because English is not my mother tongue. People will laugh at me but… you, if you want to talk Zulu, any place you mix a little bit of vowel or something like that, people will say, hey this one can speak Zulu…. So just like that, you see, just like that

That's why, even on TV I always, if I've got a twitter @ [gives names] – if you can check SABC News, they write English, I write in English as well…

A: Aah, okay

AM: Because yes… writing in English, I am ashamed yes because if I write in Zulu they say this one is illiterate

A: But don't you think that if we start using, like Zulu, if we start using it more on Facebook, and on Twitter and whatever, if we start using it more online, then it will become more popular

AM: What I will think is that, let me tell you the truth, Zulu is the most language used by SABC or any other

A: yes, it is the most spoken yes,

AM: Is the most spoke? What I will tell you is that we in South Africa we have got eleven official languages – Now I think we have twelve…

A: Yeah, the qu and que?

AM: I will tell you the truth… the Shangaan and Venda and what what, even in SABC they are, they are… what I must say… eish wena, you don't know Zulu, I don't want to put it in Zulu, they are not given enough opportunity…

A: Yes!!! No, you very right – very right… very little in fact, once a week and all that …

AM: I'm trying to say, because what I am telling you, there's a story on SABC 2 about the Shangaan, even Cyril Ramaphosa introduced it; what is it? SABC Half past nine with Shangaan, they said it's going to be closed, because it's Shangaan – I don't know what it is called… SABC 2 at half past nine,

A: can't remember the name, but I know what you are talking about…

AM: Yeah – the SABC 2 – but on SABC u Uzalo – Okay, I'm a… the Zulus in South Africa, let me say we, we are almost 80 percent, right? We are dominating South Africa, but we should be giving other languages a chance

A: yes, yes

AM: President Cyril Ramaphosa announced there will be the Shangaan soapies, it's called… on SABC 2 – it will be a soapie, now I'm surprised they say its closing, there is no funding for it, but… okay, I know SABC has, SABC... What am I saying? There's no funding at SABC so they depend on viewing, and u Uzalo has more than 10 million, but I'm surprised that they said now that SABC 2 soapie is now going to be closed, but it was… I was starting to learn the Shangaan language, and the Venda language, now, Uzalo has been dominating because it is a Zulu soapie, you know… but I was starting to learn other languages; if, if these things happen other languages will vanish

A: Yes…

AM: It will vanish if these things continue to happen… it's because, it's because, I'm not saying it's because this people in Limpopo they don't want to, I don't want to use sponsor… they don't want to sponsor – something like that... I don't know the English word, I'm a Zulu… sometimes, Eish, I don't know…

A: No – you are fine

AM: It's because they are, they are all cooped in one province, one province has so many languages… in Limpopo there is Venda, there is Pedi, there is Shangaan but in KZN there is Zulus, so that is why we're dominating in the TV industry, you see

A: Yes, yes, yes – and Andile tell me do you think that when you comment, you said sometimes when you comment in Zulu then they don't include the comments right?

AM: Yeah yeah – it happens most of the time

A: But do you think on a programme like *Yilungelo Lakho*, like when you comment in IsiZulu on that they, that they give it importance

AM: yeah yeah yeah, even now – I will tell you from my experience – if I write in Zulu, it will take a month before my comment will be shown there, but when I write English, pick up as early, they always show my comments – but when I write it in my Zulu language then maybe from the start to the finish… when I write in English you will see my comment always on the screen. But when I write in Zulu… aah… that's the truth…

A: And that's for all the programmes, I suppose…. You said you contribute to a number of programmes, right? So, all the programmes – so all the programmes are similar? They don't take much comment when you write in Zulu… when you write in English then they fine?

AM: I won't tell a lie; it depends whether the presenter is Zulu or something

A: Aaah okay

AM: In *Yilungelo Lakho*, we've got this presenter who understand Zulu… if you write Zulu on SABC News *(Sound is disrupted; interview cut short…)*

JULY 2020

A: Thank you for agreeing to talk to me again. I thought that the first time we did the interview, and then I kind of stopped studying and I started again this year, so I thought we'll just do a catch up to see if there's anything different or whatever, so we'll just go through some of the ideas, and I'll just chat to you, so I have some updated information.

AM: Okay

A: So, do you still watch *Yilungelo Lakho*?

AM: Yeah, yeah yeah… Do you still work there?

A: No – I left in December – so that was one of the reasons why I stopped my studying for a little while, but now I am starting again…

AM: Okay – yeah, I still comment there on *Yilungelo Lakho* – even last week, I made a video there – where I mentioned that, I was one of the three videos there…

A: Yes.

AM: I was one of the three videos there where I was talking about my experience whereby during the lockdown in May, my money was stolen – close to R13 000… from my bank.

A: Your money?? How did that happen?

AM: Eish – I made a video there on *Yilungelo Lakho* – it happened like in May; it was the lockdown, so we had to be retrenched at work, yeah, some of us – they had to cut some of the employees, so I received some of the money which was for my employment. It happened at my… we were drinking – Unfortunately we were drinking, what happened is that I met two ladies, we were drinking... then while we were drinking, I went with them to the ATM to draw cash. I think – no – not that I think, they saw my PIN number, and when we came back, I was sleeping in my bed and then they stole my phone and my card…

A: Oh my God!!

AM: …and they withdrew the money... Eish! I am still shocked from May… that money was supposed to be to finish my grandma's house – so I managed it, I spent almost R2000 of it, then they withdrew R13 to R14000… even now, the case is still in the police station but the police, SAPS they are dragging, they are slow, they didn't do much

A: Is it???

AM: In fact, they used my app, which they transferred the money to their account

A: Gosh!! And do you know these ladies?

AM: Yes – they ran away, they are in KZN right now

A: Oh, my word…

AM: They ran away, and my problem was that I am still in Jozi, I am stuck here I can't even speak to my grandmother or the … because I can't finish her house... I can't even explain because they ran away – I do have the case number and stuff, but SAPS they are dragging it, I don't know why; But I know, because at Capitec they called me, they said unfortunately I won't get that money back - But for them to be arrested

A: Yes

AM: But – to feel better, but the SAPS they are dragging their feet, I don't know what's happening

A: Sjoe! That is scary… and then, why did you make a video for *Yilungelo Lakho*? Were they speaking about it on the programme?

AM: Yeah, yeah yeah the problem… *Yilungelo Lakho* was talking about the problem – what problems you have while drinking – something like that, so I made a video, if you watch *Yilungelo Lakho* last of, last Monday, the third person there, I have hidden my face – the third

person, a gentleman and a lady – and then the third person was me – I was sharing the story there.

A: So Andile, can I ask you, do you think that it is easier, say now that they have got a Facebook page for *Yilungelo Lakho* right, like online pages, do you think that it is easier for you to contribute to the programme online – than it is to phone them for example?

AM: Ye-es – do I think what?

A: So, see, normally if they have the programme, right, then you can phone in or whatever, right, live on the programme

AM: yes, sure

A: But now you can even make a contribution online right, because you sent your video on Facebook? How did you send your video? Is it easier to contribute then when you are online?

AM: It's easy, it's easy – especially on WhatsApp

A: Especially?

AM: Especially in WhatsApp

A: Yes, yes

AM: WhatsApp is very easy, especially on WhatsApp it's very easy to be in contact. Like me, I have their WhatsApp numbers so most of the topics I receive them on WhatsApp

A: Do they send you a message on WhatsApp also?

AM: yeah yeah

A: Oh, I see – and do you still make comments on the Facebook page?

AM: Yes – every day

A: Every day???

AM: Every Monday – every Monday

A: And is it easy for you to make comments on the page? Do they read your comments out – or do they use it? Or do they take note of it?

AM: I don't want to lie but it happened, yeah it happened, I mostly see my comments on my TV but not always

A: Oh okay – but I suppose there are lots of people making comments also, so they can't use the same person every time you know…

AM: yeah – but normally I will see my, when I commented nicely, I will see my comment there. They read them, they do read them there, let me say that.

A: And when you make your comments for *Yilungelo Lakho* – do you write your comments in English or do you write it in, you speak isiZulu, right?

AM: Yes – I speak isiZulu, but I write my comment in English – but sometimes I do mix…

A: Huh... why do you write your comments in English?

AM: For everyone to understand what I am trying to say – like last week, I made that video, I made that video in Zulu, so I know maybe you didn't hear (understand?) what I was saying – I made my comment in Zulu, you didn't hear what I was saying – most of the people didn't hear what I was saying – so English is, it accommodates everyone –
Like especially for me, to write English it's very easy but to speak English you can't describe everything, because you know English is not my mother tongue

A: Yes, yes, yes

AM: It's not my mother language so when you speak its fine cos Zulu you flow, yeah, it's you mother tongue, but English we miss some words – yeah, you will miss what you are trying to say but when you write it down it's easy…

A: It's easier to write in English?

AM: yeah, it's easier when you write it down

A: Would it be easy for you to write in Zulu?

AM: It's the same, I don't think…

A: It's the same?

AM: It's the same, yeah with English it's the same for me – especially English, when you right in English, it's shortcut, when you write isiZulu it's the long words, you know?
(Laughs) English is very short cut

A: Is it Hey? So, it's easier to write in English – and more people understand you in English?

AM: Yeah, it's easy to write in English and to accommodate everyone but for the shortcut point of view, English is cool

A: Laughs

AM: yeah, but when I speak, I speak in Zulu

A: That's' interesting though, isn't it because like when you speak to other people on Facebook or whatever do you also speak in English? Like if you speaking to your friend, or you sending your friend a message on Facebook, would you also send it in English? Write it in English?

AM: No, no, no, when I am writing on Facebook, normally my friends are from KZN, so I write in Zulu – no English – you people are sometimes when you write all your comments are in English, they are judging too much so…

A: Why? What do they judge?

AM: Oh, they are judging you, telling you that you think you know English better than them, or something like that –

A: Okay…

AM: So, you just flow in your mother tongue because sometimes you will miss some words – yeah you will miss some words and they will say, why do you write English, because you don't know it – just write in your Zulu language – so I normally write in my Zulu language

A: Even if you're talking to them on Facebook?

AM: Yes, yeah on Facebook, I write in my Zulu language

A: Okay – that interesting and so, it's only if you like talking to like *Yilungelo Lakho* or some, like a news programme or, because I know you comment on other SABC pages also, isn't it?

AM: Most, most – you can catch me Monday to Friday on SABC News talking Zulu, the half past five News, yeah half past five news everyday – but yeah at seven news, half past one news sometimes, but yeah the half past five news is Ndebele and SiSwati, but I speak in English – and one news is Zulu and Xhosa but I speak in Zulu, I don't speak English I speak in Zulu, but in all of the news, yeah

But I do write in most of the programmes, even at @Nyanyane sometimes I will appear there, *Yilungelo Lakho*, *Daily Theta*, eish most of the SABC programmes, I am there, even on the radio stations

A: Yes – which radio stations do you follow?

AM: Ukhozi FM

A: Aah – you know, you know me I'm a KZN girl…

AM: laughs – Ukohozi FM as well as, sometimes Metro FM but mostly on Sundays, I listen to Metro FM mostly on Sundays – yeah, from nine to nine – otherwise Ukhozi FM.

A: Okay – so what you're saying is when you writing for the programmes or when you're commenting on the news programmes, then you write in English – but when you're talking to your friends on Facebook or whatever then you write in Zulu?

AM: Yeah, yeah, I write in Zulu – even in the programme, it depends on which programme it is… when it's an English programme, I write in English, when it's a Zulu programme, like what, let me say like, no it depends, let me say it depends how they ask their question

A: Yes

AM: When they write it in Zulu, I write in Zulu, when they ask in English I write it in English – it depends on how they ask me, how they pose their questions.

A: Yeah yeah – so like *Yilungelo Lakho*, they post their questions in English, right? On Facebook?

AM: yeah… no no *Yilungelo Lakho* they do post in English or Zulu sometimes –

A: Yes – But do you think, now they speak SiSwati on the programme, they speak Zulu, they speak English, isiXhosa too sometimes, right? Do you think that they should post their comments in vernac? In the mother tongue?

AM: Yeah – but I think to accommodate everyone, like especially you know most of the people, most of the people most of the South Africans they don't know Venda and Sepedi and all those northern languages, now it's better if it's English, English is fine because it accommodates everyone – so when you say you must speak your mother tongue you will miss some concept, you will miss many, many, comments because I don't know Shangaan, I don't know Venda so I will miss a lot of things there.

A: True

AM: That's why I don't watch the venda programme – all of that – because I don't know Venda… If they not writing down (refers to subtitles) – or English and Zulu – the two, most of the people know those two languages

A: Yes, yes yes

AM: yeah, they know those – Zulu is fine for every programme to have those languages

A: Andile you are online all the time, right? I mean I see you online… you and I often talk on Facebook now – so do you think that there is room on say Facebook, do you think there is room, there is place for us to use the African languages on Facebook?

AM: All of them?

A: Well... yeah, I mean a lot more people speak Zulu than they speak Venda, right? But if you are a Venda speaker, should you be, or is there room for you to use Venda on social media?

AM: No no no Venda is too difficult… a person that speaks Zulu, he either speak Zulu, Ndebele and SiSwati and Xhosa – those four languages they are the same, but Venda, Pedi… they are too difficult

A: But see, Venda is difficult for you, right…

AM: yeah – it's very difficult

A: But if you're a Venda speaker, like say somebody is from Venda, do you think that they should be speaking Venda on Facebook? Or Zulu for example?

AM: Hesitates

A: Should SABC News be putting a Zulu page, or a Venda page or an isiXhosa page on Facebook for example? Would you be happy with something like that?

AM: No, I'll be happy if they use English, Zulu, SISwati, Xhosa and whatever – but Venda no…

A: (Laughs) The Venda people are not going to be happy with you

AM: I won't even follow that one

A: You won't follow it… but somebody who is Venda should be, could follow it, right?

AM: Yeah yeah – cos we do have Vendas… where I used to work, we used to have Venda, but mostly they don't speak in Venda at work because they know we can't understand them, so they try and talk Zulu or English – Venda is very difficult – it is a challenge to me.

A: So how do you, like if you're on Facebook now right, and you see somebody made a comment, how do you decide when to use isiZulu or when to use English, or when to use a mixture of both? How do you decide when to sue what language?

AM: It depends on what language that was posted in… if they post it in Venda I will see some translation there, even though its bad translation, but I will see the translation and answer in English, if it's a Venda person so mostly I don't have Venda followers but those few Venda followers I do have, they speak English. Cos, they know this Venda language is Chinese to me – very Chinese… It's very difficult.

A: But do you think if, say for example, just think about this right… if everybody could understand isiZulu, right, then would it be easier for you to write in isiZulu, or would you still use English?

AM: I think both – let me say, yah, both… I use English… There are long sentences, English is the shortcut so in Zulu you will write a whole page in something you supposed to be writing half of the page – so English sometimes is short cut, so I write in English to make it short. Because sometimes you write a long comment and then you want to jump to another post or something, so when you write in isiZulu its long... it's going to be long – you won't finish now… Zulu takes long, so English is better, it's easy to use English, so, that's why normally when I write long posts, I write in English, when it's short then I use Zulu.

A: Yes

AM: And it depends, the people I am talking to, if I know it's a mixture of Zulu speaking and Venda or something like that, I write in English so that everyone can understand… just like here at Katlehong, we do have a page… a Facebook page. Here at Katlehong there is a mixture of Venda, Sepedi and everything. So normally we write our posts in English,

A: Really?

AM: So that, so that everyone will understand, because here in Katlehong it's a mixture… of Zulu… it is a mixture – so we do have a page here so that page, normally we write in English to accommodate everyone because not everyone understands Zulu in writing especially... they can understand when you talk to them, but in writing – they can't read.

A: That is true… I can understand that because even with me, if I hear somebody... not that I know a lot of Zulu, right, but if I hear somebody speaking it then there's some things that I will understand but if I see it written down, I have no idea… (laughs)

AM: (laughs) That's what it is, so when something is written down in Zulu you can't read that, but when you hear them talk… just like me, the Pedis, I do hear when they talk but I can't read Sepedi down, so it's easy to, it's easy when you… yeah when you talk to me I can hear but I can't read in Sepedi so it's easy when they use English to accommodate me as well… I can't read Sepedi and Venda

A: Sure, sure sure

AM: But I can hear when they talk – especially Pedis, yeah… but I can't read those languages…

A: And Andile, tell me when you put your comments up on Facebook, say for the *Yilungelo Lakho* programme, right, there are lots of people who make comments all the time – do they read your comments? Do they use your comments? Do they… are you actually contributing to the programme?

AM: A lot, a lot, yeah a lot because once I write, because normally *Yilungelo Lakho* they post their comment around 11:00 – before 12:00, yeah, before 12:00 and then I do contribute a lot – they read at around 12:30, they do read my comment sometimes, yeah – they do read my comments so that's why I do contribute a lot there, I even have their WhatsApp number now – okay it's where I shared my story on… I received their WhatsApp number, yeah yeah they sent their WhatsApp number – that's where I shared my story… But I don't know what happened because after the programme – even before the airing of that video – they said maybe they will help somewhere, somehow but since then I haven't received any feedback or something like that, I don't know, I don't know what…

A: Is it?

AM: I will forward to you on WhatsApp…

A: Yeah, or even on Facebook, but I'll go on their programme, and I'll see the video that you sent to them, I'll watch it on You Tube maybe.

AM: Yeah yeah – I still have… I don't know whether I still have that video, but I think I still have but I do have because I wrote a message on WhatsApp… it was a lady or something, she said I must make a video for that incident. I made the video then she told me she will send it to the Producer or something and see what they could help with… I don't know… Because my only problem, my only concerns… I don't have any problem with the money that was taken, but my only concern was that I didn't use it… I wanted to finish my two-

room grandmother's house… so I am stuck in Jozi, I don't know what to tell them or something like that, I don't know what to tell them now…

A: And where does your grandmother live?

AM: IN Nqutu – KZN

A: Ohhh –

AM: In KwaZulu Natal… she built a two room house a long time ago – I think it has been one and a half years it's still standing, so one and a half room is standing, and the other room is still standing… I think it's short with zinc, its short with some cement, it's not very… its few things short so I promised her, I promised her a week after that money came in. We were in lockdown so we were not allowed to move from province to province – I promised her that I will try by all means when the lockdown ends or when we are allowed to travel from province to province, I'll come back and finish it for her

A: Ah no, but you know, just have faith, it will happen…

AM: That incident happened, I didn't know what to say to her now, I didn't know, I didn't know what to say but I managed to call her and told her the story; I still, I do have the case number here, I went to the police station but that money I won't rectify it now. Because Capitec they called and said the money was used so… even on their account it was taken for me it was to arrest them – but the money, I won't get that money anymore.

So, it was due to alcohol but since then… eish

A: No more alcohol hey…

AM: Yeah!!! I just stop… I just stopped because it was too much for me, it was too much, even now, I don't want to lie I'm still hurting, I don't know what to say because the biggest problem is that I am no longer working, and I can't rectify that money…

At work they…. I got another job so at work they say there's someone with Covid 19 and so they had to cut us again. Actually, I'm a care worker you know…

A: Yes, I know… yes

AM: I'm a care worker so they had to cut some… and especially us new ones, in the new work that I found, so now I don't know what to say… I don't know what to do and in fact now, I'm looking for a home care, you know home care?

A: Yes

AM: Yeah, individual home care, yeah, I'm looking for that but I'm just looking for that, but hey there are no means, there's no trains, no trains at the moment, I'm looking for home care, but I am stuck… I don't want to lie, I'm stuck, I'm stuck… I don't know what to do

A: I hope they follow up for you…

AM: Yeah – the police maybe will arrest them, but they won't rectify that money… so I'll start maybe and try and find a number where I can call, but I'll build that house, that's my only dream is to finish that house

A: No, it will happen, it will happen… Okay lets' talk, I've just got a few more questions for you, right?

So, do you think that… so *Yilungelo Lakho* they speak different languages on the programme right?

AM: Yeah – normally they speak SiSwati and Zulu and English yeah

A: Do you think that's a good thing? Or do you think that they should only be doing it in one language?

AM: No, no no it's a very… it's a good thing especially Nckungwana and Andile [Alisha] Jali – Andile Jali is a Zulu girl, the other guy Nkunguwana is a Swati, so it accommodates us all because they speak Swati Zulu and English. So, I don't think they must add another language on top especially because I can't hear those Northern languages.

So, I think now it is cool now, it is cool – I don't want to lie, it accommodates everyone. Maybe if you don't know Zulu or Swati so it's a problem, but it accommodates us all… because if you look… I think 80 or 90 percent of South Africans they speak Zulu, they know Zulu.

A: Yes, yes over 80 percent

AM: Yeah, so Zulu is fine, Xhosa… but not Venda

A: (Laughs… Those Venda people are going to be very angry with you Andile

AM: (Laughs) Only few Vendas, only few… Vendas there are not too many Vendas. There a few Vendas and most of the Vendas they know these languages.

A: But you see, that's one of the problems, right? If you don't speak the languages, or you don't use them on TV or online or whatever, then they start to die. Because nobody is speaking them or using them anymore.

AM: Yeah, most of them they are complaining that only Nguni languages are used mostly on SABC – and there are few programmes on their languages. Only few, I don't want to lie, only few… I think the whole SABC only have u Muvhango in Venda – only that programme, there is nothing more

A: Yeah

AM: There is nothing more… I think they are excluded at some point… but it is good for us, we don't know Venda much, so we won't watch much of that programme – On Muvhango

it's better because they write down in English down so it's easy to understand what is happening. But if it will be their languages more on TV, we will be bored.

A: Because you won't understand it

AM: Yes, we will be bored, we will be bored serious… I think even with music, most of the Vendas their DJs Kanyane or something… they normally make their music to be in Zulu or English – otherwise once you make it in Venda, nobody will like that thing.

They normally… they try and write them in Zulu or something like that but most of their musicians are Vendas but they accommodate us – yeah because if you write music in Venda nobody will listen, most of the people in South Africa they don't know Venda… So, you must try and make us understand what you are saying, otherwise nobody will buy your music

A: Yes, yes

AM: …. For the sake of selling your copies, you must use English or Zulu. Otherwise use your Venda, nobody will buy that – it won't sell…

A: And on Facebook, do you follow any other groups where they speak Zulu?

AM: Yeah, yeah, I do have many groups…

A: What kinds of groups Andile?

AM: Like I said, we have a group here at Katlehong but we speak normally English; we have a group in eNqutu from our KZN, so it's Zulu there, hundred percent Zulu…

A: oh!! And on that group, do you write in Zulu?

AM: In Zulu, it's 100 percent Zulu, they don't want English posts…

A: Is it?

AM: Yeah, they write 100 percent Zulu there because it's a KZN group, so we don't have English speaking people there

A: And what kinds of topics or conversations do they have on that group? What do you talk about on that group?

AM: Sorry?

A: What kind of topics or conversations do they talk about on that group?

AM: Normally we socialise, we socialise, sometimes help each other find jobs, make jokes, sometimes… yeah, we socialise, socialise a lot… and the incidents… because we normally, in Gauteng others are in KZN so those who are in KZN they tell us what is happening around the area, our small town,

A: Yes, so it helps you to keep in touch

AM: Yeah – we keep in touch a lot so its normally about that you know, and not any other things… it's normally about that – we socialise a lot, we help each other a lot, so when we have problems, we do support a lot… so it's for support, we even have a T shirt…

A: You have a T shirt?

AM: We even have a T shirt for that group, yeah –

A: Okay… that's interesting

AM: Which is written your name, yeah – I do have one here with my name

A: And are there lots of people on the group?

AM: There is a lot of people, yeah… we normally do get togethers during December time, wearing those T shirts

A: And where do you get together?

AM: IN Nqutu, KZN

A: Oh – at home…

AM: Yeah, we normally make a get together, buy some meat, yeah… we normally get together, we wear the T shirts, I do have one here, written (with) my name and the name of the group… so when we get together, we wear those t shirts, those who are available, they come, those who are not, they don't.

But it's for families, it's for fun – nothing more

A: Yes, yes – okay that's very interesting…. And what other social media groups do you have where you speak mother tongue?

AM: I have Nqutu, I have Katlehong, I have…. It's not many, I mean I think I'm in four or five – something like that…

A: Do you think we should have more?

AM: I do add more, just to socialise with different people it's cool

A: But not for News?

AM: But normally those Facebook groups – eish – I don't trust them…. It's better for the WhatsApp group, I do have a WhatsApp group

A: Yes – okay …

AM: WhatsApp groups are cool; those Facebook groups sometimes are not cool they are not to be trusted…

A: (Laughs) Is it?

AM: At least with WhatsApp groups you have a number of the person you are talking to. So sometimes on the Facebook groups people send their, make their profile picture like being a lady, but he is a man or something like that, or he is man, or he is a lady

A: Oh gosh!

AM: So, Facebook is fooling us a lot, so I don't trust much Facebook, that's why I am into, I am into WhatsApp groups…. At least

A: I see, I see…

AM: Anyway Andile, thank you so much for talking to me again. And I wish you good luck with the job

AM: Thank you Thank you Thank you – I will try

BUSANI

December 2019

A: First of all, thank you for agreeing to talk to me.

B: No problem

A: I'm just going to go through some of the key information that I need to give you. So, like I said to you when we spoke initially, I am a part time master's student, and I am doing my masters through Rhodes University, and what I am doing is, I am looking at the use of vernacular languages, or African languages on online platforms. That includes things like websites but also social media… and so because I am, I actually work for the SABC news online department – and I mean, I am sure as somebody who contributes to some of the programmes, you will know that we don't have a lot of online content in the African languages, even though it's the mandate of the SABC to share news content – especially in those languages.

B: yeah true

A: So that is why, or one of the reasons why I am doing this – obviously because I am familiar with some of the things, but also because it's a way to impact on how the SABC online programmes continue going forward.

B: yes, correct, yeah – since we're moving to digital, forth industrial revolution… you have to conscientise the people, the young ones, I hear you.

A: Definitely… So, I just realised as I spoke to you that I actually didn't send you an email this morning with the permission letter, but I will do so one I am finished, just to let you know that the SABC has granted me permission to do the case study. Right? And with this

case study I am looking at, specifically at the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page and some of the conversations that happen there… but as we chat obviously, we can talk about other kinds of online presence that you might be involved in or contribute to or whatever as well, right?

B: Okay

A: And then Busani, finally I need to say to you that anything that you say to me is obviously held in confidence; I will not share this with anyone outside of my actual study, and if you do not want to share your name that is fine, just let me know and you know, we won't share your name either, (B agrees) and of course, at the end of the study I will, if you are interested, share with you what I come up with, hopefully it will be passable material … (laughing)… but, but you know… so essentially that is where we stand, right.

So, it's a very casual kind of interview… please if you think that there's something I have missed out in our conversation, please remember to point out for me, or whatever because obviously that's what I'm looking for – more information or insight into an online presence for African languages.

Okay – so you contacted me because you saw my contact details on the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page…

B: That's correct, yes…

A: I therefore presume that you watch the programme, or that you follow the programme online… How do you interact with the actual programme?

B: Actually I, I saw it- but I haven't been following like in too detail… I just thought it would be nice to get to know, when you tell me what it is all about on your side as well, cos yah, I haven't been that much involved in it.

A: Okay, but do you, do you actually watch the programme at all?

B: I'll be honest with you, no…

A: So, you don't really watch the programme?

B: No no I haven't

A: And so, what made you, sort of check out the Facebook page?

B: Because I go on Facebook page, I do my posts, I post a lot… and I also check people's profiles and then if I like, and then like it and comment and share my views as well.

A: Okay – and then do you ever share comments on specifically the topics that are covered in *Yilungelo Lakho*?

B: (Hesitates) Err I was going to now, because when I saw that, I haven't been, I haven't seen it as well, so now I will be… actually I was looking forward to it – and to share it, yes…

A: Okay… so Busani, when you go onto like Facebook, or I don't know if you're on Twitter as well, what language…

B: Instagram

A: Sorry

B: Instagram

A: You're on Instagram as well

B: I'm not on Twitter, yeah – I'm on Facebook and Instagram

A: You're on Facebook and Instagram… okay – so when you go onto these platforms, in what language in what language do you normally, what language do you normally use to communicate

B: You'd be surprised – it's English

A: is it??? (Laughs_)

B: It's English and a bit of Zulu, but very bit

A: Yes…

B: Even if, when I am talking to my daughter or my kids – I write in English – sorry – and then, I also put a little bit of Zulu, just to add a spice to a conversation like that … yes, yes, most of, if you've seen my posts, all my posts, then you will see that most of them are written in English and then I just put a little bit of, of Zulu or of any other language .. well just to…

A: Is there a reason that you don't use any of the other languages as the main language?

B: no… no… not specifically … I think I find it easy to echo my views in English, yes – but it depends as well, which audience I am talking to …

You know, some some… if I am talking to a Zulu, a deep Zulu speaking

A: Yes…

B: Then, then of course I would have to write in Zulu, but, on Facebook, I don't know, I haven't been writing in like in deep Zulu… I just put a little bit, you know, like a slang in Zulu…

A: Yes, yes...

B: Yes – just to put spice on that conversation that I am, on that view that I was sharing on that view…

A: Yes, yes

And I am presuming that because you're from KZN that you speak primarily, I mean that your mother tongue would be isiZulu, right?

B: Correct, yes, my mother tongue is isiZulu – we speak Zulu at home

A: And did you grow up… you speak Zulu at home – and do you still speak Zulu at home?

B: yah, we talk Zulu at home

A: Really? With family and friends and children and what have you?

B: Mphele is my surname – yes, correct – (laughs)

A: So, work is English, home is Zulu – and then when you're online…

B: With friends… lots of my friends, especially the Black friends we communicate in English – I don't know why… yesterday, you know, now that you are mentioning it… and then I was saying, how, you know what, we all you know like English, and then it's like, because if – some nice words that we use, you know, like pun and all that – not to say that Zulu doesn't have a lot of puns, Zulu is a very rich language as well, in terms of… so – and English as well, but most, I think 90 percent, 95 percent when I write, or when we talk, with our friends… but when we're writing, and then when we talking we use Zulu… but when we writing, and then

A: Yes

B: And then we find it easy… because Zulu, it takes long… and then, when you write a sentence, and then you…

A: Many words

B: yes… so it's short, you use some short, you use some short…. (laughs)

A: More economical I suppose

B: It's more economical, correct… and to the point, sorry

A: Do you think that might be one reason why so few people, speak or write, or use African languages on social media for example?

B: I think so…

A: Yah…

B: That's my view... I think so, I think I don't know, I might be speaking, yes, I may be speaking for a lot of people, but… I think people find it easy to write in English – cos it is shorter and it's to the point.

A: Yes

B: In Zulu, a sentence is very very long, you find that you drag, unless, unless you are doing a presentation where everyone is predominantly Zulu speaking and then in that meeting or whatever, but when you writing… cos most of the people – you know I've got 5000 Facebook friends, and I interact with most of them, say 2000, 3000 – what I've noticed with all of them as well, they also communicate in English – they also write in English

A: Yes, yes, yes

B: But we talk, like I'm talking to you if I, if you were Zulu speaking, then we speak Zulu, at home we speak Zulu I don't know … but when we are writing and then people find it easy to write in English.

A: Yes… Do you think that there is room on these platforms for the use of African languages?

B: There is a room for that – there is a room for African languages, but I don't know if it is being promoted enough, I don't know if… I think it comes back from, when I say the background? I'm trying to think where would this come from. Cos, yah… I don't find a lot of people writing in their language when they write on Facebook. I don't know, maybe the perception is that when you write on Facebook you are communicating with different types of people so you want people to understand you, it depends on the people that you are talking to as well, cos you know your friends, you know your group, like for instance, if I want to send a message and then I want to talk to everybody now, cos I've got friends in New York as well…

A: Yes – and that don't speak Zulu or whatever…

B: That don't speak Zulu – so when I write, when I, even when I am doing my posts, and then my status, I check first, okay, this status is targeted to, I want those people to understand, if I want everybody to understand then the whole status will be in English – the writing will be in English…

A: Right

B: But, If I and then I put a few words if want to trigger the ideas of, or the opinions of other people who are speaking other language and then I will use that language, you know, just to tease them, or something like that…. But yah, I don't know…

But it's not used, you know, like the African languages on online, Aasra, I don't think it's being used enough there, no…

A: You know that's… like I said to you when we started this conversation, that's the one thing that you know, is an important aspect in terms of how SABC News should be sharing news….

B: Correct

A: And when the laws were drawn up, when the SABC was essentially re-launched in this democratic country, we didn't have the internet then, so they didn't make provision for it, so actually, all that the law says is that you need to broadcast – as in radio and TV – in the official languages… it doesn't really say anything about online – and yet people for the most

part, you know 80% of south Africans still speak a vernacular language, or an African language at home… as opposed to English… so it is very interesting…

Do you watch any of the SABC vernacular programmes at all?

B: yes, I do

A: Like which ones Busani?

B: Like – more soapies, like this one now… this is TBT by Skhumba, I do, I watch a lot of SABC yes, and also, I've got my…

A: And those are primarily…

B: And also, I've got my comment as well at SABC, in terms of what you are talking about… I'm saying there's a lot of English – I used to say to the guys, there is a lot of English on these guys, and less the other languages, so I don't know if they are talking to a particular group, but I understand that maybe they are talking to the youth – but you know you leaving out the older people on TV as well…

Because even if they are talking… they are presenting a gospel show, they speak in English, this is English that is used there… but you find that there are very few… I'm not being racist now, because I share with the people at work as well, I've got different colleagues, there is not white people that are listening to SABC 1, Gospel, so why are you broadcasting, why you presenting that gospel in English…

A: Well, you know that's exactly it – you have a radio station like Ukhozi FM which has such a big audience, but when you look at the website it's actually in English…

B: Correct – yeah

A: …and then you start thinking but why, because the people that are listening to Ukhozi are not necessarily going to understand what is written on the website… (laughs) so sometimes it makes no sense…. Which is very interesting… Do you think though that having online platforms though, like Facebook a Facebook page or a website or whatever…?

B: I'm glad you started that that platform… I'm glad…

A: Do you think that having these online platforms makes it easier to access or contribute to these programmes?

B: Yes, yes… yes it does… maybe not much the buy-in from the beginning but I think if they, if SABC keeps on pushing it, and then yes, it will make a difference… but it will take time though, because remember, on social media most people are, I would say, I don't know, you might have the stats there… I don't know, on social media there is different types of people

A: A totally different kind of audience, hey?

B: Correct, yes, that is the word I am looking for, yes, a total different… so now, if you were to use Sesotho for instance, and you are limiting your audience,

A: That is true, so if you use one language, you start limiting, you start cutting out the others…

B: Exactly, yes… and then you are leaving out other people – so I don't know, I don't know… I still think English on social media is still going to be dominating, but if you guys are actually wanting to change that – for other languages to be used there – Good luck.

A: Laughs…

B: I'm not being sarcastic – but I'm seeing the youth now, because all our kids, we send our kids into other schools, where they don't speak their home language.

A: That is true also…

B: You know… now when you send them... Then you expect them to, when they write they must write in a language that they don't, they only speak at home that they don't know how to write… How are they going to write that …?

A: That is true, yes, absolutely, yes…

B: So, they use short sentences, yes…

A: I think that possibly in the next few years that is going to be the next big challenge. That the young people don't know, or don't understand…

B: And that's where they are losing it…

A: yes – because some of them speak it – you know, like you say, in a big social setting, and the world is becoming so small – so in a big social setting like Facebook they speak English, because it's just easier to communicate, in so many different ways…

So, if you were… I mean you were saying to me that you look at the audience and then you decide how to comment right? Or what language to use to comment

B: Yes, yes, yes, that right

A: And do you think that makes a difference, I mean like a programme like *Yilungelo Lakho* for example you think if they made… so every week they put out a post, but their post is put out in English, right… do you think if they used, or they put out a post in Sesothu or isiZulu or isiXhosa or whatever, do you think it would make a difference in terms of what language they use to communicate?

B: Yes Aasra - remember once you do that people can relate on what you are talking about – and then it would attract – because then it will attract people will read, Oh yes, *Yilungelo Lakho* –and then when they talk then when they use thus (language) then I can relate … because when you use a language where people can relate, people have a buy-in on it.

A: Yes!! Yes, yes

B: I'm sure I'm sure it will have a big impact – it will change – it will improve – if SABC can use that… and then on *Yilungelo Lakho* and then you start using the other languages… but (hesitates) remember, which is the most spoken language in the country – so the IsiZulu…

A: …will dominate

B: …will dominate yes! Will dominate – yes, And also - another thing, remember, while you talking about this social media, you know another thing – you know once you start using, you know, people will have a negative thoughts – you know once you start using a particular language, people start talking, some people, are okay, this may be Zulu talking… and then they start having attitude – you know, but it depends how you write it as well, it depends how you word it, how you use it especially in your online postings. But people will tend to say, oh this is a Zulu thing… or this is a Sesotho thing, and then you lose the person that might be interested or maybe that could share their good idea on that platform on that post….

A: You're losing someone who might be speaking or more fluent in another language?

B: Correct, yes that's what I want to say.

A: You know, it's very interesting that you say that because I was speaking to somebody else, doing one of these interviews the other day, and he was saying to me that he doesn't like to speak or to write isiZulu when he is commenting because some people then, not criticise, but they kind of look down on him and say oh you should be speaking English on this platform – why are you speaking Zulu. And he was saying that that is actually quite a big thing, that people can be quite critical when he does a post in Zulu, as opposed to if he does a post in English. He was saying that's the one reason that he always posts in English because people – and its other Zulu people, who will say to him why are you doing that, you should be posting in English.

B: Laughs – I told you my friends – we share everything – when we write, we write in English…

A: It's very interesting how it turns out, you know, that

B: True… You have a challenge there, Aasra

A: But Busani, as somebody who speaks Zulu, right, and you obviously now speak a lot of English as well – you're obviously very fluent in both, right? Do you think that that you are more fluent – or that you are more meaningfully able to communicate in either language? Are you as comfortable in both? Or are you more comfortable in one of them?

B: For me it depends Aasra – when I am chairing a meeting, and I want that meeting to come to a conclusion – I use English – even if there are black people – even when I am chairing – I

am a coach as well – I've got a team there for running – so I use English, there reason being once you start using the language – say for instance isiZulu people have a tendency of dragging the meeting and then they start using all the other words – you don't come to a conclusion, once you say I am wrapping up this thing, and then they start using another word and then it's never going to end. But however, when you using English people tend to think okay, this is how it should be concluded, and people tend to respect…

A: Like it's more authoritative to use English?

B: Correct

A: So that's the perception I suppose?

B: It is a perception, yes… of course it is a perception

A: But it obviously works for you?

B: It works for me to come to a conclusion, otherwise I would never finish. But it's nice to relate as well in isiZulu, sometimes when you have a meeting and then you find that there are different, well let me say for instance, where I am working, and then you find that there is one guy, he is an Indian, he lives in phoenix… so maybe the other five blacks that are in the meeting, so I will be chairing the meeting in English –

A: Because the one person doesn't understand, obviously

B: yes, correct

And then the other day, one staff said to me because there was a customer, a young girl, she was very upset about the service, so she called the manager – she asked to speak to a service manager, I had to come in and then… and then started talking to me about how she feels about the service, and then we spoke – and then the other person, or the colleague on the phone says why you spoke to this girl, because they went to those schools and then you talk to them in English, then you reply in English… I said it would be rude for me, and then this is a big company that I work for that… and when somebody, because she, she, I have to follow her… if she is speaking Zulu, then I have to speak Zulu,

A: Yes, yeah

B: …But if she is talking English then I have to talk English, because I mean, that English is the medium of communication, I mean that's what we communicate in…

A: Yes, yes

B: So I said, if you have done that for me and then the customer is come and complained to me, and then I would have said no you are wrong in that sense, because the customer was talking the language that they prefer, and she preferred English, hence I engaged her in English… if she turned in to Zulu, then I would have talked to her in Zulu, but if she turned

into a Sotho, I would have asked her in turn, sorry, I don't understand Sotho and would you mind if we communicate in English.

A: Laughs - You need to come spend some time in Joburg Busani…

B: Laughs – agrees

A: But let's go back to social media and Facebook specifically, right… you said that you don't always comment on like a programme, or an *Yilungelo Lakho* post for example, but you do make a lot of posts on Facebook anyway…

B: Correct, yes

A: Do you think Facebook is a good way to have discussions, or to gauge people's views about things, or to get your comments or your thoughts and feelings heard? Do you think it's a platform that allows you to do that?

B: It is, but people have abused this platform, Aasra, they have abused it – and then now people say oh Facebook is a liar and everything you hear there, and nobody tends to believe on Facebook… people have abused that platform… and then why –it's because I also sent messages to Facebook, I said guys, why you need to monitor this platform this social media, because people are abusing this platform and then the perception is created, oh no, Facebook is a liar or anything, you don't find… that's why people they won't do business now on online, which now in the 4th industrial revolution where people should use this platform either to empower themselves or enrich themselves to to start business on social media, then they can communicate, but because that platform Is not used correctly – and then people now, they have a negative perception about Facebook and then and they say oh no… but, I don't know, but like *Yilungelo Lakho* now is starting something which is good, which I think is excellent – and then because people will start, especially when you use that language where people can relate to – it depends as well which audience you want to attract

A: Yes - So yes, of course that is a problem with a programme like *Yilungelo Lakho* because it's not just a single language you know, so they use so many different languages on the programme, and like you're saying if they put up a post in English, then are they blocking other people or are they including people – but by the same token, in any other language you're going to get a similar sort of thing – if they put up a Sesotho post then are they going to block all the Zulu speakers - so I suppose it's a question that you're going to have to play around with…

B: I've seen one person posting in Afrikaans - I'm telling you they only received one comment - There were two likes or something – laughs – nobody says likes…

A: But you know, that is the interesting thing right, because Afrikaans is the third most spoken language in the country.

B: Yeah – I was just telling my boss that, I told him…

A: Yeah – even I was surprised at that – which means that it's not just sort of white traditionally Afrikaans people who speak it, you know? And then to think that if it's the third biggest language, obviously there are a lot of people speaking it.

B: Yes, yes, yes, we were chatting about it with Michelle, my boss, I said Afrikaans is the third language now in terms of spoken, and then we spoke about PE and Cape Town and all of that, and then I said I wouldn't like my child to grow up in PE – because they speak Afrikaans and English, they mix it – and she said it's a slang… I just said (laughs) but while he's talking to you, you thought somebody is talking Afrikaans and then is English in the way – so they fork out the words... you know, so yes, you don't get comments on that but if you put some English or some Zulu, or you use the … because you need the on social media now, you have to find something attractive to comment, and then like pictures or something like that Because I think people they like pictures and things like that – something that will attract their attention.

And with some of them they just read it – and oh okay and go through it – okay the have viewed it and then Facebook will say so many people have viewed your post and no comments – or maybe likes like two or five – but – it is a good platform

A: Busani – do you, I mean outside of the SABC, are you seeing that you are on Facebook, and you have a host of friends and are very active and what have you – are you a part of, or do you follow or contribute to any other discussions or groups or whatever on Facebook that might… that are speaking in isiZulu for example

B: Not… I'm in different groups – Aasra, I must be honest, I hate groups because sometimes there is one topic and then it's never gonna end and then this one posts, and this one posts and this one posts – sometimes you don't have time to go through all of those post, but I would assume that in your position that's what you need to do.

A: Busani do you by any chance, do you keep an eye out for discussions that might be happening in Zulu or in vernacular…

B: Yes, I do, I do…

A: Yeah? And is there a particular reason or have you been a part of particular kinds of discussions that have been quite meaningful?

B: It all depends as well, I think if it means something to me – if it talks about sports then I pay attention, politics I pay attention – and religion then I pay attention – and I would never

miss those things because I think these are things that we engage – I mean when I'm talking with my friends and we engage mostly on political issues, and religious issues – on social issues as well….

A: Yes, yes,

B: And then I comment

A: And I mean then you would look out for, specifically conversations happening in Zulu?

B: Yes, yes, yes then I would look out for that in particular. Or somebody has shared maybe a profound story – then I will find myself also adding up there and posting – that is where as well where the Zulu comes in that I've seen, when people maybe they are sad, they writing a sad story – or something has happened to them or it's any anniversary or something like that – yeah and then when you find that okay it's a Zulu person and then they also put some few Zulu words there, then I write in isiZulu as well to say that I relate to that.

A: So, when it's something of a more personal nature, something that impacts on you personally, then obviously it is more linked to Zulu than if it's something of a more general nature.

B: Yes

A: But I think that's a big thing, you know, like you said earlier linking English to sort of formal communication and respect and authority but that when you're more casual or more personal than it's easier to slip into vernac(ular)

B: True, yeah – yes, it is

A: Okay – but if you had a choice… Like you say, for you it's not an either or, it just depends on the situation in terms of what language you use…

B: If I had a choice?

A: Mmm

B: If I had a choice… if I had a choice, it would be isiZulu as well

A: Is it?

B: yeah – Because I am Zulu speaking, but …. (Hesitates, laughs) – why I am saying because this because in the back of my mind, you know I think again, it goes back to writing – when you are writing then you don't feel comfortable to write in isiZulu, because it takes long to get to the point but…

A: You know, that's another thing Busani… Sorry – go ahead …

B: But if you were – like when I see now on your SABC, like your WhatsApp voice message – then people prefer, then there you can talk Zulu – I like that, with SABC, and you find relate better now, they talk the language, they … like that is what I say, I said the other day, I

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said SABC have got something very interesting now with WhatsApp voice then people can relate – can talk isiXhosa – you find and maybe if they want to talk about isiZulu isiSotho then they talk in isiSotho about a particular topic that is happening but when they writing, I'll bet you Aasra – when they want to write, it will be English.

A: No, I can understand … I can… but also, you know, in the study I've been doing a lot of reading around language – and the one thing that they said is sometimes the language is not moving or not evolving as quickly as the technology –

B: Yah true

A: So, you're not going to get… you know, a lot of the times one of the reasons that people use English is that because all the technical terms and the fashionable talk – don't exist in the African languages…

B: Yeah – in the other languages – yeah, true, true… but in isiZulu, let me tell you, In isiZulu there is a lot of puns… there is a lot of puns – and then people when they talk in Zulu, almost like English because, in English as well there is a lot of puns… you can say something, you know, where you mean something else…

A: Double meanings

B: You know double meaning – which makes people laugh – and then makes you think as well… you know there is a lot of puns, that's why I love it…

A: But that's interesting…

B: But – writing is different

A: But it's really very interesting – it's very fascinating to see how this is turning out, because, you know, you said you're not on Twitter, but on Twitter for example, a lot of conversations happen in vernac…

B: Is it?

A: Yeah, and… well not vernac, you know, like you said it's like a mixture of English and …

B: Zulu….

A: … and African languages…

B: And other African languages yes,

A: And sometimes… almost, I wouldn't say slang, but more casual, not the rich sort of formal language, but it's very powerful, you know, and people seem to use it a lot – but once again, it depends, I think on the audience – so it depends on who you are talking to, what you are saying – it depends on who the audience might be.

B: I think on Twitter the perception is… this is my opinion though; the perception is this is the …. DISTORTS - Everybody on Facebook, it's just like I almost said the wrong word…

can be used by anybody… I can't say – I would say it caters for every group irrespective of status, you know – regardless of status, education, everyone you know…

A: But Twitter is for the bigger guys (laughs)

B: (Laughing) I think that might be - I didn't want to be rude, I didn't want…

A: Yeah – you know I think that might be… that actually is a perception as well, you know – that there's certain things that you need to be able to not compete… compete is the wrong word – but to be a certain kind of person to participate in it.

B: A perception they create …

A: Busani thank you for sharing.

DINEO

July 2020

A: So Dineo, just to get started, now you know where I come from, you are online, you go onto Facebook, Are you also on any other online platforms?

D: No – at the moment I am only on Facebook.

A: Okay – and is there a reason for that?

D: I don't know…. I just don't like those Twitter and any other platform; I just don't like them; I don't know why…

A: Yes, so Facebook is a more comfortable place to be in?

D: I don't know why… yes, Facebook is, for me, yes…

A: Okay – and when you are on Facebook – what sort of language do you use? Well, first, what is your mother tongue? What language do you speak?

D: Sepedi

A: You're Sepedi!! Okay – that's interesting… so when you're on Facebook, what language do you normally speak in? Do you write in English or Sepedi? Or any other language?

D: It's English, Sepedi and a little bit of Zulu most times

A: Is it? And do you speak Zulu Dineo?

D: I am… because where I am staying (in Hillbrow) … that's the language they speak, so I try to…

A: So, you try to… okay… but when you go back home and what have you then you speak Sepedi?

D: At home we speak Sepedi, but that side everyone speaks Sepedi, so… yeah that's the language that side.

A: And there's a very big difference between isiZulu and Sepedi, right?

D: There is, yeah there is a difference

A: Did you find it difficult… I am presuming that you moved to Johannesburg, right? Did you find it difficult at first to start speaking isiZulu?

D: No – for me it wasn't… I actually get to know languages very easily, I adapt easily to learn other languages, so it wasn't difficult at all for me…

A: And what other languages do you speak? If you don't mind me asking…

D: I can try and speak Venda, I know how to greet, I know when people are talking… and then also, Shangaan, I hear, and I can try and greet… I know how to greet in those languages. But I can't go into a deep conversation – though I can hear when people are talking… so that's how I know the languages.

A: Okay –

D: …. And Setswana and Sesotho from QwaQwa… they are almost the same with Sepedi, you know

A: Really? Okay…

D: Yeah, they are almost the same, so many, many… Like it won't be difficult for me to speak Setswana or Sesotho because they are almost the same as Sepedi.

A: And when you are online? Do you speak any of these, do you use any of these languages online?

D: I do sometimes… I can throw in a word, like in Xitsonga, I can throw in a word in Setswana, I can throw in a word in Sotho, so… I do…

A: And does this, does this happen generally, when you are speaking to your friends and what have you, or is it only in certain cases like for example when you are commenting on like a programme like *Yilungelo Lakho*?

D: No no no, I use it everywhere and every time…

A: Is it?

D: Yes –

A: Okay a- and tell me about the *Yilungelo Lakho* programme. Do you watch it at all?

D: I do make time to watch it – even though of late I wasn't, but I do… I used to make time to watch the show almost every week – that was before the lockdown and all, because under the lockdown mostly they were repeating old shows, so some of those shows I have watched already. But when I am home, I make sure I watch

A: And I believe, I mean the *Yilungelo Lakho* programme is mostly Nguni, but they speak lots of different languages on the programme, right?

D: Yes, they do…

A: And how do you, how comfortable are you with a programme like that where there are so many different languages being spoken.

D: I am 100 percent confident because mostly its Alicia… she's Zulu, right? But when she's speaking, everyone from any culture can call in, she relates to the languages and makes sure that they understand the person, so I think they go all out you know, when it comes to the languages, they accommodate all of us.

A: Okay and have you ever like tried, I know initially you could only call in to the programme for example, have you ever tried to do something like that?

D: I have called in once, and I spoke to the guy… what's the guy's name? Simphiwe?

A: Simphiwe, yes

D: Yeah, I spoke to him. There was a topic about child maintenance. I called through that day.

A: Okay… do you think that, like I was saying to you earlier right, I first, I saw your name because you were one of those people who make comments on the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page… do you think that having access to a page like that makes it easier for you to contribute to the programme?

D: It does, because you know they put our comments there on the screen, they read them out sometimes, so it does, it does…

A: Okay – and do you feel like they include enough of your comments, or they take it seriously enough?

D: They do take them serious, because sometimes they will have someone speaking in the panel, yeah, and then they will direct whatever comment or question that we made on Facebook, they will direct it to the panel, then you get an answer there and there, so yeah, it does work, it does help. They do take our comments serious.

A: So, you feel like you, as a member of the Facebook audience, you feel like you are contributing to the programme?

D: Yes, I do

A: Okay… So Dineo when you go online, when you go onto Facebook, do you feel…. Are you comfortable to communicate in English and or isiPedi or are you more comfortable using a single language?

D: I am comfortable using my Sepedi and English because most times I have noticed that they will post in Sotho and post again in English, then I am able to comment in both languages.

A: you know, when I was talking to some of the other people, they were saying to me that sometimes one of the reasons they use English is because it's easier to write in English

D: It is, that's true…

A: Is it?

D: But for me, that's not a problem – I always use both languages. You will find that maybe they post about the same topic in different languages – I always participate in both languages, I don't have a problem typing in both languages.

A: Is it? So, they post mostly in English, and sometimes they throw in a bit of a sentence in Zulu or SiSwati

D: Or Sotho

A: …or Sotho or whatever – How do you decide, if the post is in English for example, how do you decide then which language to comment in?

D: If the post is in English, I respond in English, and then if the post in Sotho, then I go to my Pedi because Sotho and Pedi are almost the same so… I never even thought deep about the languages, like oh, they posted in English what language am I going to use to respond? So, if they post in English, I reply in English, that's how I do it.

A: Do you think that they should be posting in African languages instead?

D: They are doing it already – so I am not complaining about it.

A: You're not complaining – but if it were ideal, would you prefer that they used African languages, or do you think that English is kind of the thing that keeps it all together?

D: Like, as they are doing it currently, I think it is okay, because they post in English and those other languages. So, I think it is okay like that.

A: Dineo, generally… do you think there is a space for African languages on these online platforms?

D: Aasra – are you asking if there's a page for…

A: No – a space, is there space for it. So, like I was saying to you earlier, a lot of the time on online you only find, or you mostly find posts and pages and information in English, right? Do you think that there should be more use of the African languages on these online platforms?

D: Yes, I think so, I think there must be more, yes

A: Is there a reason for why you think that?

D: Yes, because like most people, my…. Our people, black people they mostly loose on important information – so I think if they try and accommodate everyone in their languages it will make it easy

A: Okay, and if for example there was a page, or there was something for Sepedi people online would you be able to… sorry, let me just rephrase that, if there was News or a news page for example for Sepedi then would you follow that page, or would you participate in it?

D: I would do so, yes

A: Okay… and do you think that it matters in what language people respond, Dineo?

D: Yes, it does matter. Because it shows that maybe they understand a part of the conversation. Sometimes people just miss out because of the language, you know.

A: Okay, does the fact that in *Yilungelo Lakho* they speak so many different languages, do you think that's a good thing? That it strengthens the kind of discussion that they have.

D: It is, it is a good thing

A: Does it make for stronger discussion?

D: Yes, it does, yes it does…

A: And you're a young person who contributes to the programme, do you also follow other pages that give you News or information in African languages?

D: No… at the moment, I think *Yilungelo Lakho* and most of these other ones they post only in English. Like I'm on… there is a show that is going to start now at 10:30 on SABC 1, they speak all the languages, but…

A: Are you talking about *Daily Theta*?

D: Daily Theta yes… but their posts, all their posts are in English on Facebook. I am on that page but they don't use any other language to post so I think so far on the pages that I have joined… oh it's *Yilungelo Lakho* and *Leihlo la Sechaba* where they normally use other language, other African languages.

A: Yes, and you follow them…

D: Yes, I follow them…

A: Okay – and do you think that they should have more of that kind of content online?

D: I think they should have more; they should have more

A: Okay – do you think more people will follow them if they have more African language content?

D: Definitely more people will start following because you know this language … for some people it is not really easy to read English and to understand, and then while watching the

same show on TV they will be presenting in in the language that you know and understand – so it is better that they do the same thing online as well, like you do with *Yilungelo Lakho*

A: Yes, yes, yes… Okay – and do you think that there should only be one language on a show like if *Yilungelo Lakho* for example was only in isiZulu? Do you think that would make a difference?

D: No, no, no, no… I like the way they are doing it currently because it accommodates everybody.

A: Okay – that's interesting… and when you talk to your friends, and people that you know socially, does the language that you use change?

D: No, it doesn't, it doesn't because it depends what we are talking about at that moment… let us say maybe a friend texts me in English, I will reply in English, and then maybe she texts me in Sotho then I'll speak Sotho, you know…

A: So, it is just a reaction – depending on who starts the conversation in what language?

D: Yes

A: And Dineo tell me, when you are talking to your friends, like talking as opposed to talking on Facebook now, like actually talking to them, then what language do you use to speak?

D: It also depends (laughs) maybe I'll start to speak; you know in English… then I come with my Pedi Dumelang, then we carry on with my Pedi…. I have friends from all different languages, so myself, like as I said, I like learning other languages, if it's my Xitsonga friends then we can start with the Xitsonga, but if the conversation is getting deeper then I will be like huh huh it's getting too deep now, I don't understand, let's speak in a language that we can all relate to… which is English and then we carry on.

A: yes yes… do you think that… you know, I was talking to the show's Executive Producer [mentions name]

D: Yeah, he once messaged asking me to speak to you…

A: Oh, is it? Okay yes… because I had to ask him permission before I did that… He was saying to me that the interesting thing is that generally conversation is becoming very mixed now…

D: It is…

A: …so you don't have like only a Pedi conversation or a Xitsonga conversation… it is usually a mix of everything anyway.

D: He is very right about that. I can tell you about myself – like I can speak all the languages with one conversation that maybe I might be having with my friends, it's true, it is true….

A: And what do you think… how do you think that will follow through? I mean then that people will stop speaking their language.

D: No – we won't stop… we won't stop speaking our languages.

A: it will just get mixed up all together?

D: It does get mixed up, but also again it depends where you are. I live in the urban area where I hardly see people who are speaking my language… but there is a difference… when I am back home it is strictly Sepedi. When I am back home, I don't find myself mixing languages or so, No, it is strictly Sepedi – so we are not going to stop speaking our language, we are not going to stop.

A: Dineo – thank you for making time to speak to me.

APPENDIX D: TWEETS #yilungelo

TABLE 1:

This table illustrates differences in content as follows:

- Green: informal comments/not directly related to topic of discussion
- Yellow: conversations with other users
- Teal: programme promos
- Pink: tweets related to a topic of discussion

TABLE 2:

This table visualises Language breakdown as follows:

- Blue: English
- Yellow: African language only
- Pink: code mix with English

APPENDIX E: COMMENTS ON YILUNGELO LAKHO FACEBOOK PAGE

The following spreadsheets table comments made on the *Yilungelo Lakho* Facebook page, programme by programme. A summary of comments is also attached.

PROGRAMME: 03 JUNE 2019

03-Jun	COMMENT	RELPLY COMMENT	TRANSLATION
Do you read the fine print before you sign up for that enticing insurance cover? Many consumers have ended up with a headache after their insurance declines their claim citing a very obscure clause on their contract. Join us on Yilungelo Lakho at 12pm today as we discuss insurance mishaps. You can participate by sending an SMS to 33721. You can also call in - 011 714 6918/6819 or leave a comment right here on Facebook.			
	Insurances are Good But Some doesn't give cash Back when you fail to Pay or Accomplish promises for Payments, Some takes a lot of time when you've been in a Problem of Car to Give you Another Car		
	Insurances are good after all if you pay your premiums		
	Most of the consultants don't bother to go through the fine print with consumers, they just went to meet their targets hence a lot of people are always frustrated when it comes to claiming, I think the agents should be transparent with all the fine print		
	Old Mutual, Sanlam used to deduct be from Granyears back I recall some of the money was to pay us should we go to model c schools and that never happened, as they call it lapsed policies it means my gran o jelwe as she never got a cent from all those monies deducted. That's Soo very wrong in so many ways. I will nevr take any policies.		
	Insurance is gud bt some insurances don't give some of cash back when u loose your job and fail to pay them, they jst chow your hard earned money and that must be fixed immediately @Nquthu		
	Insurance companies sometime are not fear like you have 11months payment on insurance They said cover will work after year ;		
	Insurances are just a rip off had an investment policy with Old Mutual it came to surprise that my policy has lapse the to unemployment.		
	Insurance companies feed from the ignorance of it's clients, policies have fine print that clients don't understand, the client has to take the initiative to try & understand the jargon & comply with it. People who have a clear understanding of their policies don't have trouble when putting in a claim		
	Hi.I want to visit the show.		
	9	0	0

(NOTE: This table prints to A3)

PROGRAMME: 17 JUNE 2019

PROGRAMME: 24 JUNE 2019

PROGRAMME: 01 JULY 2019

01-Jul-19	COMMENT	REPLY COMMENT	TRANSLATION
The tax season opens today. Do you know what the latest changes are with regards to filing your tax returns? Do you have any outstanding issues with SARS that you need to resolve? Tune in at 12pm today, our guests from SARS and the Tax Ombud will shed some light on some of the questions that you have regarding tax issues. You can participate in the show by sending an SMS to 33711.You can also call in – 011-714 xxxx or leave a comment below.			
	Awesome show keep it up.		
	[illegible]		I want to about how we can be helped with regards to my father's monies, he was working (but) we got nothing even money from SARS... nothing at all. [from ZULU]
	[illegible]		cooking herself present
	Please, can that baba from SARS explain if the company isn't give you, you RPS, will they help you without RPS. We come to SARS to get money, can you imagine you are out of work and SARS say you owe them, that's why we end up not going		
	[illegible]		I want to know when I get employed as a teacher working on contract for 6 months, that contract then ends and I get another contract for 3 months, is it legal that I pay tax to SARS? [from SWATI]
	[illegible]		Hello. My problem is that I found that my ID bears another person's name. I found that there's money they claim I received which was above R13 000 in 2014 while I was not employed, I was at university. So what must I do because I am a teacher now. Thank you. [from ZULU]
	[illegible]		I want to ask how you can be assisted, at SARS when you are a victim and your money is stolen, where can you complain so that you can be helped. I am here in Port Elizabeth. [from XHOSA]
	[illegible]		I agree with the gentleman, that's a good point but in other households they survive on the SARS money and the banks are busy with different companies – so that's why it takes long for people to receive the money. Thank you for the opportunity.
	[illegible]		How can one be helped if your money is embezzled at SARS. I am here in Port Elizabeth. [from XHOSA]
	[illegible]		Presenter, I gave up my money from SARS...they embezzled it till today I never got it. [from XHOSA]
	[illegible]		SARS embezzles people's monies, mine too was embezzled. [from XHOSA]
	11	0	8 – 228

PROGRAMME: 08 JULY 2019

PROGRAMME: 15 JULY 2019

PROGRAMME: 22 JULY 2019

PROGRAMME: 29 JULY 2019

29-07-19	COMMENT	REPLY COMMENT	TRANSLATION
Have you ever been in a dishonest debt review? Catch Illingelo Lalilo on SABC 1 @ 13H00 as we educate consumers about the debt review program, what it means to be under it – pros and cons, who qualifies to be under debt review, who else applies to be under the program, the dangers of dodgy debt collectors and all pertinent issues around debt review, including how consumers can get legal recourse should they be exploited in the process. Take part in the conversation by sending an SMS to 34721. You can also call us in studio on 011 714 9498 or 011 714 9918. Do also like our twitter page @Illingelo_lalilo			
	This show make me feel happy.		
	Hi enlighten me here, I once had debt which I failed to pay in 2009. I think it's 10 years ago, so does the debt reach to a point where it's expire? Coz I heard that after 6 years it must be written off bt when I go to their particular bank they say I must settle that debt, pls advise me there #IllingeloLalilo		
	Shalom lalilalo I can assist you with that query, I work for The Credit Ombudsman. First tell me this, has the credit providers ever tried to contact you regarding the payments for this debt? If not, then the debt has prescribed. Hope the information I attached will be of assistance.		
	Shalom lalilalo Your issue falls under the law known as Prescription of debt. According to The National Credit Amendment, Act of March 2014		
	That Phirachi abt them calling me, I really don't recall even if they tried I remember that during that time I was not living, this number I'm using now even the address if they brought letters was not delivered to me becoz I even changed the place where I was renting to just		
			#Illingelo Lalilo - I really love this show, I'll ever be on a debt that I can't pay, I saw many challenges - People called you and said want to fain this cost that you will pay less, I don't trust that... I am saying that those who take other people's money are crooks, they must be arrested because people end up being money through deductions they do not know. [from KHOSA]
	IS DEBT REVIEW REAL TAKE FOR HOW LONG? & IS POSSIBLE IF people I TAKE CREDIT TO_? CAN DISAGREE WITH ME REGARDING MY CREDIT TO GET RELIEF		
	Afternoon_ is debt solve by debt councillor, I know how will I know if my debt settled? If I lodge a claim?_ If maybe I got a problem of car credit?		
			I love this topic because we are urged to finish payment but you later hear that you are still owing... they are playing with us. [from ZULU]

PROGRAMME: 05 AUGUST 2019

12-Aug-19	COMMENT	RELPLY COMMENT	TRANSLATION
Are you looking to buy property in a sectional title scheme? Before you sign on the dotted lines, do you know the common mistakes that consumers make? Find out on today's show. Tune in to SABC 1 at 12pm. Call in on 011 714 6918 or 6919. Leave a comment below or send an SMS to 33721.			
	We just buy some properties out of happiness and we don't check first and that's highly big Mistake		
	I applied for a bond February 2019 by an agent. I went there to check inside and out of the apartment and there was still someone inside and I couldn't see everything well. In what I saw everything was okay. Then after a while waiting for the flisp I went to check again there at the apartment, it was not what I thought it was. I came while the person who was a tenant there was leaving. There was no electricity and the house was licking. I called and agent wanting to cancel the bond he refused and still now I can't cancel it because the bond was applied by an agent. How do I cancel? Please help before the bond gets released		
	Ja we make that mistake without realizing just because we are too happy		
	SOMETIMES U ARE JUST EXCITED THAT U CAN AFFORD YOUR OWN PROPERTY ,SO U DON'T See the need to do research, BIG MISTAKE		
	Please do help us I know a friend who went that road of mistakes. ...		
	interesting topic definitely tuning in		
	I know those common mistake!		
		Ngioda ukusicelala ngyaguis iosimsi kanye enwen awuipbi kanie okunye unyawo slusebenzi kahle	I need help - I am sick - possibly referring to a metal in his finger and not bending - foot not working properly- INCOHERENT [from ZULU]
	ngnti ningsfumevela kwezi landiine phone numbers ndialings uncedo lwenu pls zikala zeows kusala ndifoune		I wish you can be reachable in your landlines phone numbers, I need your help... Your phones are ringing unanswered I have been phoning for some time. [from ZULU]
	Ngisemnome but sengike ngewsbone kubentu engihlale nabo emndenini		I'm still young but I've seen them (mistakes) from people I stay with in the family. [from ZULU]
	9		1 3 – 30%

PROGRAMME: 19 AUGUST 2019

PROGRAMME: 26 AUGUST 2019

PROGRAMME: COMMENTS SUMMARY