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AN EVALUATION OF THE OPINIONS OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN SESOTHO MODULES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

ABSTRACT

The lack of equivalence between African languages on the one hand and Afrikaans and English on the other hand under the governments that ruled South Africa until the collapse of apartheid has seriously undermined the status of African languages. Indigenous South Africans experienced decades of marginalisation – so much, in fact, that many, including African scholars, have come to view the study and use of African languages in education in an unfavourable light. Even more astounding is the view that Africans who study African languages beyond secondary school are regarded as “academically weak”. The perception that scholars studying African languages do not meet the requirements has resulted in fewer Africans studying their indigenous languages in school. This article aims to explore students’ attitudes towards Sesotho and probe the factors linked to students’ attitudes. The study employs a mixed-methods research approach for data elicitation. Methodological triangulation (questionnaire and interviews) was used to maximise the validity and credibility of the findings. The conclusion of this study is that most of the students have a positive attitude towards Sesotho at the University of the Free State. Students feel that Sesotho should be developed meaningfully so that it can be used as a medium of instruction in classes. Students overwhelmingly support the notion of meaningful development of indigenous languages (such as Sesotho) so that they can contribute to the development of South Africa. The data in this study also suggest that indigenous languages should not be allowed to die out.

Keywords: *Exoglossic; indigenous language; marginalisation; mixed-methods; methodological triangulation.*



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1. INTRODUCTION

The study of language attitudes is a global phenomenon (Alebiosu, 2016). Melander (2003) states that language attitudes can be linked to an affective, cognitive or behavioural index of evaluative reactions towards language varieties. Language attitudes towards Sesotho in higher education remain an area of sociolinguistics that has not

yet been extensively explored in South Africa. African languages, such as Sesotho, have experienced decades of marginalisation in South Africa, starting with the colonisation of South Africa. Indo-European languages, such as English and Afrikaans, were institutionally imposed on Africans while African languages were denied equal treatment under colonial rule. This attitude intensified under apartheid governments prior to 1994. The restrictions imposed on African languages in certain domains gradually came to negatively affect Africans' perceptions of these languages' ability to perform and function effectively in prestigious domains such as business and politics in South Africa.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a continued decline in the number of students enrolling to study African languages in South Africa and other African states. The perception that students who are registered to study African languages are academically inferior has resulted in fewer Africans choosing to study their indigenous languages at universities. (Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014). Since the beginning of democracy in South Africa there has been a growing preference for acquiring English compared to indigenous languages. Barkhuizen (2001) suggests that students prefer studying in English because the language is easier and more fun to learn than isiXhosa. In pre-colonial Africa however, indigenous people effectively used indigenous languages to facilitate communication and negotiate matters relevant to them before the arrival of the settlers. Knowledge and life lessons were successfully passed down from generation to generation. In other words, indigenous languages successfully met all societal needs before colonists imposed their worldview on indigenous African people (The Ministerial Committee Report on Indigenous African Languages, 2003). According to the report, indigenous people were able to acquire knowledge and interpret it in critical areas such as astronomy, medicine, philosophy and history (ibid).

The arrival of the settlers completely disrupted the African knowledge system. Oral traditions, which transferred knowledge from generation to generation in Africa, were undermined by the introduction of European written literature (The Ministerial Committee Report on Indigenous African Languages, 2003). During this period, writing systems for indigenous languages were developed under the administration of Europeans (Ditsele, 2014). The goal was to use this language development as a mechanism for the conversion of African people to Christianity (Ditsele, 2014).

Although the above constituted a notable contribution to the development of indigenous languages, colonisers did not miss the opportunity to impose their native languages on the indigenous speakers of African languages. According to Awobuliyi (1992), all colonists in Africa imposed their languages on indigenous people in every colony they controlled, especially with regard to the spheres of administration, commerce, trade and education (Bamgbose, 2011). Since then, indigenous languages have been relegated to the back seat and have yet to make meaningful inroads into high status usage domains. Bamgbose (2011) postulates that the lasting effect of this colonial legacy is that the undisputed hegemony of imported languages, which began in colonial times, has persisted to this day.

Table 1: Moments in South African language history

Period	Language	Official status	Domain of use	Supporting sources
1652–1806	Dutch	Yes	Trade Politics Religion Education Negotiation Social intercourse	Steyn (1995).
1795–present	English	Yes	Judiciary Business Media Education	Van Niekerk (2015).
1830–present	Afrikaans	Yes	Church Education Work	Afrikaner: From European to “Afrikaner” (SAHO, 2020).
1994–present	Indigenous South African Languages	Yes	Education Media	Zikode (2017).

The information contained in Table 1 indicates that the coloniser languages in South Africa have always been used in the high status domains of society. Since the 1600s, European languages have been official languages in the land of Africans while indigenous languages have been denied such status until recently. It is only within the recent past that indigenous languages have been granted official status.

The declaration of indigenous languages as official languages in South Africa have not significantly changed their position in society. Post-1994 South Africa, similar to many other African states, has inherited without contestation the use of non-indigenous languages (such as English) as high status domain languages. When South Africa finally became a democracy, the multiparty government maintained an exoglossic posture. The adjective “exoglossic” refers to the declaration of a foreign language as the official national language in a particular country (Mhute, 2015; Wolff, 2017). This description fits the situation in South Africa very well. Although the equal status of English and South Africa’s indigenous languages has been proclaimed, English continues to dominate the indigenous languages. The status of colonial languages has largely remained the same.

The use of non-indigenous languages as official languages in South Africa was met with resistance from students in 1976 when Afrikaans was imposed on black students as the language of teaching and learning. Marjorie (1982) states that more than 15 000 students marched in the streets carrying banners with slogans such as “Blacks are not dustbins – Afrikaans stinks” to declare their unwillingness to be educated in Afrikaans. The 1976 demonstrations forced the apartheid government to reconsider their decision and Afrikaans was later withdrawn as the language of teaching and learning in all South African township schools. Although the government’s decision was relaxed, indigenous languages were not elevated to act as mediums of instruction.

According to the South African constitution (1996), everyone has the right to receive education in the official language(s) of their choice in public educational institutions in cases where that education is deemed to be reasonably practical. This prescription is emphasised by the Ministry of Education's education policy (2006), which stipulates that all children have the right to be educated in their mother tongue while having access to global languages (Language in Education Policy, 2006). This statement can be interpreted to mean that learners in South Africa have the right to learn and be taught in their primary languages and that languages such as English will be introduced to learners as additional languages. However, the realities observed in public schools in South Africa contradict the prescriptions of the policy. Indigenous languages are taught as subjects while English takes up about ninety per cent of tuition time in government schools. In South Africa the use of mother tongue-based instruction is encouraged in primary classes, but after six years of primary schooling, English becomes the medium of instruction and the mother tongue is retained as a school subject (Baine & Mwamwenda, 1994).

Generally speaking, the lack of a rigorous commitment by the government and private sector to adopt programmes that will advance the use of indigenous South African languages beyond low-level domains has negatively affected black South Africans' perception of their languages. Against this backdrop, African languages such as Sesotho are slowly being withdrawn from public use to become languages only used in households and corridors (Moeketsi, 2014). These signs of withdrawal from public function make it difficult to understand why students still enrol at universities to study African languages.

3. LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

Language attitudes are particularly prominent in a multilingual setting where the knowledge of a particular language is associated with a particular "social type" (Fishman, 1970 cited in Rudwick & Shange 2006). Fishman's sentiments can be observed in countries such as South Africa where there is an ongoing practice of fostering linguistic proficiency in Indo-European languages in preference to indigenous languages because of the social status "promised" by attaining competency in Indo-European languages. African languages have been marginalised mainly because people do not recognise them as languages of upward mobility and job interviews are never conducted using African languages, even if the person is applying for a job in an African language department (Ntshangase, 2011). Ntshangase (2011) further argues that negative attitudes towards indigenous African languages are fuelled by misconceptions about these languages. Local indigenous languages supposedly lack the depth to express modern concepts, especially in the field of academia, and these languages also lack the required "buying power" or "market value", which render them unfit for use as languages of trade.

4. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The composition of society during the reign of apartheid in South Africa advanced the promotion and development of Afrikaans to guarantee its unrestricted use (Mesthrie, 2002). Mesthrie (2002) posits that African languages were not meaningfully developed because they were never intended for usage in the upper levels of education, economics and politics. African languages have been marginalised to such an extent that pastors and politicians continue to prefer to make lamentations in English when they address their audiences in the townships (Mkhombo, 2010). Despite being marginalised for decades, African languages continue to

be offered at universities, but their usage is limited, even at that level. In this context, the present enquiry seeks to explore students' attitudes towards Sesotho against the backdrop of observed linguistic practices at a South African university.

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section provides a linguistic imperialism theoretical framework for the study. Linguistic imperialism refers to a linguistic situation where indigenous people are gradually conscientised to look at their indigenous languages with disdain while adopting foreign languages largely due to the benefits that are expected to be derived from acquiring these languages (Agyekum, 2018). Agyekum further argues that indigenous people, especially in Africa, are encouraged to believe that indigenous languages cannot be used in education, economics, science and technology and that a foreign language is the best language for conducting business or educational training. Linguistic imperialism has deepened in African countries to the extent that many families in the cities communicate with their children in English and the children cannot speak their mother tongue. Attitudes towards African languages in school and at home are very negative, and people are ashamed of speaking their languages (Phillipson, 2009).

Attitude towards a language is influenced by the status and power associated with that particular language. This study seeks to establish whether it is true that speakers of Sesotho are shunning their language and harbouring negative feelings towards Sesotho, as suggested by Phillipson (2009).

6. RESEARCH AIM

This study sought to establish students' attitudes towards Sesotho at university. The responses of students majoring in Sesotho at second year and third year level were analysed. The investigation centred on students' answers to the following questions:

- What are students' attitudes towards Sesotho, particularly students majoring in Sesotho?
- What are students' opinions about the use of Sesotho in other valued domains?

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena under investigation (Rajasekar, Philominathan & Chinnatahmbi, 2013). This includes the study's design, setting, sample, methodological limitations, data collection and analysis techniques (Burns & Grove, 2003). The objective of this study was to provide credible and honest responses to the research questions. To achieve this goal, certain processes and procedures were followed. The study therefore used mixed methods to gather data largely because of the benefits it promises. According to Creswell and Clark (2007), this method is based on the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches in combination that provide a wide and deep understanding of the concepts being investigated.

The bias inherent in any data collection tool, investigator or particular method will be cancelled out when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators or methods (Denzin, 1978). To maximise the accuracy and relevance of the findings, this study also relied on methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation involves the use of multiple research techniques, such as observations, surveys, questionnaires and interviews

for data elicitation (Denzin, 1973). In this study, data were elicited by using interviews and questionnaires. In attitudinal studies such as this one, it is important to use unmatched methods to look at the same phenomenon. Using two research techniques to investigate the same phenomenon maximises accuracy and reliability of findings, especially when probing complex concepts such as language attitudes.

7.1 Questionnaire

The use of a questionnaire represents one of the most common methods of data collection on attitudes and opinions from a large group of participants (Ahmed, 2015). Questionnaires are probably the best available instruments for obtaining information from a wide number of people, provided they are properly constructed and carefully administered (Ary, 1979). Questionnaires allow researchers to gather self-reported information by respondents. The questionnaire used in this study contained open- and close-ended questions. According to Babbie (2001), close-ended questions are popular in research because they provide a greater uniformity of response. Open-ended questions allow respondents to add additional information to their responses. Forty questionnaires were distributed to students enrolled for Sesotho modules. Students had a week to complete and return questionnaires to researchers. Out of forty questionnaires, thirty-three were completed and returned.

7.2 Interviews

To supplement the questionnaires, research interviews were also conducted with twenty students. These enabled researchers to probe the same phenomenon while using different research tools. The students who were interviewed were drawn from the same sample used for completion of the questionnaire. An interview is a specialised form of communication in which people interact for a purpose (Fakude, 2012). According to Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman (2004), an interview is a social encounter where speakers collaborate in producing retrospective and prospective accounts or versions of their past or future actions, experiences, feelings and thoughts. In this article, students had to share their feelings and thoughts about the use of Sesotho in society.

7.3 Sampling

The sample of respondents used for this inquiry had been structured to fit the purpose of the inquiry. The study required that a sample be drawn from students enrolled for Sesotho modules at second year and third year study level at the University of the Free State (UFS). Purposive sampling was used, which meant that only students who had registered for Sesotho modules at the University of the Free State were drawn. Students were approached and informed about the study on the main campus in Bloemfontein. They were then presented with an information sheet and consent note to complete if they wanted to participate in the study. Two groups were included in this study primarily because of their unmatched experience with the Sesotho language as a language of teaching and learning at university. The second year students had encountered the use of Sesotho in a higher education setup over a period of one year while third year students already had advanced experience with the use of Sesotho at university level.

7.4 Limitations

Since respondents were required to write their responses, the researcher could not observe their attitudes directly but had to rely on reported accounts in order to deduce from the

statements the attitudes held by the respondents towards Sesotho. Because the study was limited to students enrolled for Sesotho via a major module or an elective module, the findings cannot be generalised. The two groups' encounters and experiences with Sesotho were not identical in nature. This, of course, explains the development of differential attitudes towards the matter at hand.

7.5 Data analysis

Brynard and Hanekom (1997) argue that during the process of data collection, the researcher is engaged in what can be referred to as a preliminary analysis of the data. That is, the researcher discards that which is not relevant to the research project and retains only the relevant data. Once the data collection has been completed, an in-depth analysis of the data is made by means of data filtering and mapping. At this stage, the researcher vigorously checks the responses gathered from respondents and continuously checks for themes from the data corpus. Data analysis in this study was conducted by following the principles of reducing, displaying, transforming, correlating, consolidating, comparing and integrating data, as advised by Onwuegbuzie and Combs (2011).

7.6 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are important concepts in research as they are used for reasons that include enhancing the accuracy of assessing and evaluating a research work (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011). Complete adherence to the values expressed in the two concepts can help ensure that fellow scientists (and other stakeholders) accept the findings of a research project as credible and trustworthy (Brink, 1993). Methodological triangulation was used in this study to mitigate researchers' interference during the process of data collection. The second reason for using triangulation was to confirm the validity, correctness, accuracy and reliability of the results of the study. Essentially, using triangulation would be instrumental in cancelling out any inherent bias from the researchers.

7.7 Ethical considerations

Any research that involves human participation requires ethical clearance. In this study, an application for ethical clearance was submitted to the Humanities Ethics Clearance Committee of the UFS before embarking on data collection. Prospective participants were informed that participation in this study was voluntary and that every participant had the right to withdraw at any time during the study. Moreover, participants were assured that their identities will be kept confidential. This study was granted ethical clearance by the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Free State in November 2018 with ethical clearance number UFS-HSD2018/0765.

8. FINDINGS

This section presents all the data collected through the questionnaires and research interviews.

8.1 Questionnaire data presentation

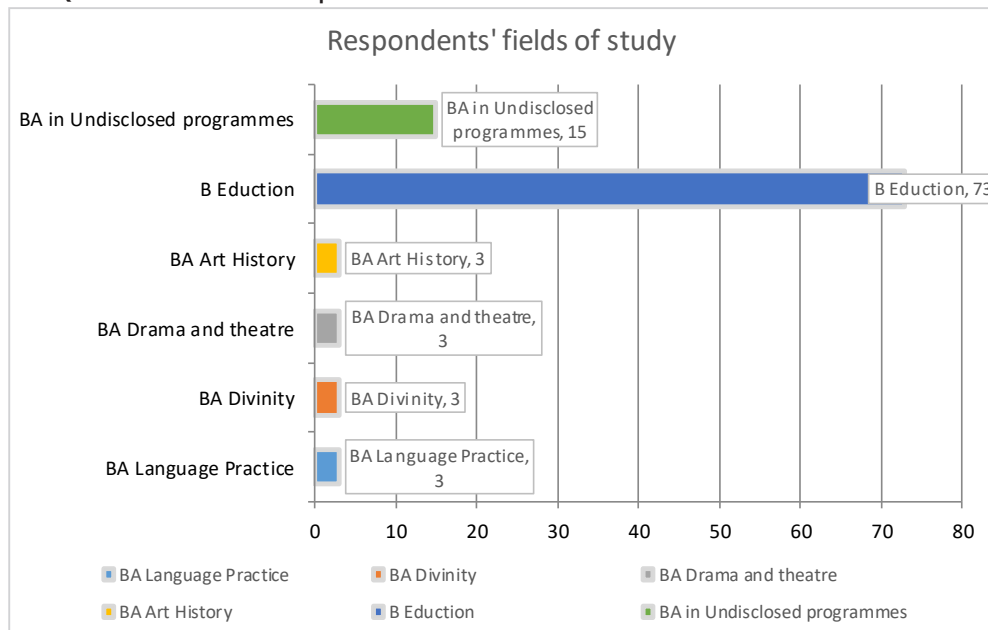


Figure 1: Respondents' fields of study

The highest number of respondents came from the Faculty of Education, as observed in Figure 1. The Bachelor of Language Practice, the Bachelor of Divinity, Bachelor of Drama and Theatre Arts and Bachelor of Art History each drew three per cent. The remaining fifteen per cent belonged to respondents who did not disclose their study fields.

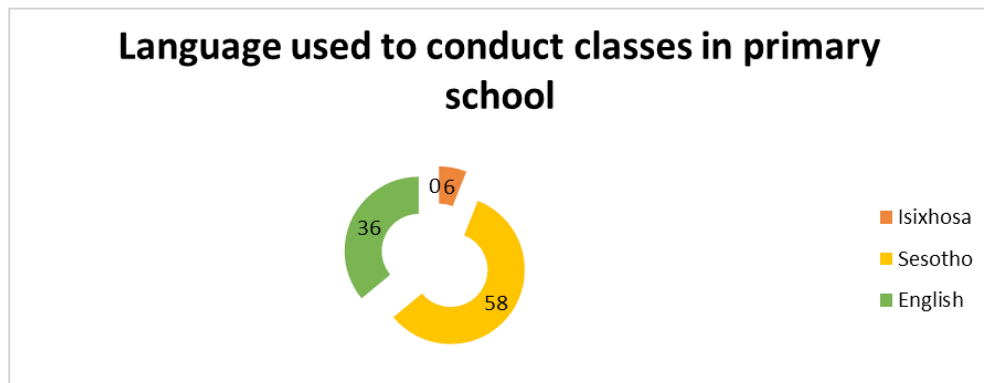


Figure 2: Language commonly used to conduct classes in primary school

Figure 2 indicates that fifty-eight per cent of the students were taught through Sesotho. Sesotho played an important role in students' education in primary school. Thirty-six per cent also indicated that English was the language commonly used to teach and discuss ideas or concepts during their primary school years. Six per cent indicated that IsiXhosa was the language commonly used to conduct classes in primary school. Teaching and learning took place using the languages of the students.

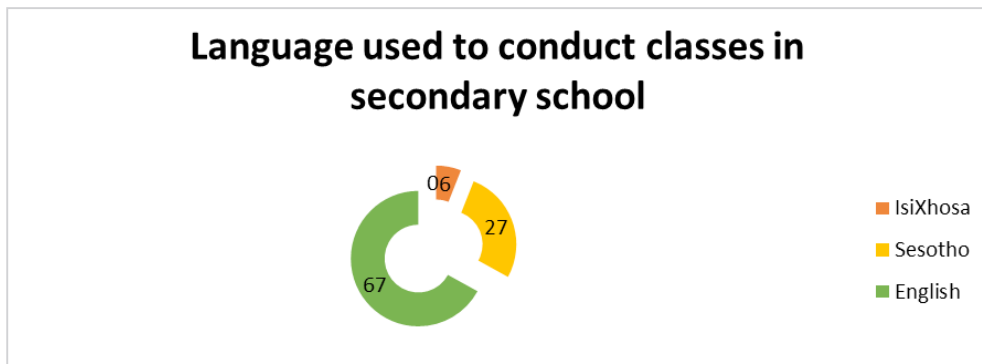


Figure 3: Language commonly used to conduct classes in secondary school

Figure 3 shows that sixty-seven per cent of the sample indicated that English was the language mainly used to conduct classes when students attended high school. Twenty-seven per cent of students reported that Sesotho was the language commonly used to conduct classes, while only six per cent mentioned that IsiXhosa fulfilled this role during their secondary school years.

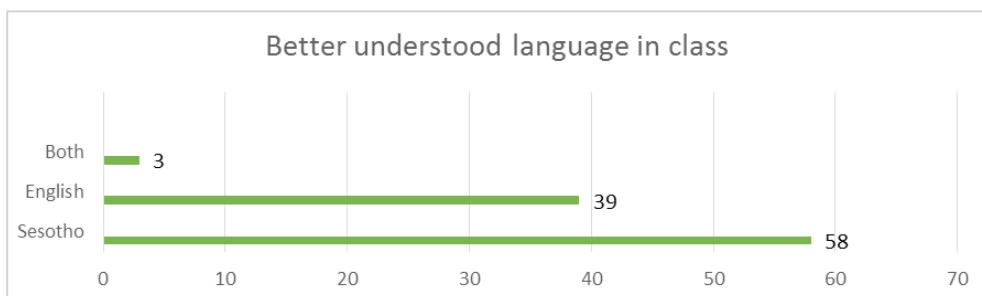


Figure 4: The language that is better understood in class

According to Figure 4, fifty-eight per cent of respondents indicated that they understood Sesotho better in class. Thirty-nine per cent indicated that English was the better understood language in class. Only three per cent indicated that they perfectly understood Sesotho and English in class.

Faridy and Syaodih (2017) argue that the mother tongue has a major influence on children. Children who master their mother tongue as a first language tend to have a larger vocabulary in this language compared to the national language (ibid). In South Africa students still learn their (indigenous) languages as subjects. Accordingly, it is not surprising that students understand Sesotho better because it is a language that has accompanied them throughout their academic journey.

Do you think learning Sesotho at university will improve your career prospects?

Table 2: Benefits of studying Sesotho

Option:	Percentage	Remarks
Yes	97%	-One can become a lecturer, news anchor in Sesotho or researcher in indigenous African languages. -The scarcity of Sesotho educators will provide me with an opportunity for employment. -Because I am going to be a Sesotho educator in future. -Because I want to end up in the media industry as a user of Sesotho. -I can provide deeper subject knowledge.
No	3%	-No remarks were made.

Table 2 indicates that approximately ninety-seven per cent of the sample strongly believed that their Sesotho studies would improve their career prospects after they had graduated from university. Their reasons for this belief are listed in the table. Three per cent of the sample indicated that they did not believe that Sesotho would improve their career prospects after graduating from university. These students did not provide any reason for holding this belief.

8.2 Interview data

The researchers conducted interviews with twenty second year and third year students enrolled in Sesotho modules. The interview questions probed students' perceptions, beliefs and opinions about Sesotho. The responses offered by interviewees provide a picture detailing the kinds of attitudes students have towards Sesotho.

The interviews were conducted at a time when students did not have classes to attend or other academic commitments. Measures were taken to ensure that data collection did not interfere with the students' academic responsibilities.

Should indigenous languages such as Sesotho be left to die out because of globalisation? Give reasons.

Many people strongly believe that indigenous languages should not be left to die out. Language and culture are inseparable. This notion is supported by the responses of students. Students also associate language with identity. Students indicated that:

Future generations will neither be able to communicate with their ancestors nor know their own roots because English would have taken over.

Because the Sesotho-speaking people are going to lose their identity and will be contemptuous of their own tribe.

Preserving our indigenous languages is very important. Nothing brings more pride to a person than knowing his or her mother tongue. In a modern world it is still important to know who we are.

Indigenous languages are what make us unique.

Future generations will not have a glimpse of their local cultures. They will be doomed because they will not know their heritage.

The statements made by the student sample suggest that they understand that the extinction of indigenous languages would have catastrophic consequences. The way students view this matter is largely influenced by the relationship they observe between language and identity, and language and culture.

Do you think Sesotho should be developed so that it can cater for the needs of all departments at a university? Explain your answer.

Most students feel strongly that Sesotho should be meaningfully developed so that it can fully function within a university context. Students believe that Sesotho must be developed to a degree where its functions are not limited. The general belief among students is that:

We are in the Free State Province, the Sesotho language should be embraced in the province and the institution.

Over the course of many years we have seen Afrikaans students flourish because they are taught in their language. I would want that for the next generation of Sesotho pupils.

The rest of the students believe that Sesotho should not be developed to the level where it can cater for all the needs of university departments. This conviction is driven by the reasons listed hereunder:

Some departments do not need Sesotho.

It would not be fair to other students who speak other African languages. The university must accommodate all cultures. English is fine as a medium of instruction for everyone.

A university is a place of higher education. English should be the only language used to cater for all departments.

The sample contained unmatched perceptions on the issue of the development of Sesotho. The conviction that Sesotho should be developed is associated with the benefits that can accrue as a result of being taught in one's own language in terms of academic performance as well as the fact that Sesotho is the biggest language spoken in this region of the country. However, some students feel uncomfortable with the use of Sesotho in all university departments. Students believe that Sesotho is not necessary for all departments. They feel that English should be the only language used since the use of English accommodates students of diverse cultures in a university.

If Sesotho were to replace English as a language of teaching and learning would you welcome the change? Provide reasons for your response.

This notion received favourable responses from students – in fact, they appreciated the idea. Students believed that the following would happen if Sesotho were to replace English:

I will be able to understand and apply what is being said in class.

This will improve my knowledge or intelligence. I will learn through a language I understand.

There are English terms that I barely understand but they make more sense when they are translated into Sesotho. Most learners do not fail because they are dumb but simply because they lack understanding.

I would be comfortable learning something in my own language.

Another small group of students would not welcome that change. This conviction is guided by the reasons provided below:

Not all of us know the Sesotho language. So, it won't be fair to other people and it will be difficult for us to adapt to that change.

English is our language of instruction. Teaching should be done in English because other students do not know the Sesotho language.

If I get a job that requires English after I have graduated, I will struggle to do what my job requires. I won't understand what is required of me and how to do it.

Most of the interviewees stated they would welcome the change. On the other hand, a small group believes that such a change will disadvantage other students who are not speakers of Sesotho.

Do you think Sesotho can express educational concepts? Explain.

There is a general belief among most students that Sesotho can express ideas pertaining to education. This group of students is convinced that education-related concepts can be expressed in Sesotho. Students believe that:

English concepts can be translated into Sesotho.

We have the lexicon of this language. Every language has its own set of meanings, so why can't we express concepts in Sesotho?.

Other students (a small group) believe that Sesotho is incapable of expressing educational concepts. These students argue that:

Sesotho does not have educational concepts or words. I cannot say *psychology* in Sesotho.

Some concepts are easily understandable in English and it will be difficult to translate them.

Students' perceptions about whether Sesotho can express educational concepts are unmatched. The larger group believes that Sesotho can express educational ideas, while the smaller group does not believe that Sesotho can communicate academic notions.

Do you think the use of African languages as languages of instruction or documentation requires urgent national attention? Why?

Students share the conviction that the use of African languages as languages of instruction requires urgent national attention. According to the students, the use of African languages as languages of teaching and learning across curricula must be urgently considered due to the following reasons:

Because of the pace at which globalisation is taking place, African languages are at the brink of becoming extinct, and English is dominating.

It is important to preserve our languages so that African languages cannot perish.

Sometimes people need to express themselves in their own African languages, so it would give anyone the potential to participate.

Some students feel that African languages should not be introduced as mediums of instruction. The shared opinion among this group of students is that:

We have so many African languages. It is going to be problematic to let them all be languages of instruction, so English should be kept as the one language.

Three students feel that it would be problematic to promote all indigenous languages to a level where they can function as languages of instruction. The remaining number of students, on the other hand, believe that the state should urgently institute measures to promote the development of indigenous languages.

9. DISCUSSION

The discussion of findings will focus on the following aspects: language practice in South African schools; studying Sesotho at university, and language preservation and development.

9.1 Language practices in South African public schools

Indigenous languages are commonly used during the first few years of basic education. The information contained in Figure 2 seems to support Mkhombo's (2010) sentiments that the use of African languages as mediums of instruction is encouraged in primary classes but after a few years there is a transition to English. African languages are then retained as subjects taught in school. The transition to English can be observed in Figure 3. The information contained in Figure 3 indicates that approximately sixty-seven per cent of the students received their education through English in secondary schools. This means that most high school classes were conducted in English. The data in Figure 5 and Figure 6 supports Mkhombo's (2010) sentiments.

9.2 Studying Sesotho at university

According to Broekhuizen (2016), South Africa is experiencing a shortage of qualified teachers for specific subjects such as mathematics and physical sciences as well as specific languages. The information contained in Figure 1 implies that students are studying Sesotho because they want to go back to their communities to teach through languages such as Sesotho.

The overwhelming evidence presented in Table 2 indicates that students believe that learning Sesotho at university has benefits. Ninety-five per cent of the student sample agree that there are benefits to learning Sesotho at university. The benefits suggested by students include the ability to completely grasp the academic content shared in lectures and the promise of employment as a language teacher.

Students will welcome the replacement of English by Sesotho as a language of teaching and learning. Students believe that learning through Sesotho will improve the learning and comprehension process. This study sample also believes that Sesotho can express educational concepts. Because of this shared belief, students feel that English concepts can be translated into Sesotho. Moreover, there is a shared perception among the students that African languages should be considered for use as languages of instruction. This means that these languages must be significantly developed so that they can meet student demand in this regard.

9.3 Language preservation and development

The general opinion among the student sample is that languages such as Sesotho should not be allowed to die out. The implications of letting a language die out are severe and the student sample is aware of this fact. Therefore, students believe that the death of indigenous languages will hinder the transfer of local cultures from one generation to the next. Students also believe that the death of indigenous languages will disturb the tradition of communicating with their ancestors. Moreover, due to the relationship between culture and language, students believe that languages such as Sesotho define their identity as a people. Accordingly, indigenous languages should not be allowed to die out.

Students believe that Sesotho must be meaningfully developed so that it can be used across departments in a university context, specifically at the UFS. Students believe that the development of Sesotho will enhance their academic performance across departments.

10. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the majority of those questioned have a positive attitude towards Sesotho at the University of the Free State. Since the study sample is not big, the conclusions cannot be generalised. Students think that the use of Sesotho should not be limited but must be expanded to domains other than households. According to the data provided in this study, the use of Sesotho has made remarkable inroads into high-level domains such as education and technology (e.g. social media platforms).

Positive attitudes towards Sesotho are fuelled by students' perceptions that Sesotho is a beautiful language, especially when the language is spoken by speakers with complete linguistic competence and performance speakers. Students believe that the prospect of being taught in Sesotho in institutions of higher education, such as the university in question, promises huge educational benefits. Students also feel that Sesotho must be preserved and should not be allowed to die out because of, for instance, globalisation.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that language must be utilised as a tool to acquire skills, information and knowledge in order to promote social justice in all spheres of the University of the Free State. Practical steps must be taken by policy makers to create a space for indigenous languages to contribute towards the economic and academic wellbeing of students.

The Free State government must take bold and practical steps to advance the use of indigenous African languages in their programmes to promote social justice. Such efforts will encourage the users of indigenous languages to take pride in their languages and continue using the languages publicly.

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