

The Socio-Cultural and Sociolinguistics Domains of Siswati Colloquial Language

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ABSTRACT: *This article concentrates on selected lexical features of Siswati colloquial language from microlinguistics to macrolinguistics aspects. It reveals that language is not static, but dynamic in nature. Colloquial language shares its characteristics with the jargon, semantic shift and naming processes. The focus is on the development of the language, peer group communication and natural intelligible domain. More lexicons and expressions reflect that they are categorised as non-standardisation language aspects, but vital in any sender recipient communication. The words or phrases that are appropriate to conversation and other informal situations are used at various context for specific communication. This article endorses the notion that language variety is inevitable in most societies and it is promulgated by coinages code-mixing, code switching and semantic shift. This research work is informed by functional approach, semantics theory of descriptive, social and expressive information.*

KEYWORDS: *Colloquial language, language variety, lexical features, jargon, sender-recipient communication.*

I. Introduction

The significant characteristics of language are cogently capsulized in its definitions. Finochiaro (1964:8) defines language as follows:

...a system of arbitrary, vocal symbols which permit all people in a given culture, or other people who have learned the system of that culture, to communicate or to interact.

The vital facts of arbitrariness and vocal symbols are also reiterated by Wardhaugh (1972:3) in his explicit account on viewing language as a system of communication. Most geo-cultural lexicons are not confined to one to specific micro or macro linguistics domain, but they stretch their analytic view from phonetic, phonology, morphology, semantic to applied linguistic domains. For this study, the focus is on relation between language and society, how they reflect society in which develop, communication and standardisation.

Colloquial language is a product of culture which is defined by Singer (1987:34) as follows:

Culture is pattern of learned, group related perception including both verbal and nonverbal language attitudes, values, belief systems, disbelief systems and behaviour.

It is noted that if focuses on the contextual patterns of communication behaviour by transmitting pattern of meaning which is embodied in symbols and concepts. Martin and Nakayama (2010) express their views about culture from social sciences and interpretive perspectives as learned and shared patterns of perception as well as contextual symbolic meanings.

More emphasis is on the notion that culture influences communication and communication reinforces culture. They are further viewed critical perspective by viewing culture as a heterogeneous and dynamic concept and a site of contested meanings that is shaped by communication.

Phillipsen (1992:7) comments on culture as follows:

...refers to a socially constructed and historically transmitted pattern of symbols, meaning, premises and rules.

Colloquial language is also referred to as a small group language. Speakers of this language are socially, culturally, linguistically and task oriented. Their focus is on communication or encoder, recipient or decodes, context and message this is an informal, and meaning-centred communication which specific – site jargon.

Steinberg (2011:19) views purpose of communication as follows:

It is to develop and maintain relationships with others. Relationships in this context means any connection, involvement or association.

It is, however, vital to look at culture, communication and language in relation to all linguistics domains to highlight and enhance their functions, significant and relationships.

Code-Switching and code-mixing are concepts that are closely related but are not the same. Bokamba (1985:3) defines code-switching as follows:

The embedding or mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two codes within the same speech event and across sentence boundaries.

He further defines code-mixing contrary to code-switching as the embedding or mixing of various linguistic units, i.e. morphemes, words, phrases and clauses from two distinct grammatical system or sub-system within the same speech situation.

Msimang (1987:83) draws a clear distinction between code-mixing and code-mixing as he says:

Code-mixing is the inter-sentential whereas code mixing is intra-sentential.

There are two reasons why the above discourse cannot be dub as code-mixing. Msimang (1987:83) reveals that if item lost the original meaning and acquired a new one or if it did not have any meaning but find its own new meaning in colloquial language then that is not code-mixing.

The selected lexicons endorse that language as a systematic means of communicating ideas, feelings, experiences and thoughts. They are however, explicated and interpreted through their functions and applications in linguistic domains.

II. Research Methodology And Theoretical Underpinning

Kumar (2005) asserts that data collection method is the process of gathering information. In this study, it is used to explore the process of interviews to give the researcher the opportunities to probe opinions, views of the interviewee. (Gray 2004). Babbie (2007) expresses his view on informed consent when highlighting the logic facts on voluntary participation in research.

The functional approach describe language according to its functions, which are instrumental, in manipulating the environment, regulatory, in controlling events; representational in conveying facts and knowledge to represent realities; interactions to ensure that social maintenance and imaginary to create imaginary ideas and systems (Halliday 1973).

The functions of a language are further illustrated by Bloom (1971) when she cogently describes a sentence in tree underlying relations: Agent-action (mommy is putting a sock on), agent-object (mommy see a sock) and processor-possessed (mommy's sock...). The cited scholars consolidate that language is used for communication systems: speaker-hearer interaction and sentence processing in speech community or culture.

Every phenomenon is influenced by something else. Research in any fields is influenced by both internal and external factors. This implies that research in historical linguistics is also influenced by other factors which are non-linguistics, form example; political, sociological and psychological ones. Twine (1991:9) supports this idea when he says:

Linguistic developments often reflect other non-linguistic social factors operating in a given society, and that is particularly noticeable in the area of the relationship between language and nationalism.

This suggest that linguistic developments should not be discussed out of context, but within certain framework. These linguistics developments are guided by certain theories. Kerlinger (1986:9) defines theory as:

A set of interrelated concepts, definitions and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variable, within the purpose of exploring and predicting the phenomenon.

This points out the importance of a theory since it helps researcher to systematically present a comprehensive and a clearly defined research. Variables are spelt out when a theory is used. This study will also adopt certain theories which will support it.

III. Discussions

The function of the lexicons is discussed as shift of meaning, extended and reduced meanings, archaic words, idiomatic expressions, verbal extensions and fields of discourse.

Paton (2015:28) views this socio-cultural domain as follows:

Colloquialism language as a discourse belonging to ordinary or familiar conversation but not used in normal and formal language.

Lutrin and Pincus (2007: 44) define this sociolinguistics domain as follows:

Colloquial language is the ordinary, everyday speech of a particular place and time period. It is informal, casual and conversational. Vocabulary is less accurate and less sophisticated. Simple sentences are mainly used, and these may contain contractions.

Linguistics is the formal scientific study of language. It is carried out systemically on the basis of objectively verifiable observations and within the framework of the theory that is appropriate to the data. Hence, generalizations about the language are made and thereafter test and verification follows. The language used in linguistic descriptions is called linguistic language usage.

Linguists who approach their subject from a relatively broad perspective put forward ‘macrolinguistic’ definitions of language.

One of the earlier modern views of language which could be characterized as ‘macrolinguistic’ is that of Sapir, one of the many American linguists of the early twentieth century. He defines language as follows:

Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of system of produced symbols. These symbols are, in the first instance, auditory and they are produced by the so-called organs of speech (Sapir 1921:8).

There is mention of a function of language, that it is a system of symbols used for purposes of communication; it is stressed that language is uniquely human characteristic. Language is non-instinctive, because it is not merely used as an instinctive reaction to stimuli, as might well be the case with animals.

In contrast to the microlinguistic definition of language, the broader views of what language is, as exemplified above, there are also narrower views of language. Noam Chomsky, the originator of transformational – generative grammar – an approach which has revolutionized linguistics over the last quarter of a century – defines language as follows:

From now on I will consider language to be a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements (Chomsky 1957:23)

The concept ‘language’ has been narrowed down. There is no mention of communication, cultural transmission and displacement. This intentionally restricted view of the concept ‘language’ leads to a specific definition of the concept ‘grammar’:

...a generative grammar must be a system of rules that can iterate to generate an indefinitely large number of structures (Chomsky 1965:15-16).

Language is an aggregation of different speech acts. A speech act can create a language, but it can also kill it. The speech act or *la parole*, which is also called a speech utterance or speech event is always unique and different from each person. Language is formed by the speech acts and the system of a language. The latter lies

in the consciousness of the people who form the community. The system of language makes the speech acts possible and has no other reason for existence. The system of language or *la langue*, is also called linguistic pattern, language system or linguistic system is considered to be interrelated with the speech acts. The simple terms for *la parole* and *la langue* are speaking and language.

Shift of meaning in biblical words

Colloquial words have some biblical terms or personal names with new meaning colloquial. This is the influence of Christianity amongst the colloquial speaking community. Some of the colloquial speakers have backslides from the church so it is easy for them to relate the biblical terms to their everyday situation. For example,

Jesus (good person, saviour)

Samson (powerful somebody)

Extended shift of meaning

There is shift of meaning that has taken direction of extended meaning. The words with extended meaning indicate that meaning is extended from the original meaning. There are words which in their original meanings mean something smaller or something so important, but colloquial language extend the meanings. For an example:

Makhwapheni (lover) < armpit.

Ncinza (arrest) < pinch

Khumula emakhokho (die) < take off chromes.

Ligedlela (motor car or steam engine train) < kettle.

Liduku (police) flag or handkerchief.

The word, *makhwapheni* derived from the noun "*likhwapha*" (armpit). The meaning here has been extended from ordinary armpit to a whole human body. This is regarded as an extended meaning because armpit is just a small portion of the body which cannot exist without a whole body. The lover (girl or woman or boy, or man, is a whole human being with his/her own armpit and other body parts.

The word, *ncinza* (arrest) originated from punching and is extended to mean arrest. To arrest a person is formal and legally done by police. After being arrested a person is taken away from society. The police do the work as a duty. Pinching on the other side may be playful and commonly done by their children when they are playing. Pinching usually affect one person who is being pinched, whereas when someone is arrested many people are deeply touched.

The expression, *kukhumula emakhokho* (to die) is derived from the action of taking off football boots, but now has extended his meaning to mean death. We may say that the colloquial language speakers observe the event when one is knocked down by a car, the shoes are untightened first as a sign of death.

The word, *ligedlela* (motor car) is colloquial used. The ordinary kettle has extended meaning to mean bigger thing such as a car or a steam engine train. The extension of meaning is based on the car's engine which when too hot boils the water in the radiator.

The word, *luduku* (police) has been extended from the ordinary flag handkerchief to police. The colloquial language speaker observed the flags that always hang on the police stations. They, therefore, associate a flag with a police force.

Colloquial words which have reduced meanings

There are words with reduced meanings. The examples are following words:

Imbuti (goat)

Sikebhe (boat)

Imbuti lencane (small goat)

The word, *imbuti* (examination paper obtained illegally before one writes an examination) *imbuti* has been reduced from the animal the goat to mean paper.

Sikebhe (ten rands note) is compared with the boat. Boat we can see that the R10 note is smaller than a boat. It has been reduced from the boat to mean the picture note.

Vocabulary of colloquial language

The most important feature of this jargon is that is ephemeral in nature, that is, to say, it lasts for a very short time. This characteristic is prominent in colloquial language because it always strives to hide the meaning from the out-group that is why you find that certain items or concepts have different names. The following examples clarify the explanation:

English	Colloquial
Lover	<i>ithekeni, umntfwana, ingabisa, limedi.</i>
Money	<i>lisholomba, intsaba, sitfombe semufi, inyuku.</i>
Father	<i>likhehla, lithayima, grootman.</i>
Police	<i>mahata, liduku, bomakepisi.</i>
Child	<i>ingcosi, ilayithi</i>
Trouser	<i>incaza</i>
To kill	<i>kunyusa, kucisa</i>

The words above shows the colloquial language lexeme are used for short time and are dynamic to keep the status quo of secrecy. One may say that casual language or street language or street language is used across the spectrum of indigenous people in South Africa

Lidladla is an archaic Siswati word for African kitchen. The colloquial language speakers there are very observant and are aware of the past. They have used this term to run away from the well-known term to avoid being understood by the outsiders. For example:

“Ngisayogidla edladleni, meaning (I am going to sleep at home).

Sigila is an archaic Siswati word used by the colloquial language speaker to mean a beautiful lady or a beautiful car. *Sigila* literary means a knob stick used by Swazis to fight or used in a special ceremony like *umtsimba* (marriage)

-endza/endzile (to die) a euphemistic or term of avoidance to die and refers to an absolute custom of killing of the twins. One may argue that the colloquial language speaking people a very good in observing the language that has long been deserted by the entire society. However, this act to them is not aiming at a preserving the language as such but obscure the meaning of what they are trying to convey to the in-group speaker.

Expression of colloquial language

In the colloquial language there are no proverbs so far, but there are idioms which are abundantly used. The idiomatic expression contributes to the shift of the meaning. These idioms are not the original Siswati expression but are the clustering of Siswati words as noted below:

Kubamba umshini (to understand)

Literary mean is to handle a machine.

Kusebenta litiya lapha (you get something if they know you)

Literary means tea is working here.

Kuba intjingamu (a person who always follows you)

Literary means to be a chewing gum.

Kudvonsa intsambo (to kick a short)

Literary means to pull a rope).

Kuphambana nemvula (to die)

Literary means to go against the rain.

Kushaya ngesitsendze (to jilt a lover)

Literary means to hit with the heel.

Kuhlindza imbuti (to study a stolen examination papers)

Literary mean to kill a goat.

The way the colloquial language forms their idioms is resembling that the Siswati language because they observe what is happening around their world and interpret it according to the real-life situation.

Field of discourse

Colloquial language has different terminologies in different fields of the real-life situation. These include legal terminology, sports, workplace, kinship and friendship terminologies.

Legal terminology

Ufahliwe (is arrested)

Kuphuma toli (to win your case in the court)

Phinela (a prisoner who has serve in jail for a long time)

Ekhulukutfu (prison)

Esitokisini (prison)

Sports terminology

Sikhala (a poor backline)

Inkhomo (a person who play soccer very poorly)

The sports terminology that is easily available is that of soccer

Work-place terminology

Atikhelwa (not going to work)

Kuhlephula (to sleep whilst on duty)

Kuyihlaba (not going to work)

Tiyaphendvuka (work very hard)

Thesha (work)

Imbasha (bribery money)

Umhlafuno (money you get on extra work)

Kugcuza (to expel from work)

Verbal extensions

Colloquial language various extensions for example: passive extension (-w-) or (-iw-).

In the above example the linguistic items are in Siswati:

Cavwa (looked by, passive).

We recognise intensive extensions (-isis-) in example:

Bambisisa (hold/hold seriously)

Some words in colloquial language *-ake-* *-is-* of a causative extension a for example:

Theshisa (cause to work)

Neuter extension (*-ek-*) is also found in the colloquial language lexicon. For example:

Colloquial Siswati language	English	Extention	English
<i>Cava</i>	(look/see)	<i>caveka</i>	(be seen)
<i>Fahla</i>	(arrest)	<i>fahleka</i>	(be arrested)
<i>Kugoca</i>	(court a girl)	<i>goceka</i>	(be courted)
<i>Thesha</i>	(work)	<i>thesheka</i>	(be workable)
<i>Cisha</i>	(die)	<i>cisheka</i>	(able to be killed)
<i>Susa</i>	(kill)	<i>suseka</i>	(be able to be killed)
<i>Hlohla</i>	(push in a hand)	<i>hlohleka</i>	(be able to be push in)

The characteristics of colloquial language is dynamic, ever changing, non-standardised, embedded with the extended meanings and phonological peculiarities. Most selected lexicons are relevant for sociolinguistic, semantics and morphological domains analysis.

IV. Conclusion

Conclusively, one may say that the colloquial language seems to be more observant and practical in real life situation. They are interested in terms that are forgotten by the community. They use archaic terms make a used the vocabulary poetic nature so that the meaning is hidden from the out-group listener. They are concern with languages, cultures, metaphors and symbols. They are the people who have intrinsic motivation to voluntarily conduct a research as social scientist. This helps the colloquial to develop a lingua franca and jargons. This research enables them to maintain the status quo of being secrete language which is ephemeral in nature.

V. Recommendations

It is recommended to note that colloquial language cuts across the micro and macro linguistics perspectives, therefore, adherence to phonetically and phonological rules are vital. The semantic and syntactic functions of the colloquial words, phrases and clauses must be within the parameters of figurative language, metaphoric domains and rhetoric techniques. Most coined colloquial language words need to be structurally and grammatical aligned to suite the current orthography and spells rules. The semantic value of colloquial language lexicons is expected to cover lexical, conceptual, componential and sense relations meaning. One cannot imagine language or specific lexicon without meaning because by its nature it is symbolic to communicate meaning. A comprehensive analysis of colloquial language lexicons should cut across various domains of sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, applied and theoretical linguistics.

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