

Chapter 9

Intersectionality and (Re)marriage: A Perspective of the Xitsonga Sociocultural Identity

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Introduction

Ehrlich, in Davies and Elder (2004: 304), agrees with West and Zimmerman (1987) that ‘language is one important means by which gender—an ongoing social process—is enacted or constituted; gender is something individuals do; in part through linguistic choices, as opposed to something individuals are or have’. In this chapter, I explore the practical use of language, culture and gender as both a social phenomenon and a community-based practice. The chapter draws from an extensive review of existing published research on the intersection of various dimensions of language and gender, such as sex, race, religion, culture and class. Eckert and McConnel-Ginet (1992), as well as Bergvall (1999), acknowledge that most studies on gender are based on Western perspectives and are centred on the experiences of white middle-class women. These scholars are also concerned about the tendency to generalise the findings of those studies to women of all races and classes. Spivak (1988) expresses the same concern and warns that excessive generalisations that assume that women behave the same way the world over without consideration of any specific historical, cultural, socioeconomic and geopolitical realities faced by them pose serious research challenges. On the same note, Stokoe and Smithson (2001: 15–16) observe that analysts spend much time interpreting categories and norms that perpetuate traditional gender dualisms rather than interrogating them to determine how speakers ‘do femininity’ or ‘do masculinity’. Above all, the same generalisations may distract future researchers from responding to many burning questions on the use and reflection of language in the construction of complex gender differences and gender relations. It is, however, interesting to note that researchers such as Naidoo and Kongola (2004), Phendla (2004), Littrell and Nkomo (2005), Kargwell (2008), Nkomo and Ngambi (2009) and Dlamini (2016) identified this gap and have since conducted intensive studies on leadership as influenced by gender and race differences within a South African perspective.

This chapter is situated in the field of sociolinguistics, which is ‘the study of language structure and social context’, with special reference to Xitsonga (Dong 2014: 92). Ehrlich, in Davies and Elder (2004: 304), emphasises that according to sociolinguistics, ‘the way I use language reflects or marks my identity as a particular kind of social subject’. Cameron (1995: 15–16) supports the sociolinguistics idea that ‘how you act depends on who you are’. The relationship between language and gender has not yet developed significantly in Xitsonga language studies. This study is grounded on the assumption that language is ‘the carrier of culture, which at the same time restricts the language’ (Ning et al. 2010: 129). It is premised on the understanding that language is ‘the main method of human thinking and self-expression’ and ‘has power to reflect all kinds of social relationships during communication’ (Dong 2014: 94–95). The chapter aspires to contribute to our understanding of the diversity of possibilities of gender expression through language within the Vatsonga culture. Its epistemology is based on the idea that language is ‘an important communicative tool in human society and it evolves with the development of the society’ (Gu and Day 2013: 251). In summary, the way people use language can be related to the social network to which they belong, and the popular claim is that in academic studies on this topic, there is a complex relationship between language and gender (Cameron 1992).

Xitsonga is a language spoken by the Vatsonga and was designated by the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) as one of the 11 official languages of South Africa. Xitsonga draws its uniqueness from the fact that it is used by groups of people in South Africa, Eswatini, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In South Africa, speakers of Xitsonga are concentrated mostly in the Limpopo Province but are also found in Mpumalanga and Gauteng. Historically, Xitsonga is assumed to be derived from the word ‘Vutsonga’, a place occupied by Vatsonga in Mozambique before the arrival of Soshangana. ‘Shangaan’ is sometimes also used, mainly by that portion of the speakers who are direct descendants of Soshangana. However, it should be noted that this is not the official name for these inhabitants of South Africa. Linguistically, Xitsonga and Shangaan are similar, but culturally and anthropologically, there is a slight difference between the Vatsonga and Machangana (Baumbach 1987). In the former Bantustan Gazankulu, a double-barrel name was used to indicate related languages spoken in South Africa, Mozambique, Eswatini and Zimbabwe. In this case, Tsonga/Shangaan referred to the language, whereas Vatsonga/Machangana referred to those who spoke it. This naming approach was formally used until the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994. However, its application in post-democratic South Africa was viewed as divisive and also demeaning to some members of society and resulted in a public outcry by some listeners of Munghana Lonene FM (MLFM), the community’s national radio station. The radio station ended

up retaining the name Xitsonga (as dictated by its SABC broadcasting license), which, according to the Constitution, includes both groups. The language name Xitsonga was truncated to Tsonga to assume a colonised orthography without the significant prefix. Some researchers conclude that the colonisation of the name was intended to make its pronunciation easier for non-native speakers (Halala and Mthebule 2014; Maluleke 2017).

This chapter, which is contextualised within a social constructionist framework, aims to explore stylistic and conversational expressions as elements of Xitsonga sociocultural identity in an intercultural society within the context of language and gender and provides empirical substance to theoretical notions. The following objectives played a critical role in arriving at the abovementioned aim:

- To analyse the impact of the transderivational morphology on the semantic structure of the partner words in Xitsonga
- To explore Xitsonga linguistic gender expressions based on agentive and adverbial instrumental prefixes
- To account for the impact of cognitive meaning extension in constructing deep-rooted linguistic prejudice and discrimination based on gender.

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The above objectives were arrived at by responding to the following questions:

- To what extent does transderivational morphology impact the semantic structure of the Xitsonga partner words?
- What is the idea created by Xitsonga linguistic gender expressions based on agentive and adverbial instrumental prefixes?
- How is cognitively based extension of meaning interpreted in the construct of deep-rooted linguistic prejudice and discrimination based on gender?

The chapter explores the linguistic expressions within the Vatsonga family context as influenced by their various sociocultural aspects. Nkomo and Ngambi (2009: 60) posit that 'culture has a significant influence on gender stereotyping, socialisation, family and work relationships and the status of women in different countries'. Marriage among the Vatsonga has traditionally been treated as a contract of commitment with rules and regulations that represent the husband's stereotypes, societal prejudice and culture. In the current South African political and socioeconomic climate,

the traditionalist view of marriage as providing social status, economic security, and protection no longer applies. It is viewed as being no longer attached to the traditional confines of the Vatsonga 'genuine marriage institution', and concepts indicating affinity by another marriage, such as stepfather, stepmother and stepchild, lack definition in the Vatsonga society. Despite this lack, the Vatsonga culture does not allow the death of a husband to result in the disintegration of a family and the destruction of the marriage institution. Hence this study on intersectionality and the (re) marriage of widowed women.

Theoretical framework and methodology

This chapter avoids debating the appropriateness of feminism and feminist theories. An extensive review of published research on language and gender studies generally indicates that, with regard to these theories, there has never been a unified body of thought. The chapter focuses on exploring gender differentiation in practical language use within the Vatsonga society. Research has also found that messages expressed through words are aligned with the ideological standpoint of the producers of the text or speech. Xitsonga, like all other languages, plays a critical role in inhabiting, enacting and responding to gender and language as influenced by various forms of social identities. In this chapter, the community of practice (CoP) theory has been applied as 'a way of seeing, a perspective from which to contemplate something to understand it' (Chesterman and Wagner 2002: 2). The theory is meant to explore ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values and power relations and helps us to understand human behaviour and linguistic behaviour in particular (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992). Above all, CoP theory has the potential to develop a model for understanding, analysing and describing the functions and evolution of literary systems and their specific application in the learning of language and gender.

While Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) advanced CoP theory, a dominant reading of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998; 2000) projects these authors as its true proponents. The word community, which is attached to the CoP theory, refers to 'groups of people that interact regularly, which may be associated with the dimension of community, inherently and irreducibly a social endeavour' (Duguid 2005: 109). According to Cox (2005: 11), community may have the connotation of a 'rather large, helpful and friendly, bounded group', and it can also be argued that it 'carries with it quite a heavy baggage of idealist connotation' (Lindkvist 2005: 1193). Although there is no common agreement among researchers and scholars about what exactly a community is, it is generally understood that it must be informed by boundaries and proximity, as well as the quality

of relationships (Wenger 1998, 2000; Tosey and Mathison 2003; Cox 2005; Roberts 2006). Within the context of CoP theory, the Vatsonga family is considered as a community where language and gender can be closely and decisively studied.

CoP theory enabled us to explore and explain the circumstances in which widowed Vatsonga women find themselves. It addressed both social and cultural factors with regard to changes in behaviour and learning about Vatsonga beliefs, traditions and values and was also applied to explore how language use influences the relationship between widowed women and their in-laws and their behaviour during and after mourning. Unlike many theories, such as that of Piaget, which is based on behaviourism as a sole focus of studying gender and which seems to rest largely with the individual when applied in the study of language and gender (Piaget and Inhelder 1969), CoP theory adopts a social process that is situated in some cultural, historical and geopolitical contexts and emphasises the learning and mutability in gendered linguistic displays across groups (Bergvall 1999). Researchers generally favour the application of this theory when studying issues related to the assessment of variation and deviance or variability in gendered practices and identities. Bergvall (1999: 279) asserts that CoP is 'well suited to address the complexity of the cross-currents of modern Western and other societies where gender roles are in flux and under challenge; where members might construct differing practices in response to differing social opportunities and settings, such as work within non-traditional fields'.

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CoP theory seems to be in harmony with the philosophy of *Ubuntu* owing to its ability to weave a golden thread between the notions of traditional and modern, as well as its capacity to encompass and transcend the limits of time (Thompson 2017). The philosophy of *Ubuntu* is explained as 'a social, economic and political phenomenon which is deeply rooted in a people's traditions and cultural system and which manifests in many forms of people's behaviour and actions whether individually or collectively' (Baloyi and Mabaso 2018). CoP theory also ensures that the research study is in sync with a community's policy agenda, and its key premise is that it can arise in any domain of human endeavour to learn through participation in multiple social practices over time (Lave and Wenger 1991; Brown and Duguid 1991; Wenger, McDermott and Snyder 2002; Cox 2005; Farnsworth and Higham 2012; Farnsworth, Kleanthous and Wenger-Trayner 2016). CoP theory can also facilitate aggregation of knowledge that may be widely dispersed among different stakeholders.

For the purpose of this chapter, preference was given to CoP theory based on its ability to contemplate many shades, such as the Vatsonga cultural identities attached to sex, gender, feminism and feminist theories. Bergvall (1999: 273) states that CoP theory naturalises intragroup variation as a social construction of gender and advises that the theory 'must be augmented by critical study

of both ideology and innateness'. CoP theory is a lens that is not used only to focus on a set of gendered characteristics but also on gender and social justice. The feminist gender theorists argue that women and men are social categories defined in relation to each other rather than based on a pre-social biological essence. They posit that a patriarchal society takes certain features of male and female biology and turns them into sets of gendered characteristics that serve to empower men and disempower women and are then presented as natural attributes of men and women. Delphy and Leonard (1992) assert that men and women exist as socially significant categories because of the exploitative relationship that binds them together and sets them apart. Many research studies have applied African feminism and post-colonial theories to identify the differences between the language use of men and women from different angles by using different methodologies (Gu and Day 2013). The question asked in this chapter is: 'What adjustments should we make regarding these differences to help people employed in the education sector to think differently and consider inclusive language development?'

The qualitative research method has been adopted as 'an enquiry process of understanding a social human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in [a] natural setting' (Creswell 1994: 2). This research method has the potential to 'produce descriptive data—people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2004: 227). A qualitative research design can be defined as having the capacity to assist researchers in analysing the symbol systems used in texts, focusing mainly on the meaning, language and cultural experiences expressed in written texts (Du Plooy 2002: 32–33). This study was qualitative in nature as a content analysis technique was adopted for collecting and analysing data in the form of words. Connolly (1998) posits that the goal of qualitative research is to obtain insights into particular processes and practices that prevail in a specific location. An observational exercise was carried out to analyse common ways of writing and selected Xitsonga expressions used in conversations.

To better understand the intersection of sex and gender in the (re)marriage of widowed women and (re)constituted Vatsonga families, the study included conversations by all-female, all-male and mixed-sex groups. The tools for data collection included semi-structured interviews, and the target population included young widows (25–45 years of age) as victims and older females (55–65 years of age) as facilitators of (re)marriage. Participants were assured of anonymity throughout the study and its publication.

Intersectionality, a term coined by Crenshaw (1991), was used as the tool for analysis. It framed and allowed for the mediation of the interactivity of language, culture and gender as social structures

in determining the life experiences of widowed Vatsonga women and discrimination in the context of their (re)marriage. However, intersectionality can be used as a feminist theory, a methodology or a tool for analysing multiple social identity structures such as language, race, culture and gender in fostering life experiences (Symington 2004; McCall 2005; Davis 2008; Nash 2008).

Background

Like other societies and cultures, the Vatsonga are entities that are continually changing. However, remnants of the past in the form of South Africa's history of racial and social discrimination can still be traced as factors that influence the need to renew and reshape societies. Traditional beliefs, patriarchal stereotypes, societal prejudice, cultural attitudes, customary legal arrangements and laws relating to marriage, divorce and inheritance can sometimes be discerned in language use that discriminates against women and favours men.

The Vatsonga (re)marriage institution expects women to adhere to restrictive family rules communicated through standard idiomatic and other linguistic expressions. Without itemised directives from their husbands, these sociocultural elements tend to leave women with limited decision-making power and control over their resources. Patriarchal social ideology still dominates Vatsonga (re)marriage procedures and places wives in a subordinate position in relation to their husbands. This arrangement prevents women from enjoying their basic human rights, especially after the death of their spouses. This is made worse by the way in which the Vatsonga manage the process of the (re)marriage of women whose husbands have died. The *vakhegula* (old females) still play a critical role in facilitating (re)marriage and the (re)constitution of the families of widowed women after the death of their spouses. Some Xitsonga idiomatic expressions are invoked to encourage surviving male in-laws to benefit from the inheritance of their deceased elder siblings by acting as caretaker husbands. The process is usually facilitated by the *vakhegula* (old females), who can be perceived as perpetrators of female-on-female injustice. Some resistance to this societal pressure has become evident since the establishment of a democratic South Africa in 1994, and it is generally believed that it was triggered by the fact that the majority of Vatsonga women now have careers and independence and often earn more than their male counterparts.

Statement of the problem

Xitsonga idiomatic expressions such as *Nhwanyana i huku yo khomela vaendzi* (meaning *Nhwanyana loko a tekiwa u ta siya muti xivundzeni a famba*), which can be translated as 'A daughter is a hen to be caught for visitors' (meaning that when a daughter marries, she leaves her village and goes away) put girl-children in a vulnerable position. Girls may consequently struggle to find ways to deal with their cultural identity in intercultural communication when they later attend institutions of higher learning. In most cases, they find themselves trapped by some of these Xitsonga idiomatic expressions and other popular sayings that have somehow become their frame of reference and influence their habits and points of view (Mezirov 2009). Some Xitsonga linguistic expressions that have become repeated utterances, as if calling for learning by doing, have led to misunderstandings and inconsistencies (Argote, Beckman and Epple 1990; Darr, Argote and Epple 1995; Reagans, Argote and Brooks 2005; Amin and Roberts 2008). Like all other societies, female Vatsonga students must emerge as professionals empowered with skills that enable them to interact with others in multi-ethnic and multicultural societies. This conception of their world compromises some inherent identity markers that instil in them a sense of belonging to their ethnic group.

The terms gender and sex attribute influence in the construct of language, but the stereotypical judgements and misunderstandings attached to these concepts call for further investigation. The distinction between gender and sex is often blurred in the Vatsonga community, and either can be used for one concept, namely to indicate whether a person is male or female. It is also worth noting that sex is a phenomenon, fixed and based in nature, whereas gender is fluid, based on culture and determined socially (Ellis 2008). Bergvall (1999: 275) regards gender as 'the social construction of femininity and masculinity'. Gender, which refers to male or female, 'indicates something about socialised behaviour patterns'. Gender roles are set by convention and other social, economic, political and cultural forces and can be expressed explicitly through language (Hesse-Biber and Carger 2000: 91).

Legal prescripts such as the *2019/20 Annual Report, Commission for Gender Equality – A society free from gender oppression and inequality* demonstrate South Africa's political attempts to redress the past system of gender bias. This framework establishes guidelines for South Africans to take the action required to remedy the historical legacy of gender bias and discrimination. However, behind the vortex of discursive public participation lies a creeping non-inclusive language that feeds into this democratic achievement and perturbing attempts to fight different forms of gender-based violence.

Limitations

This study was conducted by a native Xitsonga speaker whose ideas are largely a manifestation of the collective thinking of a people's culture and are, therefore, naturally biased. This natural bias has always served as a voice and natural inclination to refuse to be biased. The study, which is qualitative in design, provides for the interpretation of the results and contributes to the existing body of knowledge. The findings are subject to further interpretation by other researchers and scholars.

Language and sociocultural identity

178 Language is one of the most prominent identity markers in society (Garuba 2001: 7), and the knowledge, beliefs and practices of a particular society are reflected in its language (Baker 2003: 11). Like other languages, Xitsonga represents an ethnic or cultural identity. However, identity is not explicitly defined but rather conceptualised and displayed through action. This could be one of the reasons for identity being characterised by complex, allusive and ambiguous qualities that make it a difficult concept to define. Identity refers to 'a sense of belonging, and involves becoming. It embraces a shared sense of companionship, beliefs, interests and basic principles of living, and it can hardly exist outside of its representation in cultural discourses' (Baker 2003: 245). Zeleza (2006) posits that, as a social construct, identity can promote unity, patriotism and peaceful existence, foster national pride, reconciliation and nation-building or fuel violence, conflict and confrontational existence. Martin (1996: 188) defines identity as follows: 'The semantic ambivalence of the word "identity" emerges clearly: it connotes sameness and permanence, difference and change. "Identity", as well as the discourses and the narratives which refer to it, cannot be understood as reflecting an ontological, immutable reality or essence.'

Zeleza (2006:1) further argues that 'African identities, like African languages, are inventions, mutually constitute existential and epistemic constructions. Invention implies a history, a social process; it denaturalizes cultural artefacts and practices, stripping them of primordial authenticity and essentialism'. This scholar seems to have overlooked the fact that Africans existed long before the modern era, as confirmed by Deacon (1997), who refers to Africa as the cradle of humanity. The European obsession with social classifications is demonstrated by apartheid South Africa's decision to divide Africans along ethnic lines. Writers and speakers should refrain from perpetuating this tendency as it constitutes non-inclusive language. However, evidence exists of linguistic elements

of discrimination against women embedded in some idiomatic expressions in most African languages spoken in South Africa, including Xitsonga, which constitute a biased linguistic context. This is evidenced by Martin's (1996: 193) observation about the danger of falling into the trap of exploiting identity and the warning that 'the world we live in risks to be a place where violence and conflicts are fuelled by identity narratives based on aggressive and exclusive conceptions of culture and identity'.

From a scholarly observation and the above descriptions, one might deduce that identity is not irrevocably fixed but rather relational and that it is not only attached to its semantic properties but also to its ability to mutate. Hofstede (1997: 1) associates culture with the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others and describes culture as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'. Culture manifests itself through four categories, namely symbols, values, rituals and heroes, which implies that culture can be both perceived and described. Symbols refer to verbal and non-verbal language, which are the focus of this study. Values are feelings, rituals are socially essential collective activities within a culture, and heroes exist primarily in the culture's myths, real or imaginary (Hofstede 1997). Cultural identity can, therefore, refer to the characteristics, orientation, feelings and beliefs that distinguish one group from another. Cultural identity often embraces traditions and heritage that have been passed down to new generations through the years. In summary, cultural identity refers to identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has a shared system of symbols and meanings, as well as norms for conduct. Cultural identity contributes to a sense of belonging and 'is wholly cultural in character and does not exist outside of its representation in cultural discourse' (Baker 2003: 45).

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The role of intersectionality in studies dealing with language and gender

Intersectionality can play an important role in studies that deal with language and gender. Shields (2008: 301) describes intersectionality as the mutually constitutive relations among social identities. It is 'a central tenet of feminist thinking and has transformed how gender is conceptualized in research' and thus has the potential to bring about positive social change. McCall (2005) refers to the immense contribution made by intersectionality to feminist theory and our present understanding of gender by revealing that individuals' social identities profoundly influence their beliefs about and experience of gender. Shields (2008: 302) agrees and states that 'we are not

“passive recipients” of an identity position, but “practice” each aspect of identity as informed by other identities we claim’ and that gender is one of the categories of identity—awareness of self, self-image, self-reflection and self-esteem. However, it is widely agreed that intersections create both oppression and opportunity (Zinn and Dill 1996; Zinn 2000) since ‘an intersectional position may be disadvantaged relative to one group, but advantaged relative to another’ (Shields 2008: 302). Most importantly, gender must also be understood in the context of power relations embedded in social identities (Collins 1990).

Transderivational morphology on the semantic structure

Semantics, as a study of meaning, is not restricted to words only but reaches below and above the level of words. This chapter explores the meanings contributed by adding prefixes, suffixes and roots below the word level. It also deals with the meanings of clauses, sentences or larger units of discourse above the word level. The chapter is, however, confined to the idea that a word or phrase can reflect attitudes towards gender. In other words, the focus is on referential meaning, which means that there is a definite reference relationship between a word and the gender signified by that word.

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Crystal (1997: 249) defines morphology as ‘a branch of grammar, which studies the structure of words, primarily through the use of the morpheme construct’. While morphology is located within the field of linguistics and deals with morphemes and the patterns and structures of words, the linguistic concept adopted is transderivational morphology, derived from neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), which was developed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder in the 1970s as an approach to enhance the effectiveness of communication and facilitate learning and personal development. Bandler also applied transderivational morphology as an extension of the Meta Model, as it implies the examination of the movement of a root word, and together with Robert Dilts and Todd Epstein, created several procedures for exploring and applying it. They applied the concept of transderivational morphology as the process of searching back through one’s stored memories and mental representations to find the personal reference experiences from which a current understanding or mental map has been derived (Bandler and Grinder 1975; Grinder and Bandler 1976; Dilts 1998; Churches and Terry 2007; Henwood and Lister 2007).

Although there are other word formation processes worth noting, such as clipping, blending, borrowing, inflexion and coinage, the formation process that has been of much interest to this study is affixation. Adejumo and Osunbade (2014: 18) explain that affixation means ‘to be capable

of performing any function, therefore a bound morpheme is usually affixed/joined to the free morpheme, and this process is known as affixation (that is, the joining of bound morphemes) to the free one(s). When bound morphemes are added to a stem word, a new word with a new and different meaning is created. In Xitsonga, affixation plays a critical role in forming different new words. Most noteworthy, Xitsonga is agglutinative in nature and thus accommodates the extensive use of prefixes and suffixes in the formation of words.

The two types of affixes, namely prefixes and suffixes, are attached by processes called prefixation and suffixation. Prefixation is the joining of a prefix to the free morpheme. A prefix is a bound morpheme affixed at the beginning of a word. The word prefixation is itself morphologically realised from a prefix, which is a bound morpheme affixed to the beginning of a word and action (the act of). It, therefore, refers to the act of placing a bound morpheme at the beginning of a word (Beard 1995, 1998; Hlungwani 2012; Adejumo and Osunbade 2014). A suffix is an affix added after a root or stem. Suffixes are added to the end of a word to create a new word with a different meaning. Bases (roots) and affixes are regarded as two separate classes of morphemes (Crystal 1980; Fromkin and Rodman 1993; Akmajian, Demers, Farmer and Harnish 2010). Lyons (1979: 181) regards a morpheme as ‘the unit of “lowest” rank out of which words, the units of next “highest” rank are composed.’

A morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit in a language and may or may not stand alone. There are two types of morphemes, namely free morphemes and bound morphemes. A free morpheme is independent and self-expressive or can stand alone with a specific meaning—for example, *manana* (mother). A bound morpheme does not stand alone and does not have a meaning but is usually attached to another morpheme. The plural morpheme *va-* can, for example, be attached to nouns as a prefix when combined with a free morpheme, *manana* (mother), to form *vamanana* (mothers).

The suffix *-nyana* can also be combined with both *manana* (mother) and *vamanana* (mothers) to form the diminutives *manananyana* (small mother) and *vamanananyana* (small mothers). In Xitsonga, adverbial instrumental suffixes such as *n’wina* (you) are used to convert a noun to an interjection. It is a shortened version of the phrase *manana wa n’wina/manana wa wena* (your mother [element of respect]/your mother [element of disrespect]). This serves to confirm that morphemes in Xitsonga can assume different forms and meanings depending on the context in which they appear.

In Xitsonga, morphological derivation is a process by which a new word is built from a base, usually through the addition of an affix. Xitsonga contains many suffixes that play an important role in forming different kinds of new words. Some examples of nominal suffixes and verbal suffixes can be seen below.

- *manana* (mother) > *manan'wina!* (Interjection of oath, usually expressed by women.)
- *manana* (mother) > *manano!/manawe!* (Interjection expressing shocked surprise at something repulsive or wicked, usually expressed by both men and women—it simply means 'I am dead!') Alternatively, Vatsonga women usually express a cry of distress such as this one as *Yowee!* ('Alas!').
- *dyana* (eat) > *dyanaka!* ('Eat, please!' A polite way of encouraging someone to act as desired. It is usually expressed by women.)
- *dyana* (eat) > *dyanavu!* ('Please also have your share of the food.' It is usually expressed by women.)

The addition of nominal and verbal suffixes, as demonstrated in the two sets of examples, *manana* and *dyana* (mother and eat), resulted in new words with new meanings. The above statements, usually expressed by women, are uttered in low-rise intonation and are projected as caring. The new words formed from the verb *-dyana* (eat) have contributed to creating a new sense of harmonious interpersonal relationship.

Xitsonga linguistic gender expressions based on agentive and adverbial instrumental prefixes

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This chapter also interrogates the effect of adding derivational morphemes on the grammatical category or part of speech of the root word to which it is added. In Xitsonga, more than one derivational morpheme can be added to a root word to create several different meanings. Note that the root alone does not have a definite meaning and so cannot be used in speech until it has been fitted into an appropriate morphological framework consisting of words belonging to various parts of speech. Xitsonga has some forms that are applied as expressive of an agent or agency, denoting the performer of an action of agentive nouns and suffixes. The adverbial instrumental prefix *ka-* and the exclamation mark (!) as the suffix are usually applied by women in an attempt to politely direct their pathways of mental association to the addressee. Linguistically, the adverbial instrumental prefix *ka-* is a shortened version of the phrase *Eka wena [jaha, nhwana, khalavi, khegu]* ('Dear you' [boy, girl, lovely boy, lovely girl]). The adverbial instrumental prefix *ka-* cannot be considered as a prefix in Xitsonga but rather operates like a pre-prefix or an augment since *mu-* is the prefix of *mu-fan-a* ('boy'). Women usually apply this form of communication to politely direct their pathways of mental association with the addressee, for example:

- *mufana* (boy) > ***kamufana!*** (hey, boy!)
- *jaha* (young boy) > ***kajaha!*** (hey, boy!)
- *nhwana* (young girl) > ***kanhwana!*** (hey, girl!)
- *wena* (you) > ***kawena!*** (hey, you!)
- *khalavi* (lovely young boy) > ***kakhalavi!*** (hey, lovely boy!)
- *khegu* (lovely young girl) > ***kakhegu!*** (hey, lovely girl!)

Vatsonga men usually demonstrate their power over the addressees by adding various affixes (prefixes and suffixes) to give twists to commonly used base words. The adverbial instrumental prefix **he-** is a shortened version of the interjection *Hey!*, which is used to express disapproval, reproof or admonishment.

- *mufana/jaha* (boy or young man) > ***hemufana/hejaha!*** (hey, you boy/young man!)
- *nandzuwee* (you fellow) > ***henandzuwee!*** (hey, you fellow!)
- *nhwana* (young girl) > ***henhwana!*** (hey, you young girl!)
- *kamundzhina* (my fellow being) > ***hekamundzhina!*** (hey, you fellow being!)
- *khegu* (lovely young girl) > ***hekhegu!*** (hey, you lovely girl!)

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The linguistic expressions provided above simply mean to be summarily summoned. Men consider themselves as having higher status and use high-rise intonation as a way of asserting their dominance. The adverbial instrumental prefixes *ka-* and *he-*, as applied by women and men, respectively, reveal different vernacular styles. Men tend to adopt a more vernacular style that demonstrates dominance and shows that they are unique, while women's style suggests sympathy.

Vatsonga women use the greeting *xewee!* ('hello') as a salutation to their husbands or older persons. This form of greeting adds more individual inclination and respect. Should the husband fail to acknowledge this form of greeting, the word *bava/papa!* (father) is used as a follow-up. However, when a wife calls out for the husband's attention and uses the expression *hee!* (hello!), it is seen as disrespectful if directed towards someone who is older than the attention-seeker. The contrast in meaning between the expressions *xewee!* ('hello') and *hee!* ('hello') demonstrates the power that men wield over women. According to Bloomfield (1983), an interjection is a word or expression that occurs as an utterance on its own and expresses a spontaneous feeling or reaction. Interjections can be further divided into subcategories, namely primary and secondary interjections (Lyons 1981).

Vatsonga women use the following idiophones to express their polite but sincere objection and/or as an interjective of surprise, as shown in the following examples:

- *Ebo!* (a vehement objection)
- *Ehee!* (a vehement objection)
- *Xihambano!* (a vehement objection/interjection or oath)
- *Manan'wina!* (a vehement objection/interjection or oath)
- *Ndhozamanan'wina!* (interjection or oath)
- *Xuu/yhii!* (expression of shock and disbelief)
- *Swona!* (expression of shock and disbelief)
- *Ixii!* (expression of mockery)
- *Hala!* (expression of mockery)

The observation is that the affixation applied to the above examples influences the meaning and the impact of the words on the addressees. The affix also creates some sense of politeness and sympathy.

Enhancing Xitsonga's sociocultural identity through idiomatic expressions

In the context of this chapter, diversity refers to individual and group differences that include but are not limited to differences in, for example, gender, race, ethnic group, religion, age, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, personality, political affiliation, life experiences, learning styles, working styles, class, ethnicity, culture, country of origin or viewpoints. There has been sufficient advocacy with regard to the vision and goals towards achieving gender equality, as guided by the Bill of Rights contained in The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), which incorporates the acceptance of the equal and inalienable rights of all citizens, irrespective of gender, race, ethnic group, religion, age, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, etc. (Bill of Rights Sections 9.1 to 9.4). In the context of inclusive language, diversity should be measured qualitatively in terms of equality. Within the confines of diversity, Smith (2005) provides a comprehensive description of language as:

a symbolic, culturally transmitted system of communication, which is learnt through the inference of meaning. It is important to acknowledge not only that language is a

culturally transmitted system of communication, but also that this transmission is based on the inference of meaning. I describe the importance of meaning inference, not only in language acquisition, but also in developing a unified explanation for language change and evolution.

It can, therefore, be deduced that the meaning of words is confined to what they convey. Longman (1998: 67) regards idiomatic expressions as ‘a sequence of words which have a different meaning as a group or from the meaning it would have if you understand each word separately’. Idioms, therefore, cannot be expressed in isolated words and should not be broken up into their elements since they behave as fixed expressions. This view is supported by Shojaei and Laheghi (2012: 1220), who define idioms as ‘an inalienable part of each language found in large numbers in most of the languages’. The fact that the meaning of these collocations cannot be understood from the superficial meanings of the single words constituting them implies that there is a possibility for non-inclusive language. In this chapter, the concept of idiomatic expressions has been applied as embracing proverbs, similes, idioms, metaphors, puns, sarcasm and any other forms of figurative language, herein summarily referred to as idiomatic expressions.

Junod and Jaques’s (1957) *Vutlhari bya Vatsonga (Machangana)–The Wisdom of the Tsonga-Shangana People*, and Ntsanwisi’s (1968) *Tsonga Idioms* serve as the primary sources that conserve and document the Vatsonga cultural heritage. Ntsanwisi’s (1968) publication also constitutes a comprehensive scientific study of the semantic and linguistic aspects of the Xitsonga language. The table below provides ten selected examples of idiomatic expressions that serve as a frame of reference influencing the Vatsonga society’s language use and culture of thinking.

Table 1: Xitsonga idiomatic expressions that exhibit gender-based discrimination

Xitsonga (source text)	English (target text/translated text)
<p>Mavala ya mangwa i mavala man'we. Meaning: <i>Vavasati va fana eka hinkwaswo leswi va swi endlaka.</i></p>	<p>The zebra's stripes are all alike. Meaning: Women are all alike in their behaviour.</p>
<p>Mavala ya mfutsu i mavala man'we. Meaning: <i>Vavasati hinkwavo i van'we. Hambu un'wana a lehile, un'wana a komile, i vavasati hinkwavo.</i></p>	<p>All tortoises have the same colour. Meaning: All women are alike. Even though one is tall and another is short, they are all women.</p>
<p>Homu ya ntlhohe a yi na ntswamba. Meaning: <i>Wansati loko a xongile, loko ji nge singe [loko a nga ri xiphunta] i noyi.</i></p>	<p>A white cow has no milk. Meaning: A beautiful woman will probably be either a fool or a witch.</p>
<p>Mbhuri a xi hetu. Meaning: <i>Wansati wo saseka a nga hetisekanga.</i></p>	<p>A beautiful person is not complete. Meaning: A beautiful woman is not perfect.</p>
<p>Nhwanyana i huku yo khomela vaendzi. Meaning: <i>Nhwanyana loko a tekiwa u ta siya muti xivundzeni a famba.</i></p>	<p>A daughter is a hen to be caught for visitors. Meaning: When a daughter marries, she leaves her village and goes away.</p>
<p>Xinyanyana xi voniwa hi timpapa. Meaning: <i>Wansati wa mahanyelo yo biha u tiviwa hi ndlela leyi a tibombisaka hi yona.</i></p>	<p>A little bird is recognised by its feathers. Meaning: A woman of bad conduct is known by how she dresses.</p>
<p>Kuwa le'ro tshwuka a ri kali swivungu. Meaning: <i>Nhwana lo'wo saseka, loko a nga lowi, wa loloha, kumbe wa yiva, kumbe wa kariha, kumbe u ni mona.</i></p>	<p>A red fig does not lack worms inside. Meaning: If a beautiful girl is not a witch, is often lazy, or is addicted to robbing, ill-tempered or wicked.</p>
<p>Ku dlaya hi tinyarhi. Meaning: <i>Ku fa hikwalaho ka vuvabyi bya vavasati.</i></p>	<p>To be killed by buffaloes. Meaning: To die from diseases spread by women.</p>

<p>Ku mama vuloyi. Meaning: <i>Ku dyondza vuloyi kusuka eka manana wa wena.</i></p>	<p>To suckle witchcraft. Meaning: To learn witchcraft from one's mother.</p>
<p>Ku va na mbilu ya xisati. Meaning: <i>Ku va munhu wa vutoya swinene.</i></p>	<p>To have a womanly heart. Meaning: To display effeminate behaviour.</p>

These idiomatic expressions constitute the basic principles of the Vatsonga cultural identity and are used as the frame of reference when decisions are made during both marriage negotiations and proceedings, as well as during family dispute management. They also have a strong influence on people's habits, thinking and points of view. Many of these idiomatic expressions provoke emotional responses and fuel confrontational relationships. They perpetuate gender-based violence, domestic violence, emotional abuse and other forms of abuse suffered by many rural Vatsonga females.

The examples cited above are meant to describe women in a manner that devalues them while privileging men. They have an exclusionary impact on women and make them feel ostracised and less motivated to face the realities of life. This language usage has some potential for creating identity at the interstices of multiple axes, such as gender and sexual orientation. They perpetuate the stereotyping of, myths about and prejudice against women. A sizeable number of published Xitsonga texts have adopted this tone, and it is unfortunate that some are still being prescribed for use by learners and students to gnaw at the moral fibre of our democratic society.

A cognitively based account of the extensions of meaning in the construct of Xitsonga in deep-rooted gender-based prejudice and discrimination

Derivation in Xitsonga creates a new word by changing the category and/or meaning of the base word to which it applies. This section presents an analysis of deverbatives derived from verbs and the resulting semantic structures of the newly formed words as a demonstration of congruence in meaning attached to gender. Hlungwani (2012) explores the classes in which nominalisation occurs through affixation of the class prefix 7(a) and the nominal suffix onto the verb stem and determines the semantic features noted with these deverbatives in various noun classes.

Nominalisation means turning some other part of speech, such as a verb, an adjective or an adverb, into a noun or using it as the head of a noun phrase, with or without morphological transformation

(Comrie 1976; Comrie and Thompson 2007). Hlungwani (2012) focuses on individual-level nominal and stage-level nominal. This section focuses on converting verbs into nouns that refer to people to demonstrate how gender bias is socially constructed in Vatsonga society.

Table 2: Nominal nouns created from Xitsonga verbs

Verbs	Newly formed nouns (nominal nouns)
- <i>feva</i> (to devote, to hire out for sexual intercourse)	<i>Xifevi</i> (prostitute)
- <i>gawula</i> (lead one to informal marriage)	<i>Mugawula</i> (one led into informal marriage)
- <i>phukula</i> (froth over through fermenting)	<i>Xiphukuphuku</i> (fool)

Marhanele and Bila (2016) define the above newly formed nouns as follows:

- *Xifevi* > *wansati wa mahanyelo ya rigangugangu* (a woman characterised by ill morals)
- *Mugawula* > *wansati loyi a hlomisiwaka a nga lovoriwangi naswona a nga tiveki kahle laha a humaka kona, a tlhela hakanyingi a tswale vana vo ringana ni loyi a n'wi gawuleke* (a woman who marries a man whose family background is unknown, without her parents receiving lobola, and the very woman has given birth to children who are of the same age as this man and who have different fathers)
- *Xiphukuphuku* > *wanuna wo gawuriwa hi wansati kumbe wanuna wo lan'wa ndyangu a ya hlomisiwa hi wansati loyi a nga na humbi ya vana lava n'wi hundzaka* (a man who married a woman or abandoned his family to marry a woman with many children who are older than he is)

The newly formed nouns are defined so that their meanings indicate deep-rooted prejudice and discrimination against women. The nominals (newly formed nouns) have been constructed as individual-level nominals that are derogative and suggest that women are and remain excessively immoral. This tendency can create mental associations with coherent patterns of bad thoughts used by Vatsonga society to understand women and judge their behaviour accordingly.

Research findings

This observational study was based on the familiar ways we write and speak Xitsonga, which, like all languages, makes a valuable contribution to the development of a people's culture and identity and is thus viewed as a reliable tool for sustaining a tribe's cultural materials. Vatsonga men use sexist language that most Vatsonga women seem to approve of, as well as popular expressions worthy of acceptance. Whereas Vatsonga women's language reflects their consciousness, nurturance, emotional expressivity, connectedness to their children and husbands and sensitivity towards others, their male counterparts' language reflects their toughness, a sense of independence and control and authority over their children and wives. The practical language use provided in this chapter demonstrates that the Vatsonga women use linguistic features of tentativeness and powerlessness, which shows that some of the Xitsonga linguistic features are non-inclusive and discriminatory.

The interview revealed that the process of mourning their deceased husbands was experienced by Vatsonga women as emotionally draining. Their loss also takes a toll mentally, spiritually and physically, leaving them with nervous energy. They succumb to discriminatory demands because they fear losing their homes if they refuse to agree to newly arranged relationships.

Culture is not a generic trait, but its elements, symbols, values, rituals and heroes are shared through interaction with others in a society. It is influenced by ethnic traditions that consider men superior to women, thus giving them a strong voice in decision-making processes. This is a clear demonstration that language can—consciously or unconsciously—damage relationships if it offends, intimidates, belittles, excludes, reinforces harmful stereotypes and contributes to the unequal status of individuals or groups. Inclusive language makes people feel valued and included. In the Vatsonga society, gender is, therefore, constructed and accepted through social relationships based on their cultural context.

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Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that Xitsonga is not only applied as a culturally transmitted medium for the formation of meaning and knowledge but also reflects the society's social structures and attitudes based on inference of meaning. It demonstrates how Vatsonga women and men use language differently and how sexism manifests itself linguistically. Vatsonga men use their identity to consolidate their power over women and their will to exist as dominant beings. The practical

examples of Xitsonga linguistic gender expressions based on agentive and adverbial instrumental prefixes demonstrate that the linguistic aspects discriminate against women, are biased and perpetuate prejudice and stereotyping. The conclusion is that some Xitsonga idiomatic expressions are discriminatory and saturated with gendered ideologies and power relations, which confirms that the influences are embedded in the hard-to-crack patriarchal system.

This multidisciplinary chapter provided a model analysis that draws a logical connection between Xitsonga linguistic expressions and their meanings with a view to understanding intersectionality and (re)marriage of widowed women within the Xitsonga sociocultural identity. It also encourages people to be more attuned to the use of language that does not offend, demean or exclude people for any reason.

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