

# **Lecturers' Experiences in Supervising Research in the Medium of isiZulu and their Language Preferences in Disseminating Research**

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## **Abstract**

This research paper reports on lecturers' experiences when using isiZulu to supervise postgraduate studies and their language preferences when disseminating research. Qualitative research methods were used for data collection and interpretation. The sample consists of ten UKZN lecturers, who supervise research in isiZulu. All the lecturers are isiZulu speaking. The study employs Gramsci's hegemony theory and the expression 'swimming against the tide' as a theoretical framework. The study reveals that lecturers feel fulfilled to supervise students in isiZulu. The study also reveals that although the University encourages the use of isiZulu in research, isiZulu speaking lecturers find it hard to use isiZulu for research activities because of challenges they encounter when presenting at conferences and publishing in African languages. However, some are motivated to contribute to the development of African scholarship, more particularly, isiZulu, and are willing to 'swim against the tide', until isiZulu is recognised, not only on paper, but through implementation. In conclusion, we say that it is possible for isiZulu to grow as the language of research at UKZN if lecturers who are proficient in isiZulu can disseminate their research findings in isiZulu and can encourage African (isiZulu) students to conduct their research studies in isiZulu.

**Keywords:** university, benefits, isiZulu concepts, African languages, language policy, medium of instruction

## **Introduction**

Using African indigenous languages in research studies is not prevalent in most institutions of higher learning in South Africa and across the globe (Ali-Dinar 2000; UNESCO 2010). For example, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), not many studies have been produced through the medium of isiZulu. This lack of research in indigenous African languages is evident in all the UKZN libraries. Not only is the problem evident in the libraries of the UKZN, but also at the conferences organized by the University. For example, at the annual University Teaching and Learning Office (UTLO) conferences, a large quantity of papers is presented in the medium of English. It is important to clarify that the reason may be that isiZulu has not been a medium of instruction during the apartheid regime, and even today its use is still limited. This happens even though there are policies and other strategies in place that promote its use in teaching, learning and research (The University of KwaZulu-Natal Language Policy 2006; The University of KwaZulu-Natal 2012a; 2012b). This lack of research in African languages negatively impacts on the production of publications, which include journal articles and books. Liddicoat (2005) has remarked that very few publications are available in the medium of African indigenous languages compared with those produced in English. Researchers like Liddicoat (2005) and Finlayson and Madiba (2002) have argued that if African indigenous languages can be used to produce and disseminate research, this can improve the development of these languages. This concurs with the Asmara Declaration on African Languages and Literatures (2000) which asserted that Africa must encourage the use of African languages in research for their development and that the documentation should be best served by using them (Al-Dinar 2000). Therefore in this paper we argue that isiZulu has the potential to be used in research. Firstly, we give a brief background to the study where we highlight the extent to which isiZulu is used by lecturers at the University. Secondly, we discuss policies that impact on isiZulu as the language of research at UKZN. Thirdly, we discuss the state of postgraduate productivity in South Africa. Fourthly, we discuss the theoretical framework. Fifthly, we present

the methodology employed in this research. Lastly, we present the results and discussion of the findings, followed by recommendations and conclusion.

## **Background**

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the Language Policy for Higher Education (2002), as well as the Language Policy of the University of KwaZulu-Natal encourage the promotion and development of African languages in research and teaching (isiZulu at UKZN). However, research indicates that African languages, although regarded as official by the constitution of the country, are not fully recognised as such in South African universities. Nkosi (2013a; 2013b; 2014) has observed that 'on paper, South Africa has very good language policies, but the problem emerges when it comes to implementation'. Similarly, Kamwendo (2008; 2010) has commented that African languages are generally undermined and not taken seriously, especially by their speakers. This is a result of the legacy of apartheid, which did not recognise indigenous African languages as languages of research and higher learning. For this reason, many lecturers at UKZN, including native isiZulu speakers, still find it hard to use isiZulu for research purposes.

Many lecturers who are native African language speakers prefer to write their research papers in English due to journal requirements and lack of opportunities to publish papers written in African languages. As a result, very few research papers are presented in isiZulu at conferences and seminars in the University, despite the fact that the University promotes the use of isiZulu in research and teaching. It is worth noting that at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Annual Teaching and Learning Office (UTLO) conference, the University encourages presentation of papers in both English and isiZulu. At the 2013 University Teaching and Learning Conference, there were many UKZN lecturers amongst the presenters who were proficient in isiZulu. However, only four papers were presented in the medium of isiZulu. This appears contradictory especially in an institution whose motto emphasises its role as the 'premier University of African scholarship'. One would have expected that a good proportion of research papers, especially presented by isiZulu speaking scholars would have been in the medium of isiZulu at this conference. However, we take into consideration that among reasons for the inability of many lecturers to present their papers in the medium of isiZulu,

some are not proficient in isiZulu, and thus are constrained to presenting their work in the medium of English.

With regard to supervision, it is observed that many research studies are supervised in the medium of English in many South African universities, and this also applies at UKZN. To this end, very few lecturers at the University of KwaZulu-Natal supervise students' research projects in the medium of isiZulu. Against this background, the aims of this study are two-fold: First, it aims to explore lecturers' experiences on the use of isiZulu in supervising postgraduate studies. Second, it aims to explore lecturers' language preferences when disseminating their research findings. The following are the two research questions that this study aimed to address:

1. What are the experiences of lecturers in supervising research studies in isiZulu at UKZN?
2. What are the language preferences of lecturers towards dissemination of research in isiZulu at UKZN?

### ***Policies that Impact on IsiZulu as the Language of Research at UKZN***

While there is the problem of a lack of research produced or published in African languages, particularly in isiZulu, the South African Language Policy for Higher Education (2002) clearly states that African languages should be developed and promoted as languages of learning, teaching and research. Most importantly, the UKZN Strategic Plan 2007-2016 (UKZN 2012b), the Language Policy of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (2006) and the University of KwaZulu-Natal Teaching and Learning Policy (principle 1), all state that the University is committed to becoming the premier university which promotes African scholarship, more particularly isiZulu. Obviously, isiZulu is a dominant language in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and it is where the University of KwaZulu-Natal is positioned.

Based on the above discussion, it must be noted that the University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) Language Policy promotes isiZulu as an official South African indigenous language, whose 'use and status' have been 'historically diminished' (Language Policy of the University of KwaZulu-Natal 2006: 2). This policy is in agreement with the University of KwaZulu-

Natal's Transformation Charter (2012a) which also recognises that 'African languages will be promoted as academic languages' (p. 2), in the same way as policies cited above.

Given the above discussion, one notes that the University of KwaZulu-Natal's language policy and strategic plan promote African scholarship (Ndimande-Hlongwa, 2008). What is required is the commitment of everyone in the university, for the policy to be successfully implemented. This requires that African academics, take a leading role in using isiZulu in research, particularly those in the isiZulu departments across the University. For example, research produced in an African language can be motivating to university students if done by their own lecturers. It must be emphasised that the UKZN Language Policy does not only apply to students, but lecturers are also part of the institution and therefore are expected to demonstrate commitment to implementing policies that impact on them.

### ***The State of Postgraduate Productivity in South Africa***

Available statistics indicate low production of postgraduate studies in South Africa and globally (Mouton 2011; Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAF) 2010), Council on Higher Education (CHE) 2009; UNESCO 2010). Data emanating from all 23 South African universities for the years 2000 to 2007 show that South Africa is near the bottom of PhD producing countries worldwide (ASSAF 2010; Mouton 2011). The country currently graduates an annual 27 PhDs per million of the population compared to Brazil's 42, South Korea's 172, Australia's 240 and the United Kingdom's 259 (McKune 2009). Attempting to address the problem in South Africa, the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAF) (2010) notes that a bold intervention will be crucial in order to escalate and grow the number of PhD graduates in the country. It is of particular interest that in South Africa, the average annual growth in the number of PhD graduates is only 6%. Studies also show that while approximately 45% of doctoral students who enrol never complete their studies, about 29% drop out within the first two years (Council on Higher Education 2009).

Among reports about low Masters and PhD production in South Africa, language could be one of the contributory factors to the problem of low production of postgraduate studies (Huang 2011; Mushtaq & Khan

2012). We say this because we understand that language is a very important tool upon which all learning depends (Fillmore & Snow 2000). For example, if students do not understand research concepts in English, this may negatively affect their learning. Moji (1998) cautions us of the need to develop concepts for African students, and asserts that African students at tertiary level memorise concepts without understanding them. Thus, the issue of language in research plays a major role in the success of postgraduate students.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The study uses Gramsci's (1971) hegemony theory and the English Expression, 'Swimming against the tide' as a theoretical framework.

### ***Hegemony Theory (Gramsci 1971)***

The term hegemony was originally associated with the Italian political writer, Antonio Gramsci (1971) who argued that civil or lay society is directed by both 'domination' and 'intellectual and moral leadership' (p. 57). In other words, Gramsci (1971) used the term hegemony to denote the dominance of one social class over others (for example, English hegemony over African indigenous languages). This does not only represent the political and economic control, but also the ability of the dominant class to project its own way of seeing the world so that those who are subordinated by it should accept it as 'common sense' and 'natural'. Brookfield (2005) believes that hegemony is the process by which we learn to embrace enthusiastically a system of beliefs and practices that end up harming us and working to support the interests of others who have power over us ... the way we learn to love our servitude (Brookfield 2005: 93). Hegemony manifests itself in many forms, example, racial, political, cultural, and linguistic forms (Gramsci 1971). The linguistic hegemony thus derives from the political hegemony, which entails political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent which is based on the popularisation of the views entertained by the rulers or the ruling class (Gramsci 1971; Bates 1975). Thus, the working definition of linguistic hegemony for this article is; wherever there is more than one language that exists together, their status in relation to each other is often

asymmetric. In most cases, one is perceived as superior, desirable and necessary, whereas the other will be seen as inferior and undesirable (Gramsci 1971; Shannon 1995).

### ***Swimming against the Tide***

Literally, this English idiom means to swim in a direction opposite to the flow of the water. Figuratively, it means to do something that is contrary to what most others are doing. In other words, you try to do something that is very difficult because there is a lot of opposition against you. We have chosen this expression because, we observe the participating lecturers who are using isiZulu to be among a few academics in the University to recognise and use isiZulu as an academic language. It must be mentioned that the majority of African scholars, particularly those who are native speakers of isiZulu, do not seem to bother about using isiZulu in their research activities and supervision of students. Pitawanakwat (2007) argues that the development of an indigenous language requires the active participation of native and non-native scholars, community members and elders. We therefore find this expression relevant to what the participating lecturers are doing, against all odds.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

This study employed qualitative case study methods. It operated under the interpretivist paradigm. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) have stated that the interpretivist paradigm developed as a critique of positivism in the social sciences. In general, interpretivists share the following beliefs about the nature of knowing and reality:

- relativist ontology - assumes that reality is constructed inter-subjectively through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially.
- transactional or subjectivist epistemology - assumes that we cannot separate ourselves from what we know. The investigator and the object of investigation are linked such that who we are and how we

understand the world is a central part of how we understand ourselves, others and the world. Therefore, by positing a reality that cannot be separated from our knowledge of it, the interpretivist paradigm posits that researchers' values are inherent in all phases of the research process. Therefore, truth in the interpretivist paradigm is negotiated through dialogue (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007).

The sample consisted of ten UKZN lecturers who have produced their own research, disseminated (published or presented papers) or supervised research in the medium of isiZulu. These lecturers were employed in the School of Education and the School of Arts, both schools located in the College of Humanities. Five of these participants were females and five were males, and all were South Africans. Participants were selected through convenience sampling. The data was collected over a period of two weeks. Semi-structured interviews were used, and a semi-structured interview schedule with open-ended questions was developed as a data collection instrument. Questions were written in both English and isiZulu, and lecturers were allowed to answer in any of the two languages and they were allowed to code-switch. Interviews took about one hour per participant. A voice recorder was used during the interview process.

Telephone conversations were used with two of the participants who were not physically available during the time of the research, and three of the participants responded by email. Ethical procedures were observed throughout the research. This included obtaining informed consent from each participant, along with an assurance that all data would remain anonymous and confidential and would only be used for research purposes. It also included observing participant's rights to contribute or not to contribute to the study without negative consequences. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and their rights to withdraw from the study at any given time should they wish to do so, without negative consequences. The reliability of research tools was tested through using a pilot study before conducting the actual study. This was done with three lecturers who were not part of the study.

For the purposes of analysis, qualitative data analysis methods were used. The semi-structured interviews, telephone conversations, as well as the interview responses sent via email were transcribed, and the transcriptions were analysed using thematic analysis. During the analysis, categories and

broad themes that emerged from the data were developed. The results and conclusions were sent to the participating lecturers to ensure that the interpretation of the results was consistent with their original opinions. All material from the interviews and the following discussions served as the basis for the final interpretative work.

## **Results and Discussion**

It is important to explain from the outset that some of the interview responses are only in English (without isiZulu translations), while some are both in English and isiZulu. The reason for this is that participants were allowed to respond in either English or isiZulu. Therefore, all the statements which appear in English without isiZulu translations, are direct quotations which were expressed in English, while those which appear in both isiZulu and English, were expressed in isiZulu. As a result, there was a need to translate them into English, for the purposes of this paper.

### ***The Benefits of Using isiZulu in Supervising Postgraduate Studies***

The following is a discussion based on the theme that emerged from the findings in addressing the first research question: What are the experiences of lecturers in supervising research studies in isiZulu at UKZN? The issues that emerged relate to: aspects relating to isiZulu research concepts; research supervisory skills; aspects relating to research methodologies; aspects relating to exposure to theories; aspects relating to language and students' success; as well as aspects relating to students' academic writing skills. Below is a discussion of each of these aspects.

### ***Aspects Relating to isiZulu Research Concepts***

Some lecturers indicated that using isiZulu in supervising research is not as stressful as many people may think. They stated that it is not that research concepts are not available in isiZulu, but researchers need to indulge in conducting research in isiZulu so that isiZulu research concepts can be widespread. The lecturers stated that researchers need to use isiZulu when

conducting research so that those concepts are utilized. Below are some of the quotations that indicate that lecturers are confident that using isiZulu in supervising research is possible and is a way of developing the language.

*You see, people think that isiZulu has no research concepts. This is not true. Concepts are there, you only need to play with words. IsiZulu is very rich, words are there, but you only need to choose the one that best describes the concept.*

*It is not correct to say isiZulu lacks research concepts because concepts are available, people need to change their attitudes and use the concepts because you never get stuck when you write, you find a word with ease...for example, research methodology in isiZulu is izindlela zocwaningo; research is ucwaningo; chapter one is isahluko sokuqala; summary is iyoqo; pilot study is isivivinyo socwaningo; and so on.*

*I encourage my students to use isiZulu concepts as much as they can, and discourage them from using English derivations. You will be surprised, they will come up with words, sometimes I never even thought about, and those words are exactly the English equivalents. In this way, the meaning becomes the same. Examples could be: list of figures (uhlu lweziboniso); key questions (imibuzo-ngqangi/imibuzo ewumgogodla); literature review (ukubuyekwezwa kwemibhalo); analysis (ukuhlaziya); results (imiphumela); theory (injulalwazi); theoretical framework (uhlaka lwenjulalwazi); ethical procedures (inkambiso elungileyo); mixed methods (izindlela ezixubile) ....*

From the above quotations, we found that supervisors believe that isiZulu has the potential to be used for research purposes, and this refutes what others believe, that is, isiZulu and other African languages cannot be used in research due to the unavailability of concepts (UNESCO 2010).

### ***Experiences of Lecturers in Supervising Research***

Research supervision can be immensely rewarding for both supervisor and

student, but it can equally be frustrating and disheartening. The following discussion is based on the two themes that emerged from the findings in addressing the first research question: What are the experiences of lecturers in supervising research studies in isiZulu at UKZN? The issues that emerged relate to: aspects relating to isiZulu research concepts; research supervisory skills; aspects relating to research methodologies; aspects relating to exposure to theories; aspects relating to language and students' success; as well as aspects relating to students' academic writing skills. Below is a discussion of each of these aspects.

### ***Aspects Relating to the Research Supervisory Skills***

Below are some of the interview statements by some supervisors:

*I am happy that my supervision skills are developing in isiZulu and I will continue to supervise my students in isiZulu.*

*It is pleasing to see your student completing on record time. It really makes me feel my supervision skills are improving and that means I am growing as an emerging researcher and a supervisor that a student can trust, particularly as it is only a few of us who supervise students in isiZulu. I am really satisfied with the results.*

*Well...when you supervise in isiZulu for the first time, you become intimidated because you have not done it before, you feel you are not doing it, but as you continue, you improve more and more.*

*I have developed my supervision skills in isiZulu. Previously, it was very difficult but now I am confident with how I supervise my students in isiZulu. I also have students whom I supervise in English. Those are the ones who have chosen to do their research in English. But I can tell you that I have some African students that I supervise in English, and they are really struggling when compared with those I supervise in isiZulu.*

From the above statements, it is interesting to see that supervisors appreciate the importance of using isiZulu for supervision purposes. It is also remarkable

that supervisors feel that the students who do research and are supervised in isiZulu demonstrate a positive performance, especially when compared to the other African students whom they supervise in English.

### ***Aspects Relating to Research Methodologies***

Other responses indicate that supervisors find it fruitful to supervise postgraduate research in isiZulu because they are exposed to various research methodologies, which they need in order to be able to supervise students:

*I have learnt a lot about various research methodologies in the language of my own. It [being a supervisor] forces you to learn about research methodologies. Your students employ different research methodologies, and therefore you also should know about them, to be able to supervise effectively, no matter most of the materials are in English, I use the same stuff and explain to my students in isiZulu. This assists me a lot, and a few materials I get in isiZulu, makes things easier for me.*

*If you need your student to trust you, you must demonstrate adequate knowledge of the methodology which the student wants to use... I use isiZulu to advise them, but mostly, we use the English research concepts, if there is no isiZulu equivalent.*

*I have been exposed to a lot of literature to equip myself with knowledge on various research methods, and this helps me to give proper guidance to the students I supervise. It doesn't matter if most of the materials are in English because when I supervise my students, I do that in isiZulu, by making translations of the English materials.*

*I have come across some theses written in isiZulu, and I focus on the methodology sections, to see how they use the research concepts in isiZulu. This helps me a lot. It makes work very easy for me because my students understand better when the concepts are available in isiZulu.*

Based on the above responses, we find it interesting that supervisors are able

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to use materials which are available in English, to supervise research in isiZulu. This means that research produced in English is technically not any better than research produced in isiZulu because the same materials are used, it is only the language that is used to explain research concepts that differs. It is therefore interesting to see that the supervisors understand that a supervisor should have adequate knowledge of research methodologies to be able to supervise students, which is what these lecturers do.

### ***Aspects Relating to Exposure to Theories***

Some of the aspects included lecturers' contribution towards developing students' ability to engage with theory during data analysis. Some lecturers also emphasised the importance of attending conferences and seminar presentations as they feel that they learn more or gain exposure to various theories through other people's presentations. Below are some of the interview examples:

*I feel good that I now understand how different theories in my field of study operate. I have known few of them, but now I can use or explain to another person how a particular theory works. This gives me the opportunity to guide them appropriately with regard to the theory to be chosen for a particular study.*

*I normally attend conferences and seminars and get to know about different theories.*

*I become very happy to see my student able to engage with theory chosen for the study, which tells me I am the good supervisor.*

*Many students find it challenging to engage with theory when analyzing data, but I explain to them how to use a particular theory, then they do it. Usually, I am satisfied with my students.*

### ***Aspects Relating to Language and Students' Success***

Many supervisors mentioned aspects relating to language and students' aca-

demic success in research. The following are some of the supervisors' statements based on this aspect:

*Although I have not much experience in supervising in isiZulu, I have graduated three students at Masters level. They write very well when they write in isiZulu. It is quite essential to encourage students to write in isiZulu ... this has worked for me.*

*Using isiZulu to supervise my students' project is best for me because there is no communication breakdown between me and my students as it happens when I supervise in English, so if they do not follow instructions it is not that they did not understand me. Language plays a vital role in their success in research.*

*I supervise in isiZulu because I was also supervised in isiZulu when I was a student at the former University of Natal. I learned supervision skills from my own supervisor, and now I am doing the same to my students to ensure their success.*

The above quotations indicate that using isiZulu to supervise research is possible and it plays an important role, particularly when supervising a student who is a native speaker of isiZulu. In this way, the mother tongue plays an important role in ensuring academic success in research. This is seen in students who have graduated in isiZulu, as some of the supervisors have mentioned above. The importance of mother tongue is one of the issues emphasised by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as it is a key factor for education and the success of other development efforts (Boonroj 2010). Evidence in Africa and across the globe shows that the mother tongue is essential for effective learning to occur because it makes learning interesting and accessible, while it is improving the quality of education and preserving the language (Iyamu & Ogiegbaen 2007). For this reason, it may be concluded that students are likely to succeed in their research studies if mother tongue instruction is in place.

### ***Aspects Relating to Students' Academic Writing Skills***

The other aspects that emerged from the findings relate to students and

academic writing skills. This was thus reflected in the following statements:

*Abafundi babhala kahle kakhulu lapho bebhala umbiko wocwaningo lwabo ngesiZulu, akufani noma bekwenza ngesiNgisi.*

*Students write very well when they write their research reports in isiZulu, it is far better than when they do it in English.*

*Amakhono okubhala kubafundi [ngesiZulu] angcono kakhulu kunalapho uma bebhala ngolimi lwesiNgisi. Phela i-academic language is nobody's home language. Nakhona esiZulwini, njengasesiNgisini, abafundi badinga ukufundiswa indlela yokubhala i-academic writing, okuyinto vele engiyenzayo ukubalekelela.*

*Their writing skills [in isiZulu] are much better than when they write in English. Academic writing is nobody's home language. Even here in isiZulu, students need to be taught academic writing skills, which is what I do to assist them.*

*Ama academic writing skills abo angcono kakhulu kunalapho bebhala ngesiNgisi. Kukhona nje omunye umfundi wami obebhala ngesiNgisi, sengize ngameluleka ukuthi abhale ngesiZulu. Ungamangala ukuthi usebhala into enomqondo kanjani. Nendlela abhala ngayo sekuyabonakala ukuthi yinto ayibhala eyicabanga ngolimi lwakhe, useyashibilika nje impela. Uyabona nje, ngisho isivini sakhe sokubhala, kuqala bengithi uma ngimnika umsebenzi, avele alethe amakhasi ama-4, kodwa manje useletha ayi-14. Kusho khona ukuthi usebhala ngolimi lwakhe.*

*Their academic writing skills in isiZulu are much better than their academic writing skills in English. I have a student who has been writing in English, I have now decided that he writes in isiZulu. You will be surprised how well he can write now. The way he writes now shows that he is using the mother tongue, the language he thinks with, he is now cruising. Even his writing speed has now improved.*

*Before, he used to submit 4 pages of work whenever I gave him a task, but now he can submit 14 pages. It shows he is now using his mother tongue.*

*Ngibeluleka ngaso isiZulu ngoba kwabona ucwaningo lwabo balwenza ngesiZulu futhi ngijabula kakhulu ngoba babhala into enomqondo nami angiphathwa yikhanda kangako, kunalabo engike ngabeluleka ngesiNgisi.*

*I supervise them in isiZulu because it is the language they use in conducting their research and I am so happy because they write meaningfully. They don't give me any headache, unlike those whom I have supervised in English.*

*...Uma bebhala ngesiZulu benza kangcono kakhulu nami ngiyayibona into engiyenzayo.*

*They write much better when they write in isiZulu and I can see where I am going.*

As already stated above, the issue of mother tongue instruction comes into play. Studies indicate that mother tongue instruction makes learning easier (Kamwendo 2010; UNESCO 2010; Wa Thiongo 1986). It must be stated that some supervisors had the above statements to say about their students, and it is interesting to note that they were happy with most of the students they supervised in isiZulu in relation to academic writing skills. It is important to note that these participating lecturers appreciate the use of isiZulu as a medium of instruction in supervising research, no matter what the challenges were.

## **The Language Preferences of Lecturers towards Dissemination of Research in isiZulu at UKZN**

The following discussion is based on the two themes that emerged from the findings in addressing the second research question: What are the language preferences of lecturers towards dissemination of research in isiZulu at

UKZN? The issues that emerged from the data relate to (1) Conference, colloquium and seminar papers; and (2) Publications.

### ***Conference, Colloquium and Seminar Papers***

#### ***Presenting in isiZulu***

Some of the lecturers stated that they prefer to present their papers in isiZulu, especially at UKZN conferences and some other conferences outside the university, where isiZulu is recognised:

*Ngivame ukusebenzisa lona ulimi lwesiZulu ngenhloso yokukhombisa yinoma ubani ukuthi kuyenzeka lokhu ngesiZulu. Ngike ngawethula amaphepha ami ngesiZulu engqungqutheleni ye-UTLO neye-ALASA.*

*Usually, I use isiZulu to showcase that it is possible to present research in isiZulu. I have papers that I have presented in isiZulu at the UTLO and ALASA conferences.*

*Ngike ngiwethula amaphepha ezingqungqutheleni ze-ALASA ne-ALTA yaseMelika ngesiZulu, kanti nangonyaka ozayo (2014) ngizolethula ngesiZulu eMelika ku-ALTA ngoba amaphepha ethulwa ngezilimi zesintu. Awamaningi wona amathuba okwethula amaphepha ngolimi lwesiZulu.*

*I have presented a paper in isiZulu in the ALASA conference, and next year I will present my paper in isiZulu at the annual ALTA conference which is usually held in the United States of America.*

*Ngiyawethula ngesiZulu amaphepha ami ngoba iNyuvesi iyakukhuthaza, njengasengqungqutheleni nje ye UTLO, kanti ngike ngalethula nangecolloquium leya eyayimayelana nezilimi zesintu eyayiseHoward College campus.*

*I use to present my papers in isiZulu because the University promotes presentations in isiZulu at the UTLO conference, and I did present my paper in isiZulu during the African languages colloquium which was held at Howard College campus.*

*Sengake ngalethula iphepha ngesiZulu ku-UTLO conference nakulo nyaka ngizolethula futhi, kodwa inkinga ukuthi kuvele abakulalele babe mbalwa. Ngibona sengathi akukangeni ezingqondweni zabantu abanengi ukuthi isiZulu ulimi olukwaziyo ukusebenza nasezintweni ezinjengalezi. Nabo Kanye laba abathi bayalugquguzela lolu limi ababonakali bethula ngisho elilodwa iphepha ngolimi lwesiZulu.*

*I have presented a paper in isiZulu at the UTLO conference and I will do the same this year. However, the problem is that when you present in isiZulu, you have a very small audience. I think for many people, isiZulu is still not recognised as a language that can be used in things like this [conferences]. It is disappointing to find that even those who encourage the use of isiZulu [in research], do not do what they preach.*

From the above responses, we deduce that lecturers are inspired to present papers in isiZulu. The only problem is the lack of space to present papers in isiZulu. Only three conferences were mentioned by supervisors as enabling them to present papers in isiZulu. These were the University Teaching and Learning Office (UTLO) conference of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the African Languages Association of South Africa (ALASA) conference, as well as the African Languages Teachers Association (ALTA) conference usually held in the United States (US). In addition, some of the supervisors appreciated the opportunity to present their research papers in isiZulu in the African languages colloquium which was held at the University in 2013. Supervisors who said they had presented papers in the ALTA conference in the US, all stated that they have presented in isiZulu. Most interestingly, is the fact that African languages (like isiZulu) are used in conference presentations overseas, while they are minimally used in the country where they are spoken.

Besides challenging situations that do not favour the use of isiZulu in terms of research dissemination, the participating lecturers are not discouraged, but instead they want to see isiZulu developing as a language of research, thus contributing to the development of African scholarship. To us, this is ‘swimming against the tide’. Nkosi (2013b) in her presentation entitled ‘*Le Mpi Akuyona Eyamagwala: Ukufundisa, ukweluleka ucwaningo, nokucwaninga ngesiZulu e-UKZN*’ (This Battle is not for Cowards: Teaching,

Supervising and Disseminating Research in the Medium of IsiZulu) has demonstrated that it is indeed possible to use African languages as languages of learning and research to develop African scholarship, no matter what the challenges are. Therefore, it will be said that it is up to the lecturers to ensure that isiZulu is put on the map in research and to ensure that they 'swim against the tide'.

### *Presenting in English*

Four of the lecturers mentioned that they prefer to present their research papers in English:

*Njengamanje ngi-presenter ngesiNgisi, uma kunama-seminar noma ama-conference ngoba uma i-audience ingasazi isiZulu ayikho into engisuke ngingayenza, ngisho noma ngikhona lapha eSouth Africa.*

*For the time being I do my presentations in English at seminars and conferences as this is dictated by my audience, even if I am in South Africa.*

*Ngiye ngi-presente ngesiNgisi ngiphakathi nangaphandle kwaseSouth Africa. Akusikho ukuthi angithandi uku-presenter iphepha ngolimi lwesiZulu, inkinga ukuthi ngiye ngizame ukuthi abantu abaningi bezwe okuqokethwe yiphepha lami.*

*I usually do my presentations in English locally and internationally. Not because I detest presenting in isiZulu, but there is very little you can do when trying to reach out to a wider audience.*

The above two statements indicate the problem that the two participants have had to sustain in presenting their research papers when the audience was non-isiZulu speaking. It is understood that not everybody is proficient in isiZulu but there are translation facilities that could be used to overcome the problem, if African languages were to be taken seriously. However, because of the hegemony of English, it seems the availability of such facilities is not provided by institutions where conferences are held. It is unexpected of a country like South Africa, to have institutions that cannot cater for African

languages during conferences. For this reason, presenters are unable to use languages of their choice. In other words, if we have a country or universities whose language policies promote African languages; this problem can be minimized. It is therefore evident that many institutions do not recognise African languages as languages that can be used in research. Kwesi Prah (2003) tells of the ‘collective amnesia’ that is occurring as a result of not using African languages as languages of education. When African languages are devalued in this way, much of the indigenous knowledge contained in those languages becomes devalued (Roy-Campbell 2006).

### *Presenting in both isiZulu and English*

The following are examples of interview quotations by some of the lecturers:

*Ngiwethula ngazo zombili izilimi (isiZulu nesiNgisi), kodwa imvama kuba yisiNgisi. Ngiye ngibheke ukuthi izethameli zengqungquthela zisebenzisa luphi ulimi, uma kungamaNgisi ngisebenzise isiNgisi, uma kungamaNguni [amaXhosa, amaNdebele, amaSwazi namaZulu] ngisebenzisa ulimi lwesiZulu.*

*I use both languages (isiZulu and English), but usually I use English. Language preference is usually dictated to by the audience. For a seemingly English speaking audience, I use English and for a Nguni speaking audience I prefer isiZulu.*

*Iningi lamaphepha ami ethulwa ngesiNgisi ngoba isikhathi esiningi ingqungquthela isuke imayelana nolimi lwesiNgisi, kodwa-ke nangesiZulu ngiyawethula uma ingqungquthela iphathela nezilimi zesintu ....*

*Most of my papers are usually presented in English because conferences are usually conducted in the medium of English, but I also use isiZulu if the conference is about African languages ....*

*Isikhathi esiningi abethuli bamaphepha ezingqungquthela kuba amaNgisi, kodwa uma ngithola ithuba lokwethula iphepha ngesiZulu, ngiyalibenzisa lelo thuba. Zimbalwa izingqungquthela ezivumela*

## *Lecturers' Experiences in Supervising Research in isiZulu*

*ukusetshenziswa kwezilimi zase-Afrika ....*

*In most cases the conference presenters are English speaking, but if there is a chance to present in isiZulu, I use that opportunity. Very few conferences allow the use of African languages ....*

From the above quotations, we learn that what informs the choice of a language when lecturers present their conference papers is the nature of the audience. Lecturers are compelled to present most of their papers in English because the audience is non-African, while a few of their works are presented in isiZulu. Besides, African presenters find it difficult to use their African languages as they want to share their research works with academics who are non-Africans. For the African lecturers, avoiding the use of English in conferences, may limit chances of getting feedback from the audience, as some of the conference attendees are not proficient in isiZulu. However, the lecturers mentioned that they use isiZulu if the audience is predominantly isiZulu speaking. This means that lecturers should not be blamed for having negative attitudes towards their own languages as many would think, if they use English in conferences, since they are able to use them when opportunities are available. From the lecturers' statements, it is obvious that African isiZulu presenters are not likely to be a majority in many research conferences, which is the reason for the dominant use of English. This is because Africans are underrepresented in education and research (Assaf 2005-2006; 2010). Therefore, this calls for African academics to put more effort in attending and presenting their work at conferences to maximize the need for using language translation facilities in conferences, so that different languages are taken seriously, more particularly, African languages which are underrepresented in such activities.

### ***Publications***

Under this theme, two sub-themes emerged. These were publishing in isiZulu, and publishing in English:

#### ***Publishing in isiZulu***

Of the ten lecturers who participated in the study, **four** mentioned that they

prefer to publish their research in isiZulu. The following are some of the interview examples of lecturers' statements:

*Nakuba ngiseyingane ekubhaleni, leyo mbijana yemisebenzi yami ngiye ngikhethe ukuyibhala ngesiZulu. Ngikubona kuwumthwalo wami ukubamba iqhaza ekuthuthukiseni ulimi lwesiZulu ngayo yonke indlela engingase ngenze ngayo.*

*Although I am still young in research, I write most of my work in isiZulu. I regard it as my responsibility to make a contribution towards the development of isiZulu as a language.*

*Yikho ukuthi sibophe izifociya silusebenzise ocwaningweni ulimi lwesiZulu ukuze luthuthuke...Sikhumbule ukuthi ayikho ingane ethi izalwa ibe isigijima. Nolimi lwesiZulu luseyingane, lusafuna ukukhuliswa.*

*We need to soldier on and use isiZulu in research so that it can develop; bearing in mind that everything must have a start. IsiZulu likewise is still in its infancy and must be developed.*

*Iningi lozakwethu libhala ngesiZulu, kodwa ke mina ngiye ngibhale ngesiZulu ikakhulu, nakuba kusekuncane esengike ngakubhala, nami ngisemusha eNyuvesi futhi ngisakhula ekucwaningeni.*

*I usually write in isiZulu, although there is still very little that I have written so far, as I am still new at the university level of education and am still growing in research.*

From the responses of the lecturers quoted above, it is clear that their willingness to publish in isiZulu is congruent with their intention to reinforce the development of isiZulu in research. They understand that it is their responsibility to ensure that isiZulu develops in research, as presently there is a lack of research available in the medium of isiZulu, as stated earlier in this paper. We find these lecturers carrying a burden of being at the forefront of the battle, in fighting against circumstances which do not favour the use of African languages in research publications, as most journals require only

papers produced in English. For this reason, the lecturers who are 'swimming against the tide' need to be supported. This may, for instance, be done by encouraging more African lecturers to publish in isiZulu. However, people do not have the same preferences. This is seen in the following discussion about publishing in English.

### *Publishing in English*

While some lecturers have mentioned that they mostly publish in isiZulu as demonstrated above, others stated that their publications are in English, for publication opportunities. The following are examples of interview excerpts:

*Into eyinkinga ukuthi uma ubhala iphepha lakho ngesiZulu, lizophabhlishwaphi (publish) [lizoshicilelwaphi]? Ambalwa amajenali avuma amaphepha abhalwe ngesiZulu nezinye nje ke izilimi zesintu.*

*A major challenge is that it is difficult to publish a paper written in isiZulu. Very few journals accept papers written in isiZulu.*

*Ngiye ngibhale ngesiNgisi. Kubalulekile ukuba umlayezo wakho uzwakale kwi-audience, nami ngizama lokho.*

*I write in English. It is very important for your contribution to be understood by a wider audience and that is what I am trying to do.*

The above statements aptly concur with Gramsci's (1971) theory of linguistic hegemony. In a democratic country like South Africa, where there are eleven languages mentioned in the constitution as official languages, it is disturbing to observe that lecturers are still complaining about the scarcity of journals to publish their research. It is difficult to understand why there are few journals and other sources that publish papers written in isiZulu, while the country is dominated by Africans, and particularly isiZulu, which has the highest number of speakers when compared with other languages (Statistics South Africa 2011). We see this as the linguistic hegemony of English, which enjoys prestigious status as the most recognised language in research, while

little is being done to uplift the status of African languages. One could ask what are isiZulu lecturers doing in order to uplift its promotion in research? The possible answer to this question, as already highlighted before, could be that African isiZulu lecturers are the victims of the system which favours the use of English in publications. For instance, many journals only accept papers authored in English, and therefore chances are limited for papers written in African languages (UNESCO 2010). When one writes a paper, the aim is to get it published. For this reason, chances of publishing in isiZulu become limited. In other words, understanding the difficulties that African lecturers are faced with in terms of language preferences of their publications may help in reducing false accusations, for example, that African writers have colonised minds or they undermine their languages.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In this article, we have shown that lecturers are happy to supervise students in isiZulu and have demonstrated why it is necessary for lecturers to consider using isiZulu as the medium of instruction when supervising research at postgraduate level. We explored policies that inform the use of isiZulu in research at UKZN. We also reviewed literature about postgraduate studies in South Africa. In our analysis, we discussed different aspects in relation to supervising research in isiZulu. We have also discussed lecturers' preferences in disseminating their research, firstly, by means of presentations, secondly, by means of publications. We have demonstrated how some lecturers are 'swimming against the tide' in elevating the status of isiZulu in research. We argued that even those isiZulu speaking lecturers who do not disseminate their research studies in isiZulu, are not to be blamed for having negative attitudes towards isiZulu because they encounter challenges when publishing and presenting at conferences using African languages. We also demonstrated how supervisors refute the myth that there are no available concepts that can be used in research through African languages (for example, isiZulu), as many already exist, but are not used by researchers. This is due to the fact that most lecturers do not conduct their research in isiZulu. In conclusion, we say that it is possible for isiZulu to grow as the language of research if lecturers who are proficient in isiZulu will insist on disseminating their research using this language.

Consequently, it is recommended that the following should be addressed:

1. There is a need to encourage students to conduct their research in the medium of isiZulu so that the available isiZulu research concepts are used.
2. There is a need to encourage, by way of incentives, African lecturers, especially those who are proficient in isiZulu, to present and publish their research activities in the medium of isiZulu. This will increase the number of more academics to disseminate research in isiZulu.
3. There is a need for more peer reviewed journals to publish papers written in the medium of isiZulu.

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