

# **The Use of a Situational Approach in Teaching isiZulu Language to Non-mother Tongue Speakers**

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## **Abstract**

This paper reports on a study in which Krashen's second language acquisition theory was used in the teaching of isiZulu to non-mother tongue speakers in a university setting. Krashen posits that second language acquisition is very similar to the process that children use in acquiring first and second languages. He further argues that learners should have meaningful interactions in the target language for the acquisition process to occur. In the paper, we expand on Krashen's natural approach and argue that to accelerate the second language acquisition process, second language students should engage with native speakers meaningfully and authentically. We used qualitative methodologies to generate data on lecturers' and tutors' experiences of teaching isiZulu as a second language. Our findings confirm that approaches to teaching second language must indeed provide second language students with opportunities to engage with native speakers.

**Keywords:** situational approach, isiZulu, non-mother tongue, students, university, Krashen's theory

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## **Isifingqo**

*Leli phepha liqonde ukubika ngocwaningo lapho injulalwazi kaKrashen yokufunda ulimi lokwengeza isetshenziswe ukufundisa isiZulu kwabangaluncelanga ebeleni esikhungweni semfundo ephakeme. Kule njulalwazi, uKrashen ubalula ukuthi ukufunda ulimi lokwengeza kuyafana nendlela izingane eziyisebenzisayo ekufundeni ulimi lwasekhaya kanye nolokwengeza. Uyaqhubeka uKrashen aveze ukuthi abafundi kumele babe nokuxhumana okwanele nabanikazi balolo limi olufundwayo ukuze ukufunda kube yimpumelelo. Kuleli phepha senaba endleleni yokufunda ulimi yemvelo kaKrashen, bese siveza ukuthi ukukhuthaza indlela yokufunda ulimi lokwengeza, abafundi bolimi lokwengeza kumele baxhumane nabanikazi bolimi. Sisebenzise indlela yekhwalithethivu ukuqoqa ulwazi kubafundisi nabasizi babo abafundisa isiZulu njengolimi lokwengeza. Ucwaningo luveza ubufakazi obuqinisekisa ukuthi izindlela zokufundisa ulimi lokwengeza kufanele ngempela zinikeze abafundi bolimi lokwengeza amathuba okuxhumana nabalusebenzisa njengolimi lwasekhaya.*

## **Introduction**

In recent times, South Africa has adopted a move to promote and develop African languages that were previously neglected during the apartheid era. Consequently, a slight growing interest in learning African languages is noticeable among some non-mother tongue speakers of such languages. The availability of basic language courses for non-mother tongue speakers in private organisations and public institutions is also a stimulus for the growing interest. In addition, learner books and workbooks in various forms have also been published on basic language and literacy relating to African languages (see, for example, Nyembezi 1979; Muller & Mthethwa 1982). However, from our review of literature, it transpired that not much research and literature has been generated regarding the teaching, learning and acquisition of African languages in South Africa.

Nevertheless, some may argue that there has been a distinct interest and a growing body of knowledge in second language acquisition, learning and teaching relating particularly to English (for example, Krashen 1981; Brumfit 1984; Kilfoil & Van der Walt 1997; Gass & Selinker 2001; Gawie & Thobedi 2004; Van der Walt & Hattingh 2007 and others). Particularly, Krashen (1981; 1982; Tricomi 1986), has done much work in developing

theory for second language acquisition. Even though Krashen's theory relates to the English language, his viewpoint is also applicable to other languages that are acquired, learnt and taught as second languages. Krashen's second language acquisition theory posits that language acquisition is similar to the process that children use in acquiring both first and second languages. This means, second language acquisition can be viewed as a natural process. The postulation is that second language speakers should have meaningful interaction in the target language during the acquisition process. This requires communication at a discourse competence level, which means vigorous natural communication in which speakers are not concerned with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying, decoding and understanding. Clearly, in such situations the focus is more on fluency in the target language rather than accuracy in grammar. Therefore, this natural approach in second language acquisition does not emphasize the explicit teaching of grammatical rules and constant error correction. There is also considerable evidence arguing for this viewpoint that error correction is not only unnecessary but also inadvisable and even harmful to second language learners (Brown, Cazden & Bellugi 1973; Botha 1987; Woods 1989).

This paper, therefore, reports on a study in which we used Krashen's (1981) second language acquisition theory in the teaching of isiZulu to non-mother tongue speakers. We expand on Krashen's natural approach and argue that to accelerate the second language acquisition process, the meaningful interactions that second language learners engage with should occur in authentic situations and with native speakers of the target language.

In this paper, we begin with a brief discussion on language policy issues in South Africa that highlight how the marginalization of indigenous African languages during the apartheid era hindered the development of their pedagogy. We then discuss the qualitative research methodology we used in the project. Furthermore, we draw from Krashen's (1981) second language acquisition theory to analyze lecturers' and tutors' experiences in isiZulu non-mother tongue teaching of first year students at a South African university in KwaZulu-Natal. Finally, we discuss the implications of the situational approach.

## **Language Policy Issues in South Africa**

During the apartheid era, South Africa had only English and Afrikaans as

official languages. These two languages were used in educational, political and socio-economic domains. In essence they were used to reinforce the apartheid philosophy (Alexander 1989; Kamwangamalu 2003). African languages were marginalized and their speakers were obliged to learn both English and Afrikaans in order to access education. First language speakers of English and Afrikaans were not expected, and most did not see the need, to learn African Languages since African languages were relegated to the inferior status. In contrast, in the new democratic South Africa, the status of nine African languages has been elevated as they are now official languages together with English and Afrikaans (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). It was for this reason that the education sector including higher education aligned their language policies; with the resultant new Language in Education Policy (LiEP) (DBE 1997) and the Language Policy for Higher Education (LPHE) (DHET 2002).

The Language Policy for Higher Education (2002), amongst other things, aims at developing indigenous languages as languages of learning and teaching and also, promoting multilingualism. Higher education institutions, as centres of knowledge production, are expected to take the lead in promoting multilingualism. Some universities such as the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN 2006); Rhodes University, the University of Johannesburg, University of Cape Town, and others (Kaschula 2013; Madiba & Mabiletja 2008; UKZN Transformation Charter 2012), have led the implementation of the multilingualism policy. In this, they have developed and reviewed their own language policies to promote the teaching and learning of African languages and their use as languages of learning and research. In such universities, (some of them were former English and Afrikaans medium universities), first language speakers of English and Afrikaans are slowly beginning to learn African Languages. In 2006, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) introduced multilingualism policy to promote and develop isiZulu; and the UKZN language policy states that, 'isiZulu would be developed to provide students access to the language for research, learning and teaching' (Language Policy of the University of KwaZulu-Natal 2006: 3). Most importantly, in 2013 the UKZN Senate approved the introduction of a compulsory isiZulu module for all undergraduate students who are isiZulu non-mother tongue speakers across the University. The offering of the module commenced in 2014. However, it is important to highlight here that the data used for this project were collected

in 2013, and that was before the isiZulu compulsory module had started. Nonetheless isiZulu compulsory module was already offered as a requirement to all students in Education and in Health Sciences. In the following subsection, we explain the module and the research strategy that we followed.

### **Research Strategy**

As alluded to earlier, Krashen’s natural approach (1981) was employed and expanded on in this study. In the course, students were provided with opportunities to engage with native speakers of isiZulu in different authentic situations. Such opportunities were linked to lectures and tutorials to enable both language learning and language acquisition processes to occur. For this, we draw from Krashen’s argument that the teaching and learning environment for second language learners should enable the systems of language acquisition and language learning to occur simultaneously (Krashen 1981), a point we discuss further in the next subsection. As such, as we developed isiZulu course for non-mother tongue speakers, we incorporated an authentic situational approach element. To draw attention to the nature of isiZulu course from which we generated data, in the following sections we discuss the course structure, a profile of students who participated in the course, and the mode of delivery.

### ***The Course Structure***

The structure of isiZulu course was arranged into thematic units (for example, *umndeni* (family), *ikhaya* (home), *isikole* (school) *iNyuvesi* (the university), and so on), which followed a similar format. The themes provided a framework in which various interactions could be identified. To illustrate the format for each theme, in table 1 below, we provide an example of ‘the family’ thematic unit and its contents, to enable the readers to have insights into the courses structure.

**Table 1: The exemplar unit of the course structure**

<b>1. Theme</b>	<b>The Family (<i>Umndeni</i>)</b>
<b>2. Outcomes</b>	To engage in basic conversations about their families

<b>3. Background knowledge</b>	Cultural information pertaining to The family ( <i>Umndeni</i> ); for example, kinship relations Concept of family in Zulu culture Family dynamics
<b>4. Content knowledge</b>	Situations: social activities, family activities/ceremonies Language usage : terms of address and Vocabulary linked to the theme Pronunciation : use of short text
<b>4.1. Reinforcement activities</b>	Pair activities: listening and speaking in different situations Group activities: role play
<b>4.2. Practical application</b>	Reading text and writing assignment: family-tree
<b>5. Mini project</b>	Interview isiZulu mother tongue speaker about his/her family tree
<b>6. Tutorials</b>	Reflection on the family tree Discussion based on the isiZulu speaker's family tree Viewing–DVD: <i>umembeso umabo</i> (gift giving ceremonies occurring in particular times in Zulu culture)
<b>7. Assessment</b>	Self-assessment Peer assessment
<b>8. Further reading</b>	Selected texts
<b>9. Reference notes</b>	nouns, verbs, possessive pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, adjectives, adverbs

As shown in Table 1 above, the thematic unit provides opportunities for learning relevant cultural information of the target language, the grammatical structure, engaging with the language usage, and interacting with native speakers in natural settings. Since language is embedded in culture, it exposes learners to relevant cultural aspects that give them better understanding of the language usage context. Hence, each unit began with brief cultural information linked to the theme. For example, students were taught about the concept of the family in Zulu culture, where the meaning of family is not

limited to the idea of the nuclear family as in the English culture. In the content knowledge, students were taught grammatical structures relevant to the theme, which they further independently studied from reference notes obtained in class. Moreover, the grammatical structures were taught and contextualized in authentic texts. For example, the nouns, *ubaba* (father), *ubabekazi* (aunt), *udadewethu* (sister), *umfowethu* (brother), and *umalume* (uncle) were taught in the thematic unit and were contextualised within the family tree. The teaching of the nouns was also integrated with the cultural information that was taught at the beginning of the theme. This allowed students to manipulate the grammatical structures in authentic texts as they gained the language usage from the native speakers' perspectives.

In order to extend opportunities for language usage in real contexts, students had to do a mini project linked to the theme that required them to interact with first language speakers. For example, as shown in table one above, each student interviewed isiZulu speaker about his/her family tree. Students had to choose the native speaker they would interview either on campus or in the community. This allowed them to schedule the mini project during their own time. They filled a report and discussed their experiences of the mini project during tutorial sessions. The assessment further provided opportunities for language learning as it incorporated peer assessment.

### ***Profile of Students Participating in the Course***

One-hundred and sixty students enrolled in isiZulu course for non-mother tongue speakers. Although this is a compulsory module across the university, it is again mandatory for Bachelor of Education (B Ed.) students. This is in line with the Department of Higher Education policy as it emphasises that Bachelor of Education students are required to have a second language competence (*Department of Higher Education and Training 2011*). Furthermore, it is significant for the non-native speakers of isiZulu to take this module. It is an advantage to them as they gain conversational skills, which they would require when they teach learners in the schools, given that 80% of the people in KwaZulu-Natal speak isiZulu as a home language (*Statistics South Africa 2011*). The significance of this is that the Language Policy for Higher Education (2002) emphasizes the importance of teachers' competence in the language of learners they teach.

This module consists of a diverse group of first year students from different cultural, linguistic, racial, and geographical backgrounds. The students usually speak different home languages such as English, Sesotho, Sepedi, Venda, Turkish, Kinyarwanda, and siSwati. Since students came from diverse language backgrounds, it is obvious that they were also diverse in terms of racial representation. Some of these students were Whites, Indians, Coloureds, Africans (from different African countries like Burundi, and Turkey, as well as other provinces of South Africa (Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and KwaZulu-Natal). It was critical for us to note the profile of the students as it related to the time they spent interacting with isiZulu native speakers. For example, students who resided on campus (mainly, African) and had no transport of their own, had more opportunities to interact with native speakers either on campus or at the taxi ranks and bus ranks.

### ***Mode of Delivery***

The course itself is a semester module that was taught within 14 weeks. In each week, there were three contact sessions (three double periods). Of these, two contact sessions were allocated for lectures, and one contact session was allocated for tutorials. Students were divided into three lecture groups; about 50 students in each group. Content knowledge was taught during the lectures, where reinforcement activities were also given. Students were also given mini projects during both lectures and tutorials. Besides the content knowledge that related to the theme, students were also taught classroom expressions that were meant to help them with their everyday classroom communication. Some classroom expressions related to the teacher's usual commands and others related to students' responses and requests. Table 2 below shows examples of such classroom expressions with their English translations.

**Table 2: Examples of daily classroom expressions**

<b>A. Classroom expressions</b>	<b>B. English translations</b>
Ngiyaxolisa	I am sorry
Uxolo, ngicela ukubuza	Excuse me, may I ask
Sithini ngesiZulu...?	What do we say in isiZulu...?



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Ngcicela ukuphuma	May I go out
Ngcicela ungiphindele	May you please repeat for me
Siyabhala manje. Vulani izincwadi!	We are writing now. Open your books.
Niyezwa?	Do you understand?

During class periods each lecture group was divided into two tutorial groups, and tutors facilitated the tutorial activities during the tutorial sessions. In the tutorial sessions, students presented and discussed the mini project they had done, and engaged in language activities (for example, reciting folk songs and role-playing) in the target language. The interaction was meant to help students practise the spoken language. Tables 3 and 4 below show two examples of folk songs that were used during tutorials:

**Table 3: Folk song 1 –  
Izinyon’ezinhlanu (Five birds)**

<p><u><b>Izinyoni ezinhlanu</b></u>  <i>Izinyon’ ezinhlanu, zazihlez’  emthini,  Yathi le, sibonani laphaya?  Yathi le, yindoda nesibhamu.  Yathi le, asibalekeni.  Yathi le, asicasheni.  Yathi le, asesabi thina, asesabi thina.  Aqhu!Sash’ isibhamu!  Aqhu!Sash’ isibhamu!  Aqhu!Sash’ isibhamu!  Aqhu!Sash’ isibhamu!  Aqhu!Sash’ isibhamu!  Aqhu!Sash’ isibhamu!  Zaf’izinyon’ezinhlanu!</i></p>	<p><u><b>Five birds</b></u>  Five birds were sitting on a tree,  Bird one said, what do we see ov  Bird two said, it’s a man and the  Bird three said, let us fly away.  Bird four said, let us hide.  Bird five said, we are not scared,  Bang! Goes the gun!  Bang! Goes the gun!  Bang! Goes the gun!  Bang! Goes the gun!  Bang! Goes the gun!  They died; the five birds!</p>
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**Table 4: Folk song 2 – We  
Nomathemba!  
Nomathemba! (Hey!**

<p><u><b>We Nomathemba!</b></u>  <i>We Nomathemba!</i></p>	<p><u><b>Hey! Nomathemba!</b></u>  Hey! Nomathemba!</p>
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<p><i>Ushaywe ubani?</i>  <i>Yiyo le ndoda.</i>  <i>Ibize ize la!</i>  <i>Hhayi! Ngiyesaba.</i>  <i>Gibela nant' ihhashi!</i>  <i>Hhayi! Ngiyesaba.</i>  <i>Ehl' amathamb' ebhek' ezansi</i>  <i>Ehl' amathamb' ebhek' ezansi</i>  <i>Enyuk' amathamb' ebhek' ephezulu</i>  <i>Enyuk' amathamb' ebhek' ephezulu</i></p>	<p>Who hit you?          It is this very man.          Call him to come here!          No ways! I'm scared.          Ride on this horse!          No ways! I'm scared.          Down go the bones, and down go          the bones (I give up)          Up go the bones, and up go the          bones (I am irritated)</p>
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Activities such as those shown in tables 3 and 4 above, were accompanied by physical actions. Tutors who were native speakers of the language facilitated and directed the actions. Tutorial sessions were lively and carefree much to the enjoyment of tutors and students themselves.

Our research strategy draws from lecturers' and tutors' experiences of teaching and tutoring isiZulu second language course. Since we integrate our discussion with Krashen's theory, we briefly discuss the theory in the next sub-section.

### **Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory**

Originally, Krashen's (1981) theory of second language acquisition had five main hypotheses of second language acquisition; namely, (1) the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, (2) the Monitor hypothesis, (3) the Input hypothesis, (4) the Natural Order hypothesis, (5) and the Affective Filter hypothesis. However, as the theory developed and matured, it later became known as the Monitor Hypothesis. According to Krashen, (1981) two independent systems of second language performance exist; namely, the acquired system and the learned system. The acquired system is the product of a subconscious process very similar to the processes children undergo when they acquire their first language. Second language acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language where participants engage in natural communication situations. In this way, speakers focus more on the communicative act rather than on the form of their utterances (Brown, Cazden & Bellugi 1973). In other words, as non-mother tongue speakers communicate with native

speakers, they attend to relaying and / or decoding the messages communicated and not on the correctness of grammar of their utterances. Thus, in Krashen's view language acquisition neither requires broad use of conscious grammatical rules, nor tedious drill. He further argues that conversations with native speakers in the real world support the acquisition process. However, Krashen does not dismiss completely the teaching of grammar/rules to second language learners. He argues for the purpose and the approaches in teaching these. He explains that a relationship exists between acquisition and learning and that the latter influences the former.

In Krashen's (1981) viewpoint, the teaching of grammar should occur alongside the creation of natural settings for language learning that will facilitate acquisition. In this way, the target language grammatical structures learnt would assist the second language learner to monitor (by planning, editing, and correcting) the acquired interlanguage. However, the monitoring process occurs mostly when there is adequate time such as in written tasks rather than in spoken language. In this sense, that we concur with Krashen's (1981) argument and further argue that the theory has implications for second language teaching approaches in formal settings, as it suggests that second language learning situations should enable the processes of both the acquired and the learned systems to function simultaneously. Our argument therefore, is that second language teaching approaches should be structured in such a way that they certainly provide opportunities for second language learners to acquire the language. When teaching focuses only on the grammatical structures, it is possible that learners would know the rules of grammar but still lack the knowledge to use the target language (Krashen 1981). In the following discussion, we present the findings and implications of the project where we highlight how the situational approach facilitated the acquisition of the target language.

### **The Situational Approach in Second Language Acquisition**

Our findings present the lecturers and tutors' experiences of teaching and tutoring in isiZulu course, respectively. We also integrate their observations of the impact of the course. We present the findings under the following three themes: students' interest and confidence, academic performance, and socio-cultural integration.

### ***Interest and Confidence***

As discussed earlier in the paper, Krashen (1981) postulates that for second language learning two independent systems of second language performance that exists (acquired and learned systems) should occur simultaneously. Furthermore, the acquisition system requires second language learners to have opportunities for meaningful interaction in natural environments, mainly with native speakers. Thus, providing meaningful activities that are based in real life situations in the classroom and in the project equips students with the language they can use to communicate messages in real life conversations. When students are communicating real messages that are linked to the activities they gain confidence for the target language practical situations. In the same breath, in isiZulu second language course, we found that students who participated in the study demonstrated interest and confidence when communicating with isiZulu first language speakers in their everyday situations. They could initiate conversations with lecturers and other students on campus. For example, when they needed assistance they would use the learnt expressions. In one instance when a student was looking for her lecturer, she asked,

*Sawubona. Ngifuna uMiss Msomi. Ngingqongqoza ehhovisi lakhe angimtholi. Ukhona yini namhlanje?* (Good day. I am looking for Miss Msomi. I am knocking at her office, I can't find her. Is she present today?)

Another dialogue between two students and a lecturer went like this:

Students: *Sanibona.* (Good morning)

Lecturer: *Yebo, nifuna bani?* (Good morning. Who are you looking for?)

Student 1: *Sifuna uMiss Msomi.* (We are looking for Miss Msomi)

Lecturer: *Akekho yini ehhovisi lakhe?* (Is she not in her office?)

Student 1: *Ukhona kodwa kukhona omunye umfundi phakathi.*

(She is there, but there is another student inside)

Lecturer: *Ubani ofuna uMiss Msomi? Uwena noma yilo?*

(Who is looking for Miss Msomi, is it you or this one?)

Student 1: *Hhayi, akumina, ngiphelezele uNatasha.*

(No, it is not me, I am accompanying Natasha).

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The students' success in using the language meaningfully develops interest in using the target language all the time. This was evident in the course where second language learners on several occasions used the target language (isiZulu) even amongst themselves. Besides communicating with the home language speakers, students attempted to use the language amongst themselves outside the classroom. In one instance, one lecturer overheard two students talking:

Student 1: *Hhayi bo! Wenzani wena?* (Hey, you! What are you doing)?

Student 2: *Ngiyahamba.* (I am going)

Lecturer: *Hawu! Nihuluma isiZulu?* (Ha! Are you speaking isiZulu)?

Students 1 & 2: *Siyazama nje.* (We are just trying).

These examples show that the students' conversations with native speakers during the course activities supported the acquisition process. However, the opportunities for meaningful interactions that students had with the native speakers were alongside the teaching of grammar/ rules during lecture sessions. Nonetheless, the grammar teaching was also contextualized in authentic texts.

### ***Improved Academic Performance***

The students' achievements were not only confined to communication through the spoken word, but it was visible in their academic performance on written tasks. Although students started the course without any knowledge of the target language, they displayed an improved competence in verbal communication, and there was a remarkable progress in their reading comprehension abilities. The students' progress was evident in the quality of the answers during their formative and summative assessments. For example; though the comprehension text in the examination paper was three pages long, students could read and understand it. Examiner's comments on the examination paper pointed out that the students scored significantly higher in questions that required their comprehension rather than the questions that required the application of the grammatical rules. Below are some of the students' responses based on isiZulu comprehension text whereby they were

required to read the questions and respond in isiZulu:

Question: *Uthandani ubaba kaZola?* (What does Zola's father like)?

Answer: *Ubaba uthanda ukulalela umculo kanye nokudoba.*

(Father likes to listen to music and fishing) (Student 1).

Question: *Ufundaphi uZola?* (Which school does Zola attend)?

Answer: *UZola [u]funda eMlazi Junior Primary School.*

(Zola attends uMlazi Junior Primary School) (Student 2).

As indicated in the above examples of two students' responses, it was observed that students had a good understanding of the reading comprehension text set on the examination paper. Although student one left out the qualifier (*kaZola*) in the subject, she displayed understanding of the core message in the question. This proves that language acquisition (particularly for message communication) is not dependent on knowing language grammatical rules. This is supported by Krashen (1981) who posits that language acquisition neither requires extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, nor tiresome drill, as discussed in the theoretical framework section. As discussed earlier in the paper, Brown, Cazden, and Bellugi (1973) reiterate that error correction and explicit teaching of rules are not relevant to language acquisition.

Further, in comprehension questions of the examination paper where students had to translate isiZulu sentences into English the responses showed a reasonable level of students' understanding of the language; for example:

Question: *Ngiyalithanda ikhaya lami.*

Answer: I love or like my house very much.

Question: *Efrijini kukhona ubisi.*

Answer: There is milk in the fridge.

Furthermore, the students' academic results of the final examination showed an improved level of achievement, see Table 5 below:

**Table 5: Analysis of students' academic performance in the module**

		Number of Students	Percentage of students
95% - 100%	1 <sup>st</sup> class: 'Outstanding'	07	5%
85% - 94%	1 <sup>st</sup> class: 'Excellent'	26	19%
75% - 84%	1 <sup>st</sup> class: 'Very Good'	38	27%
70% - 74%	Upper 2 <sup>nd</sup> class: 'Good'	21	15%
60% - 69%	Lower 2 <sup>nd</sup> class: 'Fair'	36	26%
50% - 59%	3 <sup>rd</sup> class: 'Adequate'	11	8%
0% - 48%	Fail	0	0%
	TOTAL PASS	140	100%

### ***Socio-cultural Integration***

One of the problems in South Africa is social integration among diverse racial groups (Freemantle 2012; van der Merwe & Managa 2012; Misago 2009; Azindow 2007). In the course, as students began to communicate in lectures and tutorials, they gained confidence to initiate basic conversations with native speakers using the target language in authentic situations. For example, in their greeting and basic conversation project, they initiated conversations with native speakers on campus. Since the teaching approach did not focus on grammar, they took little regard of breaking the grammar rules as they were intent to communicate messages. They would gladly meet as groups in open spaces on campus and perform their activities openly even in full view of other students. We therefore argue that the module offered opportunities to promote multilingualism among different cultural and racial groups of students at the university. Research indicates that multilingualism facilitates social cohesion in most multicultural societies (Romaine 2013; Ouane & Glanz 2010). When people learn other languages they begin to understand and tolerate the speakers of the target language better and then embrace their cultures. The integration of cultural information in themes in the course made the second language learners to understand the cultural context of the target language and that facilitated their interactions with native speakers.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, we have argued that knowledge of language rules needs to be contextualized when teaching a target language. We discussed how isiZulu course for non-mother tongue speakers was designed and taught to accommodate an authentic situational approach. We demonstrated how students have acquired competence in the target language, isiZulu, as seen in both their spoken and written responses. Furthermore, we have shown how these students have gained confidence when speaking with mother tongue speakers of isiZulu. Not only have students demonstrated the acquisition of the target language, they have also achieved language learning competence, as evidenced in their use of grammatical language structures when answering the examination paper. In addition, we have highlighted how students have academically performed in the summative assessment, as shown in Table 5. By engaging with Krashen's (1981) theory of second language learning, we have demonstrated how the situational approach can be successfully used to facilitate learning of the target language. We therefore conclude that using a situational approach on teaching a target language is an effective tool.

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*The Use of a Situational Approach in Teaching isiZulu Language*

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