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## Editor's note

We are pleased to present this special issue, which we consider to be unique in its scope and content:

*Creating opportunities to explore issues around the epistemological and ontological assumptions of African languages acquisition and learning: The African way.*

What distinguishes this issue is that it may be the only one published in South Africa exclusively in African languages, focusing on the teaching of African languages. Throughout this process, we have gained significant insights as we ventured into what may be uncharted territory, and we hope that this issue serves as a trailblazer, paving the way for more works of this nature.

The body of literature on African languages and their pedagogical, cultural, and intellectual dimensions is certainly expansive and multifaceted. This compilation of works showcases a variety of scholarly inquiries into the challenges and innovations within African language education, the cultural significance embedded in linguistic practices, and the broader implications of language policies. From examining the role of proverbs in imparting life lessons to exploring the integration of technology in language teaching, these studies collectively highlight the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and education in African contexts. A critical issue highlighted by some of these articles is the tension between the languages used for academic writing and those used in the research itself. African researchers often face challenges when their work is evaluated through the colonial lens of dominant languages like English, necessitating a continuous justification of their methodological choices. The articles are written in seven languages: Xitsonga, isiZulu, Siswati, Setswana, Sepedi, Luganda, and Kiswahili, reflecting the rich linguistic diversity of the African continent.

In the first article, **Berrington Xolani Siphosakhe Ntombela** discusses the inherent challenges faced by African writers whose work is judged through the colonial lens of dominant languages like English. The paper employs autoethnography to analyse reviewers' comments on a chapter written in isiZulu, revealing the reviewers' lack of understanding of the chosen research paradigm. This critique underscores the potential discouragement for writers who must constantly justify their methodological choices.

The second article by **Athumani S. Ponera and Isaya Simon Lupogo** delves into the philosophical importance of the heart in Bantu epistemology and ontology. The paper argues that for the Bantu, the heart, rather than the brain, is central to critical thinking and moral judgment. This is evidenced through the analysis of Euphrase Kezilahabi's novels, which illustrate the heart's role in shaping behaviour and differentiating between good and bad by individuals.

In the third article, **Refilwe M. Ramagoshi** explores the application of multiple intelligences in teaching African languages to foster creativity among students and teachers. Highlighting the drawbacks of scripted lessons, the study uses the poem "Molagodimo" to demonstrate a method that incorporates diverse cognitive levels and learning styles, promoting a more engaging and creative learning environment.

The fourth article by **Nomalungelo Ngubane and Xolani Khohliso** addresses the intellectualisation of Sesotho to enhance academic access and success for African students at the University of the Free State. The paper argues for the development of Sesotho terminology to support the learning of new disciplinary concepts, aligning with the Language Policy Framework for Higher Education 2020.

**Nkhensani Maluleke**, in the fifth article, investigates the challenges faced by Grade 3 teachers in a South African school who use both Xitsonga and English despite the school's language policy. This qualitative study highlights the conflict between teachers' practical language use and formal policies, advocating for a more inclusive approach that respects learners' linguistic diversity.

In the sixth article, **Mantsha Modiba and Sekgaila Chokoe** examine the orthographic dilemma faced by Northern Sotho speakers in distinguishing between the graphemes /hl/ and /tlh/. Using phonotactic theory and a descriptive qualitative design, the study highlights the need for clearer grammatical rules to resolve this confusion among literate Northern Sotho speakers.

**Malilensha Cecilia Mkhwanazi** discusses the integration of technology in teaching South African languages in the seventh article. The study employs actor-network theory and critical discourse analysis to argue for the digitisation of African languages, which can enhance learning and preserve these languages in the digital age.

In the eighth article, **Khulisile Judith Nkuna**'s research focuses on the application of Siswati nouns from phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic perspectives. The study, guided by Afrocentricity theory, reveals complex patterns in noun usage and their cultural significance, contributing to a deeper understanding of Siswati grammar and its sociocultural context.

The ninth article by **Zinhle Primrose Nkosi and Alexandra O'Neil** explores the role of parents in supporting their children's isiZulu language learning. Through semi-structured interviews, the study identifies various ways parents can enhance their children's language skills and calls for programs to equip parents with the necessary knowledge and skills.

**Tinyiko Chauke** examines Xitsonga proverbs related to wild animals in the tenth article, using the conceptual theory of metaphor. The study highlights how these proverbs impart lessons on behaviour, cooperation, and moral values, showing their educational importance in both primary and secondary school curricula.

In the eleventh article, **Connie Makgabo and Keletso Makgobatlou** investigate the difficulties faced by Grade 8 learners in Sepedi language education in Tshwane's independent schools. Using

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the study identifies cultural, social, and pedagogical challenges, recommending strategies to improve vocabulary teaching and learner engagement in Sepedi.

**Edward Masembe, Fred Masagazi Masaazi, and Jackson Kizza Mukasa** analyse the implementation of Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) for teaching Luganda in the twelfth article. The study highlights the lack of CBC materials for African languages and calls for better training and resources to support effective language teaching.

In the thirteenth article, **Ablonia Dihloriso Maledu** discusses the importance of Sepedi folktales in teaching communication, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. Using document analysis, the study advocates for the formal inclusion and assessment of folktales in education to make learning more relatable and effective.

**Sanele Nsele** explores teachers' methods for teaching critical reading and comprehension using isiZulu literary texts in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase in the fourteenth article. The study critiques traditional teaching methods and recommends approaches that foster deeper understanding and critical thinking.

The fifteenth article by **Ndzalama Maluleke, Tintswalo Mapengo, and Osborn Chauke** emphasizes the importance of Xitsonga proverbs in maintaining Vatsonga cultural identity. The study highlights the need to reinforce the cultural relevance of these proverbs in the modern world to preserve the Vatsonga heritage.

In the sixteenth article, **Rehema Yawe Nakandi and Moses Mayanja** reflect on the impact of formal education and western culture on indigenous education in Buganda. The study calls for documentation and technological integration to preserve Luganda culture and restore its educational value.

Finally, **Sibonelo Edgar Zulu and Sicelo Ziphozonke Ntshangase** examine how proverbs and idioms can be used to teach the values of Ubuntu to isiZulu learners in the seventeenth article. The study, underpinned by semiotic theory and social constructivism, demonstrates the effectiveness of these linguistic tools in promoting respect, morality, and communal values.

These articles collectively underscore the critical role of language in education, cultural preservation, and identity formation. The studies highlight both the challenges and opportunities in teaching African languages, advocating for innovative pedagogical approaches, technological integration, and culturally responsive policies. Through these diverse perspectives, the importance of valuing and promoting African languages in educational contexts is vividly illustrated, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers in Africa.

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