Digital Transmission of isiXhosa Idiomatic and Proverbial Knowledge on Facebook

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Abstract

This article explores the digital transmission of isiXhosa idiomatic and proverbial knowledge on Facebook, focusing on how online users preserve, reinterpret, and innovate traditional expressions in a contemporary digital space. Rooted in Afrocentric and sociolinguistic theory, the research examines how Facebook functions as a modern storytelling platform where indigenous wisdom is sustained, challenged, and re-imagined. Data were collected Facebook posts containing isiXhosa idioms and proverbs and analyzed qualitatively to identify emerging themes of preservation, semantic shift, and creative adaptation. The findings reveal that while Facebook enables younger generations to access isiXhosa proverbial knowledge, it also introduces new contexts that alter meanings. The article highlights the dual role of digital spaces as both preservers and transformers of cultural identity. Funded by the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, this article contributes to efforts to safeguard indigenous linguistic heritage in the digital age and underscores the importance of integrating social media literacy into cultural preservation initiatives.

1 Introduction

Idioms and proverbs form an integral part of isiXhosa cultural and linguistic identity, acting as vessels of communal wisdom, social norms, and moral education (Mvanyashe, 2019). In pre-digital societies, the transmission of such expressions occurred primarily through oral practices such as iintsomi (storytelling), familial instruction, and communal gatherings. Elders were regarded as the custodians of this heritage, ensuring inter-generational continuity through spoken performance. Since then, the rapid rise of digital communication technologies has redefined how isiXhosa speakers interact, share, and interpret idiomatic and proverbial knowledge using platforms like social media instead of fireplaces (Xulu, 2024; Turner, 2023). Even so, there is little empirical evidence of how idioms and proverbs are preserved and shared on social media, at least as far as languages like isiXhosa are concerned.

This article investigates how Facebook enables, modifies the circulation of isiXhosa idioms and proverbs. The article addresses the following research questions:

RQ1 How are isiXhosa idioms and proverbs used and adapted on Facebook?

RQ2 In what ways do digital platforms influence the preservation or transformation of these traditional expressions?

RQ3 How do users negotiate authenticity and cultural meaning in online contexts?

The article situates these questions within broader debates about African language digitalisation, linguistic sustainability, and cultural preservation in an era of technological transformation.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the theoretical framework underpinning the article. Section 3 reviews relevant literature on oral traditions and digital culture. Section 4 outlines the methodology and the approach to data analysis. Section 5 presents and discusses the findings. Finally, section 6 concludes the article by addressing the research questions and presenting recommendations and limitations.

2 Theoretical Framework

This article draws on Afrocentricity and Sociolinguistics, situated within the field of Digital Humanities. First, Afrocentricity, as articulated by Asante (2003), prioritises African epistemologies and cultural perspectives. The theory frames the approach of this article to isiXhosa idioms and proverbs not merely as linguistic artefacts but as living cultural expressions. Through this lens, Facebook becomes a contemporary *imbizo* — a communal space where

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identity and memory are renegotiated.

Second, Sociolinguistic theory informs the article's exploration of language use in context. It provides a framework for understanding how idioms and proverbs adapt to new communicative environments while maintaining social functions such as humour, instruction, and critique (Kamwangamalu, 2003; Madima et al., 2024). Finally, the Digital Humanities perspective enables the integration of technology and cultural studies, emphasising the importance of preserving African linguistic data in online repositories, archives, and social media discourse (Turner, 2023).

3 Literature Review

3.1 Oral Traditions and Digital Culture

According to (Finnegan, 2012), orality should not be understood simply as the absence of writing, but as a complex mode of cultural production in which knowledge is communicated through performance, repetition, participation, memory, and social interaction.

Idioms and proverbs are particularly significant within this oral tradition because their meanings are embedded in cultural experience rather than being limited to their literal lexical forms. Mvanyashe (2019) argues that isiXhosa idioms and proverbs constitute repositories of Indigenous Knowledge Systems because they encode knowledge about history, customs, social behaviour, nature, morality, and community life. The expressions therefore function simultaneously as linguistic resources and cultural pedagogical tools. Their significance lies not only in what they say, but also in the social contexts in which they are used and interpreted.

The relationship between orality and technology has increasingly attracted scholarly attention. Rather than viewing oral and written forms as mutually exclusive, (Finnegan, 2012) emphasises the interaction between different modes of communication. This perspective is particularly useful in understanding the contemporary movement of oral traditions into digital environments.

Ong (1982) distinguishes between primary and secondary orality. Secondary orality emerges through technologically mediated communication and possesses some characteristics of oral culture, including participation, repetition, responsiveness, and communal engagement. Social media platforms can consequently be understood as environments in which elements of oral communication are reconstructed through written posts, comments, images, videos, memes, voice notes, and other multimodal forms. In this regard, digital communication creates new spaces in which cultural expressions can circulate beyond the immediate communities and interpersonal settings in which they were traditionally transmitted.

African scholarship increasingly demonstrates a movement from traditional orality towards digitally mediated forms. (Mpofu, 2022), for example, describes social media as a space in which indigenous storytelling is recreated and reproduced through digital technologies. His study of indigenous media in Zimbabwe demonstrates that social media can facilitate the re-embodiment of traditional storytelling practices rather than simply replacing them.

Similarly, (Tsaaior, 2020) argues that oral forms increasingly migrate into digital environments. Facebook and other social media platforms enable these forms to circulate beyond their original oral contexts, creating digital memories and archives. This movement is important because oral knowledge has historically been vulnerable to loss because of its dependence on human memory and continued performance.

3.2 Transmission of Idioms and Proverbs in African Languages

Studies such as Mvanyashe (2019) and Chabata (2018) emphasize the educational and epistemic roles of idioms in African societies. In isiXhosa, idioms are often encoded with agricultural, social, and historical imagery that connects individuals to community values. Digital mediation, however, creates opportunities for reinterpretation that can dilute or revitalise these meanings depending on user engagement (Malatji, 2019).

Malatji and Lesame's research on South African languages provides useful evidence of this broader process of linguistic adaptation. Their study of young people's use of South African languages on social media found that English continues to play a significant role in online communication, while African languages remain present in users' everyday digital practices. The study also highlights the prevalence of code-switching and the different language choices users make across platforms and communicative contexts.

(Malatji, 2019) argues that the preservation of African languages on social media faces the us of multilingual practices. These findings are important for understanding the digital transmission

of idioms and proverbs. That is, if the language environment in which these expressions circulate is increasingly multilingual and characterised by code-switching, then digital representations of idioms cannot necessarily be expected to reproduce traditional forms unchanged.

The digital circulation of idioms therefore raises a distinction between preservation of form and preservation of meaning. An expression may be reproduced accurately while its cultural meaning is altered by the surrounding discourse. Conversely, a modified expression may preserve its underlying cultural significance while taking on a new form.

3.3 Digitalisation, Indigenous Knowledge and African Languages

Although digital technologies provide opportunities for documenting and circulating indigenous languages, these opportunities are unevenly distributed. African languages continue to encounter limitations relating to digital resources, technological infrastructure, standardisation, online content, language technologies, and representation.

Madima et al. (2024) argues that South African indigenous languages require deliberate positioning within contemporary digital communication environments. His discussion highlights the contradiction between the importance of indigenous languages to South African society and their relatively limited representation within digital environments.

The relationship between digitalisation and African-language development is also evident in education. Xulu (2024) argues for the integration of technology into the teaching of African languages and identifies digitalisation as an important component of contemporary language development. The study suggests that information and communication technologies can contribute to the teaching, development, and promotion of African languages, while also drawing attention to the limited availability of digital resources.

Digitalisation may facilitate a more participatory form of cultural transmission. Instead of knowledge moving exclusively from elders to younger generations through face-to-face interaction, digital environments enable horizontal and multidirectional circulation. Younger users can reproduce traditional expressions while simultaneously adapting them to contemporary experiences. This process can be understood as a form of cultural negotiation in which tradition is neither simply preserved nor abandoned, but continually reconstructed.

3.4 Social Media, Cultural Memory and the Recontextualisation of Tradition

According to (Tsaaior, 2020), social media platforms provide new environments for circulating and acquiring digital existence for African languages. According to (Motsaathebe, 2019), English dominance on multimedia platforms challenges the effective use of African languages on these platforms. Even so, multilingual approaches assist in ensuring the presence of African languages (Lesame and Malatji, 2022).

Social media increasingly functions as a space for the construction and negotiation of cultural memory. Cultural memory is not simply the passive preservation of information from the past; it involves the continual selection, interpretation, repetition, and reconstruction of cultural knowledge.

The concept of recontextualisation is especially useful here. When an idiom or proverb moves from a traditional setting into Facebook discourse, it is removed from one communicative context and inserted into another. Its linguistic form may remain recognisable, but its meaning may be influenced by the new circumstances in which it appears. Digital users can consequently activate traditional cultural resources to comment on contemporary experiences.

Recontextualisation is consistent with scholarship on digital orality. Studies of African digital communication demonstrate that digital platforms can create new forms of orality in which traditional narrative resources are reproduced through technologically mediated interaction. Mpofu (2022), for instance, conceptualises social media as a space where indigenous storytelling undergoes adaptation and re-embodiment rather than simply disappearing.

Digital recontextualisation may therefore produce both continuity and innovation. Continuity occurs when users reproduce an established idiom or proverb and retain its conventional cultural meaning. Innovation occurs when users adapt the expression, place it in an unfamiliar context, combine it with other linguistic resources, or use it to address contemporary social experiences.

3.5 African Languages, Digital Visibility and Linguistic Hegemony

A further concern in the literature is the unequal linguistic distribution of digital spaces. The dominance of English and other globally powerful lan-

guages means that African-language users do not enter digital environments on linguistically neutral terms.

There is a need for a strategic engagement with social media as part of efforts to position South African indigenous languages within the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Madima et al., 2024). That is, African languages must be integrated into technological and educational environments if they are to remain relevant within contemporary digital society (Xulu, 2024). The implication is that language preservation cannot be separated from technological development. A language that is absent from emerging digital spaces risks becoming increasingly marginalised, whereas a language that is actively used online gains new domains of functionality.

3.6 The Gap in the Existing Literature

Research has established that idioms and proverbs function as important repositories of cultural knowledge and educational resources (Mvanyashe, 2019), while research on African-language social-media use demonstrates the complex relationship between indigenous languages, English, multilingualism, and digital communication (Malatji, 2019; Lesame and Malatji, 2022).

Research on digital orality further indicates that social media can provide new environments for the circulation and transformation of oral traditions (Mpofu, 2022; Tsaaior, 2020). More recent scholarship on African-language digitalisation has similarly emphasised the importance of developing digital environments in which indigenous languages can remain visible, functional, and sustainable (Madima et al., 2024; Xulu, 2024).

However, a significant gap remains concerning the specific digital transmission of isiXhosa idioms and proverbs on Facebook. Much of the existing scholarship examines either the cultural and educational significance of idioms and proverbs or the broader use and preservation of African languages through social media. Less attention has been given to how specific isiXhosa idiomatic and proverbial expressions are reproduced, interpreted, recontextualised, and negotiated by users within Facebook discourse.

4 Methodology

This article forms part of a larger Master's research study entitled "The Impact of Digitisation on the Transmission of Idiomatic and Proverbial Expressions in isiXhosa Culture", completed at Nelson Mandela University. The broader study investigated the ways in which Facebook as a digital communication platform influences the transmission and interpretation of isiXhosa idiomatic and proverbial knowledge. The present article draws specifically on the Facebook-based component of that research and focuses on the relationship between digital mediation, cultural continuity, and linguistic transformation.

The study employed a qualitative content analysis approach within a digital ethnography framework. This approach was appropriate because the research sought to examine naturally occurring isiXhosa language practices within a digital environment rather than measure users' attitudes through quantitative methods.

4.1 Sampling and Data Collection

Facebook posts written in isiXhosa and containing idioms or proverbs were selected using purposive sampling. Posts were gathered from open community groups, cultural pages, and public discussions in which isiXhosa idiomatic and proverbial expressions were explicitly used or discussed. The selection of posts was guided by their relevance to the research questions, particularly their demonstration of traditional meanings, adaptations, contextual reinterpretations, or interactions between users.

The focus on publicly accessible Facebook material enabled the study to examine naturally occurring examples of isiXhosa linguistic and cultural expression in a contemporary digital environment. The selected material included the original posts and relevant user comments and interactions, allowing the analysis to consider not only how idioms and proverbs were presented but also how their meanings were collectively interpreted and negotiated by other users.

4.2 Data Analysis

The data were analysed qualitatively through thematic content analysis. The analysis focused on three broad categories. First, preservation looked at how expressions retain traditional linguistic and cultural meanings. Second, reinterpretation considered how idioms and proverbs adapted to new social, cultural, political or communicative contexts. Finally, hybridisation considered blended isiXhosa-English constructions, digitally mediated

forms and humorous or creative adaptations.

Each post was examined in relation to its linguistic form, contextual function, cultural meaning, and user engagement, including comments, likes, and shares where these contributed to the interpretation of the expression. Particular attention was given to instances in which users explained, affirmed, extended, or transformed the meanings of idioms and proverbs.

The analysis also considered the relationship between the traditional meaning of expressions and their meanings in digital contexts. For example, the interpretation of *Isisele senyathi* was compared with its established meaning in isiXhosa proverbial discourse. This enabled the study to distinguish between instances of semantic preservation and instances of semantic extension or innovation.

Ethical considerations included the anonymisation of social media users and posts and sensitivity towards the cultural knowledge contained in the data. The study also recognised that publicly accessible social media material may contain culturally significant expressions whose interpretation requires respect for the communities from which they originate.

5 Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings in relation to the three research questions and is organised thematically to demonstrate how isiXhosa idioms and proverbs operate onFacebook. Section 5.1 examines the principal findings concerning the preservation, transformation, and digital mediation of idiomatic meaning. Section 5.2 then discusses these findings in relation to the theoretical framework and existing scholarship, with particular attention to linguistic preservation and innovation, grounded meaning, Afrocentric interpretation, digital transmission, and cultural sustainability.

5.1 Main findings

5.1.1 Preservation of Meaning

The idiom "`Isisele senyathi`" as used in Figure 1 maintains its traditional meaning as a metaphor for a person who possesses deep wisdom, insight, and understanding. Historically, the expression draws from the image of a buffalo's leftovers — believed to still carry value and nourishment — symbolising that even remnants of great beings or teachings contain knowledge worth preserving. On Facebook, users employ "Isisele senyathi" to praise



Figure 1: Interpretation from the Facebook page.

intellectuals, elders, and individuals who share profound ideas or reflections. This usage demonstrates the preservation of moral and intellectual reverence embedded in isiXhosa oral tradition. The online community's engagement with such posts, through likes, comments, and shares, mirrors traditional forms of collective acknowledgement and respect for wisdom.

5.1.2 Semantic Shift and Innovation

In digital contexts, "Isisele senyathi" has also undergone creative reinterpretation. Some users now apply it metaphorically to describe people who are resourceful, humorous, or socially influential online — those whose digital presence "feeds" others with entertainment or inspiration. This expansion of meaning from intellectual depth to digital influence signifies a subtle semantic shift. It demonstrates how Facebook users infuse traditional idioms with contemporary relevance, blending cultural continuity with linguistic innovation. The idiom's recontextualisation reflects the adaptability of isiXhosa proverbial thought to the modern communicative environment.

5.1.3 Digital Mediation of Culture

The use of "Isisele senyathi" on Facebook illustrates how digital media mediate cultural expression. In oral settings, tone, gesture, and audience response enriched the delivery of such idioms. Online, however, users rely on visual and textual cues

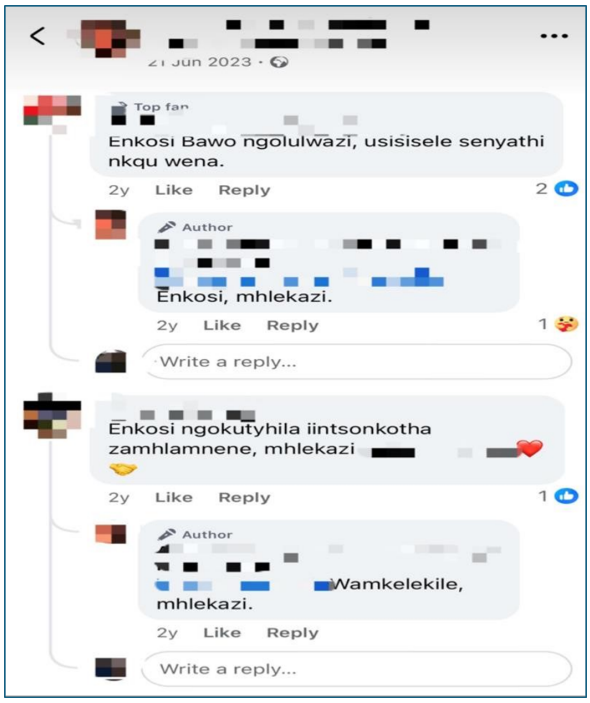


Figure 2: Comments from Facebook users.

— emojis, memes, hashtags, and captions — to recreate affect and emphasis. For instance, a user might pair the idiom with a smiling or thinking emoji to convey admiration or reflection. This demonstrates how digital tools substitute performative aspects of oral communication while simultaneously expanding the reach of idiomatic knowledge to younger and digitally engaged audiences. Thus, Facebook consequently functions as a contemporary communal forum sustaining and transforming isiXhosa idiomatic knowledge through mediated interaction.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

5.2.1 Digital Platforms as Spaces of Linguistic Preservation and Innovation

The analysis of the Facebook post and its comment interactions reveal that digital platforms have become important contemporary spaces for the preservation and re-imagination of isiXhosa idiomatic and proverbial knowledge. The idiom "Isisele senyathi"—traditionally used to describe a person who is deeply knowledgeable, wise, and reflective—illustrates how indigenous linguistic heritage can thrive in virtual environments. In the post, the author explains the idiom's meaning, historical associations, and linguistic variations, while commenters respond with affirmations and expansions, such as "`Enkosi Bawo ngolwazi, usisisele senyathi ngoku wena`".

This exchange demonstrates how Facebook functions as a digital storytelling environment, echoing the oral tradition in a new technological context. The act of posting, explaining, and responding parallels the oral call-and-response dynamic of traditional Xhosa communication, where meaning is collectively constructed and affirmed. The digital space thus reconstitutes the communal ethos of African knowledge transmission, keeping alive the spirit of ubuntu and shared intellectual growth.

5.2.2 Grounded Meaning within Innovation

Although the idiom is recontextualised within a digital environment, its semantic integrity remains intact. According to Mesatywa (1954:3), Isisele senyathi refers to "`umntu olumkileyo, onamava.`" The Facebook interpretation aligns with this foundation, translating the idiom to mean "a mine of information." This modern phrasing retains the metaphor of depth and wisdom while resonating with current linguistic realities where "information" has become the modern equivalent of "wisdom" or "knowledge."

This interplay between tradition and modernity embodies the innovative adaptability of isiXhosa idiomatic expression. Digital users are not replacing original meanings but reframing them to suit contemporary contexts. In this way, the digital environment supports what Finnegan (2012) describes as "the continuity of orature," whereby oral art forms transform yet remain rooted in indigenous frameworks of meaning.

The Facebook post, therefore, exemplifies semantic preservation through cultural translation. The idiom's essence remains Afrocentric, grounded in indigenous wisdom systems, yet its form evolves to speak to a digital generation that values data, information, and connectivity. This reflects the dynamic resilience of isiXhosa idiomatic discourse, capable of surviving and flourishing amid linguistic globalisation and technological advancement.

5.2.3 Afrocentric Interpretation: Digital Ubuntu and Collective Knowledge

From an Afrocentric perspective (Asante, 2003) digital platforms such as Facebook enable African people to reclaim and reaffirm the narrative of their linguistic and cultural heritage. The use of isiXhosa idioms in online spaces signifies an act of cultural self-definition, where speakers use indigenous language to interpret their world, express intellect, and

affirm identity.

The Isisele senyathi post reveals a community of practice where participants affirm one another through respectful dialogue and recognition of knowledge. Expressions like "Enkosi Bawo ngolwazi" (thank you, father, for the knowledge) show that online communication among isiXhosa speakers still upholds communal values of respect, hierarchy, and gratitude, which are central to African philosophy. The digital domain thus becomes an extension of ubuntu, where language and knowledge-sharing remain grounded in relational ethics.

This aligns with the view of wa Thiong'o (1986) that language is not only a medium of communication but a carrier of culture. When isiXhosa speakers interact online using their language and idioms, they resist linguistic erasure and assert the continued relevance of African epistemologies. The online circulation of idioms like Isisele senyathi contributes to the digital decolonisation of discourse, positioning isiXhosa as a language of modern knowledge and intellectualism.

5.2.4 The Role of Digitalisation in the Transmission of Indigenous Knowledge

Digitalisation contributes to both preservation and pedagogical innovation in the transmission of idiomatic and proverbial knowledge. Previous research on the digital transmission of isiXhosa idiomatic and proverbial expressions demonstrates how social media can facilitate the circulation, reinterpretation, and continued accessibility of traditional expressions in contemporary digital spaces (Zinto, 2025). Through posts, comments, and reactions, younger generations can gain access to idioms that might otherwise remain confined to elders, oral gatherings, or printed texts. From a digital ethnographic perspective, these interactions can be understood as creating a living and evolving record of cultural expression, in which indigenous knowledge is continuously circulated, interpreted, and recontextualised (Hine, 2015).

Participants not only preserve the idiom's linguistic form but also engage in interpretive participation, where meaning is negotiated and extended. This interactivity transforms idioms into living texts that evolve with users' contributions. It is, therefore, evident that the digital environment allows isiXhosa idiomatic knowledge to move beyond documentation toward active practice, enhancing its vitality and relevance. Moreover, the Facebook discussions display a clear pedagogical function. Users learn from each other's insights, drawing from shared experiences and ancestral wisdom while interpreting idioms in relation to contemporary social realities. This demonstrates that digital spaces are not passive repositories but collaborative classrooms where traditional wisdom meets modern literacy.

5.2.5 Implications for Cultural Sustainability

The findings affirm that digital platforms are integral to the future of isiXhosa linguistic sustainability. The online circulation of idioms and proverbs supports language continuity by providing visibility, accessibility, and community engagement. Such practices counteract the risk of language attrition by creating a new domain of cultural expression—one that is inclusive, participatory, and technologically relevant.

In this sense, Facebook and similar platforms act as digital extensions of the fireside, where oral traditions are retold, reinterpreted, and stored for future generations. The idiom Isisele senyathi thus represents not only the continuity of meaning but also the innovation of expression, ensuring that isiXhosa idiomatic and proverbial knowledge remains an active part of contemporary communication.

This finding underscores that digitalisation, far from eroding indigenous knowledge, enhances its preservation and adaptive vitality. The online discourse surrounding Isisele senyathi reflects how isiXhosa speakers are reconstructing cultural memory through participatory digital engagement. The idiom's continued use, reinterpretation, and discussion illustrate the merging of traditional epistemologies and modern digital literacy. Ultimately, the digital landscape offers a new cultural ecology—a hybrid space where ancient wisdom meets modern connectivity, ensuring that isiXhosa idioms and proverbs remain both timeless and timely. The preservation of isiXhosa in digital spaces is therefore an act of cultural continuity, intellectual affirmation, and spiritual resilience.

6 Conclusion and Recommendations

This article set out to address three questions concerning the use of social media in the preservation and transformation of isiXhosa idiomatic and proverbial knowledge.

First, how are isiXhosa idioms and proverbs used and adapted on Facebook? The findings demonstrate that users employ idioms and proverbs to communicate wisdom, praise, humour, reflection,

and social commentary, while also adapting traditional expressions to contemporary digital contexts. The example of Isisele senyathi demonstrates that an expression can retain its core meaning while acquiring additional associations within online communication.

Second, in what ways do digital platforms influence the preservation or transformation of these traditional expressions? The findings indicate that Facebook facilitates preservation by increasing the visibility, accessibility, circulation, and intergenerational transmission of isiXhosa idiomatic knowledge. At the same time, digital communication introduces new contexts, forms of interaction, and multimodal resources that can contribute to semantic extension, reinterpretation, and innovation.

Finally, how do users negotiate authenticity and cultural meaning in online contexts? The findings suggest that authenticity is negotiated through collective interaction. Users explain meanings, affirm interpretations, provide contextual understandings, and sometimes extend traditional meanings. Authenticity should therefore not be understood solely as the preservation of a fixed linguistic form but also in relation to the continued cultural relevance and meaningful use of the expression within changing social environments.

Overall, the article argues that Facebook plays a complex dual role in the transmission of isiXhosa idiomatic and proverbial knowledge. It preserves traditional expressions by making them accessible to wider and younger audiences, while simultaneously recontextualising them in ways that may extend, modify, or transform their meanings. Digital spaces should therefore not be viewed solely as threats to linguistic authenticity. Rather, they should be understood as evolving sites of cultural negotiation in which preservation and transformation occur alongside one another.

To safeguard and strengthen isiXhosa idiomatic heritage in digital environments, three strategies are recommended. First, social media archives containing isiXhosa idioms and proverbs should be integrated into university language programmes. Such integration would expose students to naturally occurring contemporary language practices while encouraging critical engagement with the relationship between traditional meanings and digital adaptations. Second, partnerships should be developed between the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC), linguists, educators, cultural practitioners, and digital content creators to curate and promote high-quality isiXhosa cultural and linguistic content. Such collaboration could contribute to the development of reliable digital resources while supporting the visibility of isiXhosa in contemporary digital spaces. Finally, community-driven digital literacy initiatives should be developed to promote culturally informed online language use. These initiatives should encourage users to understand the cultural significance of idioms and proverbs while recognising that linguistic adaptation is a natural component of language development.

Limitations

This article has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the article focuses specifically on Facebook and therefore does not account for the ways in which isiXhosa idioms and proverbs circulate on other social media platforms such as TikTok, WhatsApp, Instagram, or X. The findings should consequently not be generalised to all digital platforms.

Second, the article is based on a qualitative analysis of selected publicly accessible Facebook posts and interactions. The purposive selection of data provides detailed insight into particular instances of idiomatic use but does not provide a statistically representative account of all isiXhosa idiomatic and proverbial practices on Facebook. The findings therefore illustrate patterns of digital language use rather than establish their prevalence across the wider isiXhosa-speaking population.

Third, the article focuses primarily on the textual and digitally mediated use of idioms and proverbs and cannot fully reproduce the contextual richness of traditional oral performance. Features such as tone, gesture, facial expression, interpersonal relationships, and the physical setting of an oral interaction may not be fully captured in Facebook data. Future research could therefore combine digital ethnography with interviews, participant observation, and comparative analysis of oral and digital performances to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how isiXhosa idiomatic and proverbial knowledge is transmitted across contexts.

Ethical Considerations

The research informing this article received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee (Human) of Nelson Mandela University under ethics clearance reference 2234. The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical requirements

and procedures approved by the Committee.

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