

Investigating the Effects of Non-Standard Dialects on the Written Competency of Setswana Home Language Grade 10 Learners



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ABSTRACT

This article investigated the impact of non-standard dialects on Grade 10 learners at the two selected high schools in Winterveldt concerning writing Setswana and how to improve the written competency of Setswana Home Language (HL) learners. The study was conducted at two high schools where 56 participants were selected from Grade 10, with 28 participants from each school. The study employed a qualitative method. In this regard, two focus groups consisting of ten learners each from each school were interviewed. Similarly, class observations, constructive analysis, and text analysis were also used to collect the data. According to the data, it is evident that Non-standard dialects had a significant influence on the written and spoken outputs of the learners and most learners and teachers could not differentiate. The data also suggested that the Setswana written by female learners is better in comparison with how or what the Setswana male learners write. Based on the findings and conclusions the following recommendations can be made: (1)The government and the Department of Education must employ or rather hire native Setswana speakers to teach Setswana home language. (2) When learners do not understand certain aspects of the Setswana classes, teachers must not speak Sepitori to make the learners understand and (3)The use of non-standard dialects must be minimised in schools to reduce its influence on Setswana. The study findings will provide insights to the Department of Education about the challenges that Setswana L1 learners encounter that prevent them from excelling in written competency of the Setswana home language. This will help in policy implementation.

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INTRODUCTION

Winterveldt is a small township situated in Pretoria with residents speaking different Black South African indigenous languages, namely: Setswana, Sepedi/ Sesotho sa Leboa, Sesotho, Nguni (isiZulu, isiNdebele, isiXhosa), Xitsonga, English, Afrikaans, and Tshivenda. With so many languages in a small township such as this, it is not easy for someone to use one standard language. They use Sepitori and Tsotsitaal to communicate, which helps them to bridge the communication gap that exists in society. Ditsele and Mann believe that there is undisputed evidence that the use of the so-called dialects of language in South Africa is on the increase and serves as an important communication bridge for supranational language forms

that serve many people from different ethnicities living side-by-side in different urban settings in the country.¹

Sepitori is a pidgin language. In this regard, Pidgins and Creoles are languages that develop in situations where “groups of people, who do not share a common language, must communicate” with one another.² These languages affect the learners’ subject performance, especially Setswana L1, because learners are exposed to these languages from birth, and parents communicate with their children using these dialects (Sepitori and Tsotsitaal). Accordingly, they do not see the necessity of speaking standard Setswana. This does not only affect their Setswana performance at school but could also be the cause of the extinction of the standard Setswana, which they must promote by communicating in it at home and schools. In the process, Sepitori and Tsotsitaal have become the first languages (L1) of many Winterveldt residents, resulting in this becoming a contributory factor to the learners’ poor performance in Setswana Home Language (HL) and the dying out of standard Setswana as a language in this area.

Gardner and Calteaux suggest that children who grow up in townships often learn this colloquial variety before acquiring a standard language, leading to various problems in the teaching of standard languages in schools.³ Gardner and Calteaux's views are similar because they both believe that being exposed to the colloquial language makes it difficult for one to be proficient in the acquisition of standard languages. Accordingly, where one lives today plays a vital role in which language, one becomes competent.

Undoubtedly, learner’s competence in their mother tongues is decreasing due to these Non-standard dialects. The government has tried to promote Black South African indigenous languages, but there does not seem to be any real progress. Many teachers are not equipped or trained to teach these languages, and mother tongue speakers of the indigenous languages provide little support to this matter.⁴

According to Ditsele, “Sepitori simply means “the language of Pretoria. As such, it has not only become the lingua franca” in the townships, “but also serves as a marker of urbanisation and being “city-wise.”⁵ It is important to note that people who migrate to Pretoria adopt Sepitori to distance themselves from their rural backgrounds. Even speakers living outside the municipal borders try to learn” to speak Sepitori, not only because they seek to add it to their linguistic repertoires, but also to gain the concomitant positive social advantages such as urbanity, street wisdom, social recognition, and coolness.

Instead of rejecting the use of Sepitori, for learners of Setswana L1 who use a vocabulary that is used in one and not the other language, it may be more beneficial to encourage the cross-use of such vocabulary. In other words, such vocabularies should be interchangeable in the two languages. Thus, it should be acceptable to adopt Sepitori-coined terminology into standard Setswana to achieve two objectives, namely, firstly, to address the challenge of having unnecessarily long phrases and secondly, to take advantage of the available single words that people use actively in their daily lives and to legitimise them by adopting and harmonising them into the standard varieties of the Setswana.⁶

Some scholars have researched the rapid growth of non-standard dialects and how they bestow a high status and coolness onto such speakers, how they should be accepted and adopted into standard Setswana.⁷ Even though Non-standard dialects are rapidly growing, the dying of our indigenous Black South African languages especially, Setswana, must not be ignored. Setswana is declining slowly due to the rise of these two non-standard dialects of the language. Instead of focusing on the rapidly growing Non-standard dialects, more emphasis should be placed on the prevention of their influence on the Setswana performance of learners and, on the other hand, devise ways of promoting and enhancing the development of Setswana L1 so that it is promoted to maintain its official status.

¹ Thabo Ditsele and Charles C Mann, “Language Contact in African Urban Settings: The Case of Sepitori in Tshwane,” *South African Journal of African Languages* 34, no. 2 (2014): 159.

² Jeff Siegel, “Literacy in Pidgin and Creole Languages,” *Current Issues in Language Planning* 6, no. 2 (May 15, 2005): 143, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664200508668278>.

³ R. Gardner and M. Lambert, *Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning* (Mass: Newbury House, 1992), 1.

⁴ Anne Schlebusch, “Non-Racial Schooling in Selected Cape Town Schools: Language, Attitudes and Language Learning,” 1994, 98.

⁵ Thabo Ditsele, “Why Not Use Sepitori to Enrich the Vocabularies of Setswana and Sepedi?,” *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 32, no. 2 (2014): 215–28.

⁶ Ditsele, “Why Not Use Sepitori to Enrich the Vocabularies of Setswana and Sepedi?” 224.

⁷ Louis Molamu, *Tsotsi-Taal: A Dictionary of the Language of Sophiatown* (Unisa Press, 2002); Ditsele and Mann, “Language Contact in African Urban Settings: The Case of Sepitori in Tshwane.”

Accordingly, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

RQ1- What are the possible interferences of Non-standard dialects in the writing competency of Setswana Home Language Grade 10 learners?

RQ2 - What can be done to maintain the status of Setswana in schools?

The following hypotheses are, therefore, formulated:

H1: Urban contact varieties have an influence on the written competency of Setswana Grade 10 learners.

H2: The teaching and learning of Standard Setswana will always be affected by the Non-standard dialects learners bring to schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review related to the topic of this study is discussed in this section. Local and international books, journals, newspapers, and other sources of various scholars were examined to investigate the different views and opinions on the same or similar topics that this study intended to explore.

Background on Urban Contact Varieties

Attributable to its rich and differing social character, South Africa is a multilingual nation, lodging an extraordinary number of dialects. Eleven of these are legitimate; to be specific, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho, Setswana, Sepedi, siSwati, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga. Notwithstanding among these eleven authority dialects, there are more unofficial languages spoken by the nation. These unofficial languages incorporate urban contact varieties of UCVs. These are varieties spoken by generally dark natives in urban townships, utilised as the lingua franca, essentially in informal spaces. Accordingly, all 11 official languages make their own contributions to UCVs.⁸ Other non-official languages, including blended types of language in multilingual townships, for example, Tshwane and Soweto, have their varieties of UCVs, which have a bringing together capacity and have turned into the vernacular standard in these regions.⁹ Various investigations concentrate on UCVs in Gauteng, for example, Makhudu, Mesthrie, Molamu, Ditsele, Tshotetsi and Wagner.¹⁰ These examinations investigate Gauteng township language varieties, for example, the Tsotsitaal that is dependent on isiZulu, Setswana, and Afrikaans additionally, Iscamtho, Soweto Tsotsi and Pretoria Sotho (Sepitori) as the lingua francas. In addition, they look at the historical backdrop of UCVs, concentrating on their structure and work, and on how they work as character markers for the youth in urban townships of South Africa and how they can be utilised to enrich the vocabulary of the standard languages.¹¹

Explanation of Concepts Related to the Study

Koine and Argot

Schuring explains that Koine is a language variety that has arisen from contact between two or more mutually intelligible varieties of similar languages.¹² According to Trudgill, Koinisation is a process that ultimately produces Koine.¹³ It starts out with the prior mixing features from the different varieties and gives rise to a high degree of variability. In turn, Argot refers to a language used by criminal groups to achieve secrecy.

⁸ Chris Hurst, "The Multiplicative Situation," *Australian Primary Mathematics Classroom* 20, no. 3 (2015): 10–16.

⁹ Hurst, "The Multiplicative Situation"; Ditsele, "Why Not Use Sepitori to Enrich the Vocabularies of Setswana and Sepedi?"; Vic Webb, Biki Lepota, and Refilwe Ramagoshi, "Using Northern Sotho as Medium of Instruction in Vocational Training," in *Globalisation and African Languages* (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton, n.d.), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110891614.119>.

¹⁰ Rajend Mesthrie, "I've Been Speaking Tsotsitaal All My Life without Knowing It," *Towards a Unified Account of Tsotsitaals in South Africa*, in: M. Meyerhoff and N. Nagy (Eds.), *Social Lives in Language—Sociolinguistics and Multilingual Speech Communities*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2008, 95–110; Molamu, *Tsotsi-Taal: A Dictionary of the Language of Sophiatown*; Ditsele, "Why Not Use Sepitori to Enrich the Vocabularies of Setswana and Sepedi?"; Kgomotso Jennifer Tshotetsi, "The Influence of Tsotsitaal on Setswana: An Investigative Study at Itsoseng in the North West Province.,", 2016.

¹¹ Ellen Hurst, "Style, Structure and Function in Cape Town Tsotsitaal," 2008; Ditsele and Mann, "Language Contact in African Urban Settings: The Case of Sepitori in Tshwane."

¹² Gerard Kornelis Schuring, *Omgangs-Sotho van Die Swart Woongebiede van Pretoria* (University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 1984).

¹³ Peter Trudgill, "Language and Society," *Dialects in Contact*, 1992, 107.

Pidgin

Holmes explains that: Pidgin is a reduced language that results from extended contact between groups of people with no language in common; it evolves when they need some means of verbal communication, perhaps for trade, but no group learns the native language of any other group for the social reason that may include lack of trust or close contact with each other.¹⁴ Usually, those with less power (speakers of substrate languages) are more accommodating and use words from the language of those with more power (the superstrate), although the meaning, forms and use of these words may be influenced by the substrate language. According to Siegel, pidgin is a new language that develops out “of a need for communication among people who do not share a common language.”¹⁵ This is confirmed by Salem who notes that a pidgin “can be viewed as a language that results from contact between people who are not able to speak a common language” but need to talk with understanding to each other.¹⁶ Thus, it can be concluded that pidgin is a language of communication between people of different cultures speaking different languages in a particular setting. Mufwene concurs with the above views pertaining to a pidgin that people who are communicating using a pidgin that is reduced in terms of structure specialised about their functions, typically trade related, and that initially served as a non-native lingua franca for users who preserved their vernacular languages for their day-to-day interactions.¹⁷

Standard language

A standard language is a language that has been given the status of being an official language to be used in educational institutions. This is why Holmes believes that a standard language is one that “is written, and which has undergone some degree of regularisation or codification (for example,” in grammar and “a dictionary), it is recognised as a prestigious variety or code by a community, and it is used for academic writing.”¹⁸ Hudson opines that, ‘ a standard language’ passes through the following processes 1) selection (A variety of language has to be selected to be developed into a standard language) 2) codification (linguists or authors has to write dictionaries and books in this variety) 3) elaboration (the possibilities of using this variety in education, government and documents must be elaborated.) 4) “Acceptance (the variety has to be accepted by the relevant” community for use).¹⁹ Bock and Mheta are of a similar view on the four processes of standardisation that must be followed when a language is to be standardised, and they suggested that the listing of these terms does not necessarily represent the order in which these stages are reached.²⁰ The two scholars further note that language codification has to precede acceptance, and a variant is normally only chosen as the standard language because it has been codified. Similarly, acceptance should follow directly after selection because, in order for a language to be selected and codified (written down in the form of grammar, dictionaries, and so on), it needs to be accepted by the community of speakers. Yet acceptance should follow elaboration because a speech community must continue to accept the standard form once it has reached a stable stage.

Multilingualism

Multilingualism entails the ability to use more than one language. According to Mrabet, multilingualism refers to the speakers’ competence to use two or more languages and may cause problems.²¹ The present study needed to find out how this became an issue in Pretoria, and specifically, in Winterveldt, where the study was conducted. Learning many languages may lead to language shift. Furthermore, learning many languages may lead to the shift or death of the individual’s mother tongue.²² As mentioned earlier, the

¹⁴ Janet Holmes, *Women, Men and Politeness* (Routledge, 2013), 85.

¹⁵ Jeff Siegel, *The Emergence of Pidgin and Creole Languages* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 40.

¹⁶ Mohammed Salem, “Diwan ‘Deferred Betrayals’ of the Poet Mohammed Salem,” 2013, 105.

¹⁷ Salikoko S. Mufwene, “Language Evolution from an Ecological Perspective 1,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Ecolinguistics* (Routledge, 2017), 73–88.

¹⁸ Holmes, *Women, Men and Politeness*, 78-79.

¹⁹ R. A. Hudson, *Sociolinguistics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 33.

²⁰ Z. Bock, “Introduction to Semiotics. Bock, Z. and G. Mheta (Eds.). 2014,” *Language, Society and Communication: An Introduction*, 2014, 55–77.

²¹ Y. Mrabet, *Towards Natural Language Question Generation for the Validation of Ontologies and Mappings* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 2021), 1.

²² Y. Mrabet, *Towards Natural Language Question Generation for the Validation of Ontologies and Mappings* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 2021), 2.

schools where the study was conducted are in a multilingual community, and it is also vital to look at how multilingualism threatens the mother tongues of those learners to the point of them dying out. Multilingualism does not only affect learners but also goes as far as affecting the teachers as well.²³ He further suggests that teachers do not differentiate between teaching the language, teaching through the language, teaching about a language, or teaching a language and literature in that language.

Language

According to Dahvana, a language usually defines a country and its people; it is through a language that people can tell their ethnic group or the culture to which one belongs.²⁴ She continues to reiterate that it is also through language, religion, traditions, totems, cultures, and beliefs that people can differentiate themselves from others. In this vein, Hartshorne concurs with Dahvana when confirming that ‘Language is a repository and means of articulation of values, beliefs, prejudices, traditions, past achievements and history.’²⁵ The residents of Pretoria speak all the South African indigenous languages, namely, Setswana, Sesotho sa Leboa, Southern Sotho, isiZulu, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and Tshivenda. Therefore, with so many languages in a small township, it is not easy to use one standard language. Sesotho sa Leboa provides the highest percentage of interference on Setswana because it has many speakers in Winterveldt. As a result, it is not surprising to find Setswana-speaking learners in Winterveldt communicating in Sesotho sa Leboa when they are outside the classrooms. In contrast with this view, Xitsonga and Tshivenda have extremely few speakers who communicate in these languages in Winterveldt; therefore, they have little influence on the Setswana Home Language. According to Malimabe, there are extremely few Southern Sotho speakers in Pretoria; however, the impact of Sotho on composed Setswana of Grade 10 learners can be because of the widespread utilisation of Sotho in churches.²⁶ Although in the vicinity of the Bophuthatswana regions, Setswana hymn books and Bibles were utilised, which was not the case in Pretoria. Recently, churchgoers have started utilising the Bible and hymn books in their own mother tongues. However, Sotho is still the dominating language in churches particularly, in the Dutch Reformed Churches. Nguni languages (isiZulu, isiXhosa, and isiNdebele) have numerous speakers, but the influence is rather extensive, in fact, Setswana influences these languages instead. Winterveldt has more schools offering Setswana Home Language as a subject than isiZulu. Therefore, most isiZulu speakers tend to take Setswana Home Language as a subject in most schools because of the lack of schools offering the language.

Urban Contact Varieties of Language

Possible interference may be the result of using UCVs of languages such as Sepitori and Tsotsitaal. Sepitori and Tsotsitaal are not official languages and are not supposed to be spoken in formal settings. They comprise the features of several languages, namely: Setswana, Sesotho sa Leboa, isiZulu, English, and Afrikaans. People from Winterveldt adopted two UCVs, namely, Sepitori and Tsotsitaal as their lingua franca. According to Ditsele, Sepitori simply means “the language of Pretoria”. As such, it has not only become the lingua franca in black residential areas, but also serves as a marker of urbanisation and being “city-wise”.²⁷ People who migrate to Pretoria adopt it to distance themselves from their rural backgrounds. Even speakers living outside the municipal borders try to learn and speak Sepitori, not only seeking to add it to their linguistic repertoires, but also to gain the concomitant positive social features such as urbanity, street wisdom, social recognition, and coolness

Sepitori is a pidgin language. Pidgins and Creoles are languages that develop in situations where groups of people who do not share a common language, must communicate with one another.²⁸ Most literature on UCVs has focused on Tsotsitaal, looking at its emergence, history, function, and

²³ M. Cohen, “The Education of Pre-Service Teachers in Language Education” (University of Johannesburg, 2005), 1802.

²⁴ A.T. Dahvana, “The Alignment of Assessment with Teaching and Learning in the Language Learning Area in Grade 10.” (Tshwane University of Technology, 2015), 1.

²⁵ K.B. Hartshorne, “Language Policy in South Africa, 1910-1985, with Particular Reference to Medium of Instruction,” in *Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice in the English Second Language* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman (Pty) Ltd, 1987), 63.

²⁶ Refilwe Morongwa Malimabe, *The Influence of Non-Standard Varieties on the Standard Setswana of High School Pupils* (University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 1990).

²⁷ Ditsele, “Why Not Use Sepitori to Enrich the Vocabularies of Setswana and Sepedi?,” 224.

²⁸ Siegel, “Literacy in Pidgin and Creole Languages,” 143.

development in South Africa.²⁹ Tshotetsi looked at the influence of Sepitori on Setswana in Itsoseng, while Wagner examined Sepitori in Pretoria. Tsotsitaal is a slang language spoken by tsotsis in the township; and was coined from the American words.³⁰ Others maintain that the word tsotsi comes from the Sepedi word 'hotsotsa,' which means to sharpen. It is a word associated with violence and unfettered mobility.³¹ Tshotetsi asserts that Tsotsitaal is a dynamic variety of language, accommodating new words and phrases, which are regularly supplemented as they are introduced in the course of time.³² Molamu characterises Tsotsitaal as a language made up of components of Afrikaans and different dialects spoken in South Africa.³³ Tsotsitaal is an African (Urban) Youth Language (AYL) from South Africa, implying that it is a language collection or style of speaking in the vernacular, which is utilised by many South African youths, especially in the townships. It developed in Sophiatown during the 1940s during the era of politically sanctioned racial segregation.³⁴

Below are examples of how people are influenced by urban contact varieties when they communicate with each other.

Example 1: Sepitori

Byanong lona gale itsi katjeko ga tonya and neke bolela le batho bare batla botsisa gore re banyaka eng kaosane since re pallwa ke go kgopela.

Instead of

Jaanong lona ga le itse, gompieno gore go maruru gape ke ne ke bua le batho ba re ba batlile go botsa gore ba batla eng kamoso fa re retelelwa k ego kopa.

English. *Now you don't know, today it is cold, and I was talking to people wanting to know what they will need tomorrow because we can't ask.*

Example 2: Tsotsitaal

Magata a mo kasi a nyaka reye sgela, gape ko sgela mazothi a di chipi a tletse and anyaka batho bago spana and rona remo jaiveng kagore are spane and arena gedlela majita adi gedlela atlo tseyo mazothi zwaap.

Instead of

Mapodisi a mo gae a batla gore re ye sekolong, gape kwa sekolong basetsana ba bantle ba tletse mme ba batla batho ba ba dirang, rona re mo mathateng ka gore ga re dire, ga rena dijanaga, banna ba dijanaga batlile go tsaya basetsana botlhe.

English: *The police want us to go to school, and at school, there are many beautiful girls, and they want those guys who are working. We are in trouble because we are not working, and we do not have cars. Guys with cars are going to take all the girls.*

Type of interference

Malimabe indicates that these types of interference include loan words, codeswitching, and grammatical errors.³⁵

Loan words

There are many loan words from Afrikaans and English that are accepted and used in standard Setswana. Some of the words that are loan words, are there in Setswana, but most learners prefer using loan words instead of the Setswana words. It is not wrong to use these loan words, but the idioms in the Setswana language are slowly dying. Here are examples of the loan words that are mostly used.

Loan words are mostly used.

²⁹ Dumisani K Ntshangase, "The Social History of Iscamtho," *Unpublished Masters Dissertation. University of the Witwatersrand*, 1993; Molamu, *Tsotsi-Taal: A Dictionary of the Language of Sophiatown*; Mesthrie, "I've Been Speaking Tsotsitaal All My Life without Knowing It."

³⁰ Valencia K Wagner, Thabo Ditsele, and Mary M Makgato, "Influence of Sepitori on Standard Setswana of Its Home Language Learners at Three Tshwane Townships," *Literator: Journal of Literary Criticism, Comparative Linguistics and Literary Studies* 41, no. 1 (2020): 1-7.

³¹ Rosalind C Morris, "Style, Tsotsi-Style, and Tsotsitaal: The Histories, Aesthetics, and Politics of a South African Figure," *Social Text* 28, no. 2 (2010): 88-89.

³² Tshotetsi, "The Influence of Tsotsitaal on Setswana: An Investigative Study at Itsoseng in the North West Province," 20.

³³ Louis Molamu, "Wietie: The Emergence and Development of Tsotsitaal in South Africa," *Alternation* 2, no. 2 (1995): 139-58.

³⁴ Hurst, "Style, Structure and Function in Cape Town Tsotsitaal," 245.

³⁵ Malimabe, *The Influence of Non-Standard Varieties on the Standard Setswana of High School Pupils*, 15.

English/Afrikaans	Setswana
Iron (English)	Aene
Bank (Afrikaans & English)	Banka
Papier (Afrikaans)	Pampiri
Petrol (English)	Peterole
Mathematics (English)	Mathematiki
Tafel (Afrikaans)	Tafole

Loan words that have a Setswana equivalence.

Below are some loan words that have a Setswana equivalence:

Afrikaans (venster)	loan word (Lefenstere)	instead of (Letlhabaphefo)
English (Matric)	loan word (Matiriki)	instead of (Marematlou)
English (mathematics)	loan word (Mathematiki)	instead of (Dipalo)
Afrikaans (tafel)	loan word (Tafole)	instead of (Lebati la bojelo)
Afrikaans (pleit)	loan word (Poleiti)	instead of (Sejana)

Raubenheimer stated that the loaning of words has become an integral part of language development and enrichment a long time ago; it is a natural phenomenon.³⁶

Grammatical errors

Like any other standard language, Setswana has grammatical rules that need to be followed. Due to the interference of some varieties of language on the written competence of Grade 10 Setswana learners, some grammatical rules are not followed. For example:

- The wrong usage of concords

There is a different use of concords for different nouns in different classes, due to the influence of some languages, as English learners tend to use concords for different classes.

Thabo le dikgomo ba timetse (Thabo and the cows are lost)

Instead of

Thabo o timetse le dikgomo (Thabo is lost with the cows).

- The wrong usage of conjunctions

Mme o a rapela fa re robala maitseboa (Mom prays when we sleep at night).

Instead of

Mme o a rapela fa re robala bosigo (Mom prays when we sleep at night).

- The wrong usage of words in context

Mafenstere le matlhabaphefo a butswa (Windows are open).

Instead of

Mafenstere a butswa

Or

Matlhabaphefo a butswa

The first word is the loan word that is accepted to be used in Setswana; both *letlhabaphefo* and *lefenstere* refer to a window; they are, in fact, synonyms, so each can be used alone in a sentence.

- The wrong usage of passives

There is a difference between spoken language and written language; many people tend to confuse the two. This grammatical error is due to the confusion between the written and spoken language.

Example: *Mo lenyalong nama ya tlhogo e ja ke malome.*

Instead of

Ka lenyalo nama ya tlhogo e jewa ke malome (In a wedding celebration it is the uncle who eats the head).

³⁶ D. Raubenheimer, *Immigration and Bilingual Education: A Case Study of Movement of Population Language Change and Education within the EEC*. (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1983), 101.

- Direct translation

O sotla diritibatsi (He abuses drugs).

Instead of

O dirirsa diritibatsi (He/she uses drugs).

Example 2: *Ka fa tlase ga taolo ya bojalwa (under the influence of alcohol).*

Instead of

O a tagilwe /O gapa dipodi (He/she was drunk)

Code-switching

Code-switching is also another problem that influences Setswana in Winterveldt. According to Poplack, code-switching is the alteration of two languages within a single discourse and sentence.³⁷ When bilingual speakers converse, they frequently integrate linguistic material from both their languages within the same discourse segment; this process is called code-switching that has a variety of linguistic and interactional functions. It can have simple uses in expanding vocabulary.³⁸ During a visit to one of the schools in Winterveldt, the researcher realised that teachers used Setswana and English words when teaching and speaking, and learners adopted that practice with the understanding that this was the correct way of teaching and learning Setswana and also how they must communicate.

Below are examples of the sentences that were used during code-switching.

- *Koketso o tlile go tswa ka fa classeng ya me because you are making a noise and kgale ke go kgalemela. (Koketso you are going to leave my classroom because you are making a noise and I have been reprimanding you to keep quiet.).*
- *Ke kwala Setswana Monday, so ke tshwanetse go bala. (I am writing Setswana on Monday so, I must study).*
- *I am going to tell your parents so that ke go latlhise maaka (I am going to tell your parents to stop you from lying).*
- *Beke e e tlang ke graduation motho o tshwanetse ke go batla Gown le lepanta la BTech (Next week is the graduation ceremony, so I am supposed to get a gown and Btech hood).*
- *Dikolo di a bulwa kamoso and nna ga ke a kwala homework ya English (The schools are reopening tomorrow, and I did not do my English homework).*

Code-switching is a major problem in schools, and it impacts negatively on learners' performance. Learners who are taught through code-switching cannot be competent in either the speaking or writing of Standard Setswana. This research study intended to determine whether the interference of these urban varieties can influence the speaking and writing competencies of Grade 10 Setswana L1 learners in the selected high schools in Winterveldt.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following theories are included in the study because the researcher believes that they are relevant and appropriate as they present views and opinions related to this topic: These theories are the behaviourist theory of language acquisition, the social integrationist theory, and the cognitive theory to "assist the study in achieving its aims and objectives."

The Social Interactionist Theory

The social interactionist theory states that a child's acquisition of language is influenced by the contact of several factors that are linguistic, physical, and social in nature.³⁹ The principle of verbal interaction is vital for language learning and shares the notion that "the environment plays a vital role in the growth" of language. Cognitive theories agree that language learning is a complex accomplishment involving the child's cognitive participation. According to this theory, social communication "expects that language

³⁷ Shana Poplack, "Dialect Acquisition among Puerto Rican Bilinguals," *Language in Society* 7, no. 1 (1978): 89–103.

³⁸ Nancy Bonvillian, *Language, Culture, and Communication: The Meaning of Messages* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 334.

³⁹ V. Moodley, "Challenges in the Assessment of Visual Literacy across the Official Languages in South Africa," in . . . *Paper Presented at 6th Global Conference, Visual Literacies: Exploring Critical Issues* (Oxford: Mansfield College, 2013), 33.

securing is impacted by the collaboration of various elements – physical, semantic, psychological, and social."⁴⁰ This theory shares a considerable number of features with the other three theories.

From birth, children are surrounded by other people who speak with them. This correspondence has an impact on how the infant learns to speak his or her local language. Some contend that "nature" is completely in charge of how an infant learns a language, while others contend that "nurture" determines how an infant acquires his or her first language. Accordingly, social interactionists contend that the way an infant learns a language is both organic and social.⁴¹

The Cognitive Theory

Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development suggests that children move through four stages of mental development. His theory focuses on understanding how they acquire knowledge and also on understanding the nature of intelligence.⁴²

Malik suggests that Piaget's acquisition of language takes place within the context of a child's mental or cognitive development.⁴³ He argues that a child must understand a concept before he/she can acquire the language form that expresses that concept. A good example of this is unevenness. "There will be a point in a child's intellectual development "when he or she can compare objects with respect to their size. This means that if you give the child several sticks, he or she could arrange them in order of their size. Piaget suggests that a child who has not yet "reached this stage would not be able to learn and use comparative adjectives like "bigger" or "smaller." Object permanence is another phenomenon often cited in relation to the cognitive theory."⁴⁴

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted at two high schools where 56 participants were selected from Grade 10, with 28 participants from each school. The study employed a qualitative method. In this regard, two focus groups consisting of ten learners each from each school were interviewed. Similarly, class observations, constructive analysis, and text analysis were also used to collect the data.

Text Analysis

Text analysis was employed in the study where the ten participants, consisting of five Grade 10 learners from each school, were given multiple-choice questions to complete, and then their responses were analysed to identify if Sepitrori and Tsotsitaal interfered in their writing of Setswana Home Language.

Interviews

There was a focus group of ten learners, one from each school to determine their knowledge about Non-standard dialects and to test whether they could identify the possible interference of Non-standard dialects in their speaking and written competencies.

Writing task

A writing task was also used as a data collection tool. Twenty Grade 10 learners (ten from each school) were given a topic on which to write a one-page essay.

⁴⁰ D Reutzel and Robert B Cooter Jr, *Teaching Children to Read: Putting the Pieces Together* (ERIC, 2000).

⁴¹ Reutzel and Cooter Jr, *Teaching Children to Read: Putting the Pieces Together*.

⁴² Prachi Jayesh Thakkar et al., "An in Vitro Comparison of Casein Phosphopeptide-Amorphous Calcium Phosphate Paste, Casein Phosphopeptide-Amorphous Calcium Phosphate Paste with Fluoride and Casein Phosphopeptide-Amorphous Calcium Phosphate Varnish on the Inhibition of Demineralization and Promotion of Remineralization of Enamel," *Journal of Indian Society of Pedodontics and Preventive Dentistry* 35, no. 4 (2017): 312–18.

⁴³ Zunera Malik and Sham Haidar, "English Language Learning and Social Media: Schematic Learning on Kpop Stan Twitter," *E-Learning and Digital Media* 18, no. 4 (July 9, 2021): 361–82, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2042753020964589>.

⁴⁴ Thakkar et al., "An in Vitro Comparison of Casein Phosphopeptide-Amorphous Calcium Phosphate Paste, Casein Phosphopeptide-Amorphous Calcium Phosphate Paste with Fluoride and Casein Phosphopeptide-Amorphous Calcium Phosphate Varnish on the Inhibition of Demineralization and Promotion of Remineralization of Enamel."

Multiple choice questions/ comprehension question

The researcher also used a comprehension test to collect data. Twenty Grade 10 learners (ten from each school) were presented with ten multiple-choice questions. This instrument was used to collect data for research question 3 (Do learners know the difference between urban contact varieties and Setswana?)

Ethical considerations

Since the study included respondents under the age of 18, letters were given to their parents/guardians for consent. The study took place at the two selected high schools. It is on this basis that the researcher requested permission from the Department of Education to go to these different schools, the participants were informed and had to give their consent to participate in the study and their anonymity was guaranteed and assurances were given that no participant's name would be used, and participants were not deceived with regard to this study. The respondents were advised that they would not be paid, and the information would only be used for this study. Furthermore, the participants in this study were provided with sufficient information about the study. Before the data collection commenced, the participants were informed that the interviews would be tape-recorded to ensure that the exact words of the interviewees were not lost.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Essay findings (N=20)

All 20 essays were read to identify the Non-standard dialects (including phrases and clauses) and to establish the origin of such terms. The Non-standard dialects that were researched mainly emerged from Setswana, Northern Sotho, and isiZulu as it is a mixed language that developed from contact between these languages. As such, it is difficult to differentiate between these Non-standard dialects and Standard Setswana. As is the case with Setswana, Non-standard dialects also comprised adoptive phrases that were mainly drawn from English and Afrikaans.

It was found that the majority of learners (85 % or 17/20) wrote UCV terms in their essays. A minority of 15 % or 3 out of 20 did not use UCV terms or rather they used Setswana terms. Of the three who did not write any Sepitori/Tsotsitaal terms in their essays, two were from school A, one from school B. Based on the number of Setswana HL speakers in Winterveldt, one would have expected that these schools would have had the highest number of learners who did not use any Non-standard dialects in their essays, but that was not the case as these schools had the lowest number of learners who used/wrote Non-standard dialects in their essays.

Interview Findings (N=14)

Ten Setswana Grade 10 learners from School A and School B were interviewed on their knowledge and understanding of the Non-standard dialects and their influence on the written and spoken performance of Setswana Grade 10 learners. They were also asked in which language they preferred to communicate at school and at home, as a follow-up to the questions they were asked on the difference between Non-standard dialects and Setswana. Some of these influences and differences were discussed in the literature review. These participants were selected because they are the most common ones. The questions were structured in such a way that Setswana Grade 10 HL learners understood and could respond to them and that they were based on Non-standard dialects and their influence on Setswana as discussed in the literature review.

Learners findings (N=10)

In total, ten Grade 10 learners were interviewed, five from School A (south of Winterveldt) and five from School B (west of Winterveldt). This was done in focus groups of five each, where both the schools used for sampling were represented.

Question 1: What is the difference between non-standard dialects and Setswana?

Most learners, 90% or nine out of ten, felt there is no difference between Non-standard dialects and Setswana. The remaining learners thought there were differences; accordingly, she substantiated her argument based on the following reasons.

- *Non-standard dialects are not standardised, so they are not allowed to be used in formal settings, you get penalised when you use Non-standard dialects instead of Setswana.*
- *Non-standard dialects are not official, and Setswana is an official language.*

Question 2: What can be done to promote the use of Setswana in schools and maintain its official status?

There was a 50/50 response to this question; 50% of the learners felt that something could be done to promote the use of Setswana in school and discussed different ways of maintaining its official status.

“There are several ways of promoting the use of Setswana, for instance; we can have monthly Setswana awards to encourage us to speak Setswana at all times in class and during lunchtime outside class and also at home with our parents and friends. We can also read more Setswana books in school. If we practise this effectively, we can also maintain its official status” (LM2).

“We can promote the use of Setswana in schools by at least having more Setswana writers; we have few Setswana writers; everyone who becomes a writer these days chooses to write in English. We can also learn the importance of Setswana and its roots to help maintain its official status” (LF7).

“There are a few ways of promoting the use of Setswana in schools and help maintain its official status. These include having native Setswana speakers as our teachers. Our Setswana teachers are not native Setswana speakers; they even use Sepitori examples in formal Setswana classes” (LF1).

“We can promote the use of Setswana if we limit the use of Non-standard dialects in school or stop communicating in Non-standard dialects at all” (LF9).

“I think the use of Setswana can be promoted by having Setswana competitions in schools, such as essay writing competitions or Setswana spelling bee competitions” (LF8).

The remaining 50% or five out of ten learners felt nothing could be done to promote the use of Setswana in schools and thought there was no need to maintain its official status. Below are their responses:

“There is nothing that can be done to promote the use of Setswana in schools. Setswana already receives the attention it deserves, and Setswana is not a language to be promoted it is not that important” (LM3).

“I think there is no need to promote Setswana use or even try to maintain its official status because Setswana is just an indigenous language; it is not a lingua franca and not the language of power” (LM4).

“We cannot try to promote the language that is already dead; we cannot ignore the growth of Non-standard dialects; our focus must be on the growth of Non-standard dialects, not trying to promote the use of dying language” (LM5).

“There is no need to promote the use of Setswana and maintain its official status, we should pay more attention in the languages that are developing like Sepitori and the likes of Tsotsitaal” (LF10).

(LM8) “Language is dynamic; we should focus on the language or varieties that are developing and not on promoting Setswana. The generation that is born now is exposed to Sepitori/Tsotsitaal; I think they should just accept Sepitori and Tsotsitaal for use during Setswana lessons, in essays and during presentations.”

This finding is supported by Ditsele (2014) when he suggests that Sepitori terms are used to enhance the Sepedi and Setswana vocabulary.

Question 3: In which language can you best express yourself? Explain

Four learners responded that they could express themselves the best in English, and they felt comfortable with using English to communicate. Below are their responses.

“I can best express myself in English because English is a lingua franca; when communicating in English, there is no need for you to explain or say the same thing twice” (LF1).

“English is the language I am comfortable communicating in because English is the language of power, and it has the status” (LF7).

“I can express myself best in English because English is the language of the literate and the educated; when you communicate in English, people respect you” (LF8).

“I prefer communicating in English because of the power and status it yields” (LM4).

Another four learners indicated that they could communicate the best in Sepitori and Tsotsitaal, as can be seen in their responses below:

“I can best express myself in Sepitori and Tsotsitaal because I am from Pretoria and those are the languages I was born into and the languages that we use at home” (LM5).

“Sepitori and Tsotsitaal are the languages I can best express myself in because they are spoken in my society; everyone in my area uses Sepitori and Tsotsitaal to communicate” (LM6).

“Sepitori and Tsotsitaal because they are cool. When you communicate using them, you are regarded as cool and many people from the hood respect you wantshwara” (LM10).

“I can best express myself ka Sepitori ka gore Sepitori se tsentsha bantwaneng, and it is the language I acquired from birth and gape Sepitori ke stele” (LM9).

Two remaining learners indicated they could best express themselves in Setswana (LF2 and LM3), both from School A (North of Winterveldt).

“I can best express myself in Setswana, and I prefer using Setswana to communicate because it is the standard language, and I am proud of it, I also do not want it to die” (LF2).

“Setswana is the language I can best express myself with because it is my native language and both my parents are Batswana, I speak it at home, at school and with my friends” (LM3).

Question 4: Can you differentiate between Setswana and UCV? Give an example.

An overwhelming majority, 70 % or seven out of ten learners, felt there is no difference between Setswana and Non-standard dialects, and were surprised that that question was asked. Three remaining learners were able to tell the difference between Non-standard dialects and Setswana with reference to the following responses and some examples.

(LF1) “There are differences between Non-standard dialects and Setswana; the first difference is that Setswana is standardised, and UCs are not. Secondly, Setswana terms are used in formal writing and are used during oral presentations and Non-standard dialects can only be used in informal settings, for instance, in a formal setting, you can use the Setswana word (batla) and the UCV term (nyaka) in an informal setting; they both mean the same thing.”

(LF2) “The difference between Non-standard dialects and Setswana is that Non-standard dialects are used by educated and illiterate people whereas Setswana or the standard language is used by educated and literate people.”

LM3 Abstained from answering the question.

Question 5: Do you think learning Setswana is important? Explain.

Most learners (80 %, or eight out of ten learners,) felt that it is not important to learn Setswana or any other Bantu languages, for that matter. Below are their responses:

(LM6) *“It is not important to learn Setswana because it is not the language of power. No one will respect you for speaking Setswana or any other indigenous languages for that matter.”*

(LF8) *“I don’t think it is important to learn Setswana because, language is dynamic, and I think English is the only language that is static. Setswana changes every day, and there are many varieties that are more similar to Setswana, so that makes it difficult to learn Setswana or the standard varieties of a language.”*

(LF2) *“I don’t think it is important to learn Setswana, because I am not a Motswana, I just do Setswana as an HL because there is no Xitsonga school in Winterveldt, and I am a Tsonga-speaking person.”*

(LF4) *“It is not important to learn Setswana because it is only spoken by a few people”.*

(LM5) *“It is not important to learn Setswana because of where it is originated, despite the fact that it is an official language, it is a foreign language we all know that Setswanas come from Botswana, and not South Africa.”*

(LM7) *I don’t think it is important to learn Setswana because Setswana doesn’t have the status.*

(LM10) *It is not important to learn Setswana because Setswana is being replaced by Sepitori and other Non-standard dialects; those who are born in this generation they are born into Sepitori and the language that they acquire first is Sepitori.”*

The remaining two felt it is important to learn Setswana because of the following reasons:

(LM9) *“Well, for me, I think it is important because I love it, and besides loving it, it is important to learn Setswana for communicative purposes.”*

(LF1) *“It is important if you want to continue with it to become a professional teacher of it.”*

Table 1: High frequency of non-standard terms

Non-standard terms	Frequency	Setswana	English
Monyako	15	Mojako	Door
Tsotsi	15	Senokwane	Criminal
Banyana	15	Basetsana	Girls
Batswadi	13	Batsadi	Parents
Byang	13	Jaang	How
Thaba	12	Itumela	Happy
Nyaka	11	Batla	Want
Tseba	11	Itse	Know
Dintshang	11	Go diragalang?	What is going on?
Flopo	10	Bothata	Problem
Techere	9	Morutabana	Teacher
Prinspala	8	Mogokgo	Principal
Fru	8	Meso	Morning
Katjeko	8	Gompieno	Today
Chelete	6	Madi	Money

Besides this high frequency of UCV terms, some learners used loan words. Raubenheimer suggests that loaning words became an integral part of language development and enrichment a long time ago and is regarded as a natural phenomenon.⁴⁵ Table 4.3 presents five loan words that learners used during their presentations.

Table 2: Loan words

Loaned terms	Original terms	Language loan from	Setswana terms
Matiriki	Matric	English	Marematlou
Tafole	Tafel	Afrikaans	Lebati la bojelo
Poleiti	Plate	English	Sejanaga
Tura	Duur	Afrikaans	Tlhotlwagodimo
Patella	Betal	Afrikaans	Duela
Bereka	Werk	Afrikaans	Dira
Afota	Afford	English	Bokgoni jwa go duela
Polane	Plan	English	Leano
Flopa	Flop	English	Dira phoso
Kereya	Kry	Afrikaans	Fitlhela

There were also UCV clauses and phrases that were common amongst all ten learners across both schools. Table 4.4 presents the phrases and clauses that most learners used during their oral presentations.

Table 3: UCV clauses/ phrases

UCV clauses/phrases	Setswana equivalence	English equivalence
Banyana ba katjeko ba botsisa thata ka dilo tsa kaosane	Basetsana ba gompieno ba botsa thata ka dilo tsa segompieno	The girls of today ask too much about the things of tomorrow
Magata a mo kasi a spana jampas go tshwara majita a utswang digedlela.	Mapodisi a mo gae a dira bosigo go tshwara banna ba ba utswang dikoloi/ dijanaga.	Police from homework at night to arrest guys who steal cars.
Mazothi zwap a nyaka motho o a spanang	Basetsana botlhe ba batla motho yo o dirang.	All girls want a guy who is working.

Multiple choice test findings (N=14)

Text analysis was also employed in this study, accordingly, ten Grade 10 learners, five from each school, were given a multiple test to complete, and then their tests were analysed to check whether learners knew the difference between Non-standard dialects and Setswana. The multiple choices were created in a way that Grade 10 Setswana learners understood and could complete.

An overwhelming majority of the learners (70%, or 7 out of 10) failed the multiple-choice test, this means that only 30%, or 3 out of 10 passed the multiple-choice test; of the three that passed the multiple-choice test, two came from School A and one from School B. even though of the 30 % of the learners who had passed, no one got more than 55 % for their tests. Based on these findings, it is evident that learners could not identify UCV terms, and what is more, they could not differentiate between the Non-standard dialects and Setswana.

According to the data, it is evident that Non-standard dialects had a significant influence on the written and spoken outputs of the learners and most learners and teachers could not differentiate.

⁴⁵ Raubenheimer, *Immigration and Bilingual Education: A Case Study of Movement of Population Language Change and Education within the EEC*, 101.

DISCUSSION

The following table presents seven Non-standard dialects that appeared in all the essays across the two schools. These terms which are not acceptable in the formal writing of Setswana, emerged from Northern Sotho, isiZulu, and Afrikaans.

Table 4: Urban contact variety terms that appeared the most in essays.

UCV terms	Number of appearances	Setswana	English
1 Byanong	15	Jaanong	Now
2 Nyaka	17	Batla	Want
3 Sgela	5	Sekolo	School
4 kaosane	11	Kamoso	Tomorrow
5 Kgopela	11	Kopa	Ask
6 Botsisa	12	Botsa	Ask
7 Magata	5	Mapodisi	Police

There were cases where learners used Sepitori/Tsotsitaal terms (byanong) in one paragraph and Setswana one (jaanong) in another paragraph. This case suggested that they had acquired Sepitori and Setswana terms that are synonymous, but thought they were both acceptable in the formal writing of Setswana. Nkosi notes that learners do not know the difference between Sepitori and Northern Sotho; a solution to this is the suggestion made by Ditsele that Sepitori terms should be used to enhance the Setswana and Northern Sotho vocabulary.⁴⁶ The data also suggested that the Setswana written by female learners is better in comparison with how or what the Setswana male learners write. This finding is supported by Xia, who suggests that females pay more attention to using standard language than men do.⁴⁷

UCV terms as used by people from Pretoria are written, and some are pronounced like the Setswana terms, for example, *byala* (alcohol) *banyana* (girls), *techere* (teacher), *plane* (plan) and *bereka* (work). These UCV terms are static because they sound like Setswana words and influence the usage of words in the standard language, but at the same time, they are dynamic because their meanings are known and comprehensible to the people of Pretoria only. The static and dynamic elements of UCVs as far as the teaching and learning of Setswana are concerned as was confirmed by both teachers and learners.

Discussion Summary

Non-standard dialects are spoken by anybody, anywhere and in any form. The standard language, which educated and literate people speak, is used in schools, in the media, and in formal settings. All eleven South African languages, namely, English, Setswana, isiZulu, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, isiNdebele, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiSwati, Afrikaans and isiXhosa, have the same status and recognition in the sense that no language is dominant over the other. All of them are regarded as official languages and nothing is said about these Non-standard dialects. However, it is important to note that there is a difference between spoken and written language; while the spoken language is informal, the written language is formal. The spoken language influences the written language in the sense that a person normally writes what he/she actually speaks, in the spoken language that does not apply the grammar or the syntax rules of the language. The vocabulary of learners contains non-standard dialect terms, and when used in sentences, are relevant to the meaning of these Non-standard dialects, thus demonstrating the fact that Non-standard dialects contain Setswana terms, and this influences Setswana.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions the following recommendations can be made:

- The government and the Department of Education must employ or rather hire native Setswana speakers to teach Setswana home language.

⁴⁶ Duduzile Faith Nkosi, "The Technological Process as Framework for the Improvement of Instruction of Technology" (University of Johannesburg, 2008);Ditsele, "Why Not Use Sepitori to Enrich the Vocabularies of Setswana and Sepedi?,"224.

⁴⁷ Xiufang Xia, "Gender Differences in Using Language.," *Theory & Practice in Language Studies (TPLS)* 3, no. 8 (2013).

- The media must increase programmes promoting the importance of Setswana, so that people can be encouraged to use Setswana in public and in the school without feeling illiterate and must be taught the importance of language maintenance.
- Learners must be encouraged to read more Setswana materials and must listen to and watch Setswana shows.
- When learners do not understand certain aspects in the Setswana classes, teachers must not speak Sepitori to make the learners understand.
- The use of non-standard dialects must be minimised in schools to reduce its influence on Setswana.
- Non-standard dialects words should be adopted into Setswana so that learner's performance in class can improve.
- The Sepitori and Tsotsitaal should both be standardised.

CONCLUSION

This article has investigated the impact of non-standard dialects on Grade 10 learners at the two selected high schools in Winterveldt concerning writing Setswana and how to improve the written competency of Setswana Home Language (HL) learners. The findings have revealed that Non-standard dialects affect the language acquisition of urban children. The child acquires a colloquial language naturally, this has an effect when learners are faced with tasks and assignments where the knowledge of Standard Setswana is required. In this regard, learners from two schools at Winterveldt were given a multiple-choice test task and an essay to write. It was found that most learners did not pass these Setswana tasks instead of using standard language in their tasks they used non-standard dialects. This poor scholastic result can be attributed and ascribed to UCVs, especially Sepitori and Tsotsitaal. It is evident that UCVs pose a serious threat to the standard language, Setswana in particular because they interfere with the standard language. Hence, various recommendations have been provided to provide solutions to this challenge and to guide policy implementation.

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