

# Possible Interference of Urban Contact Varieties in Speaking and Writing Setswana of Grade 10 Learners: A Study at Winterveldt



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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to describe the type and the extent of interference of urban contact varieties (UCVs) in speaking and writing Setswana of Grade 10 learners and how to improve the performance of Setswana Home Language learners. The study was conducted at two high schools where 30 participants were selected from Grade 10 and two Setswana educators from each school. The study employed a qualitative method, two focus groups consisting of ten learners each from each school and four Setswana educators were interviewed. Similarly, class observations and text analysis were also used to collect the data. It was found that most learners do not pass Setswana. This poor scholastic result can be attributed and ascribed to UCVs, especially Sepitori. It is evident that UCVs pose a serious threat to language, Setswana in particular because they interfere with the standard language. The study findings provided insights to the Department of Education about the challenges that Setswana L1 learners encountered that prevented them from excelling in Setswana HL at high schools due to the possible interference of UCVs. Based on the findings the following recommendations can be made. The media must increase programmes promoting the importance of Setswana so that people can be encouraged to use Setswana in public and school without feeling illiterate and must be taught the importance of language maintenance and UCV words should be adopted into Setswana so that learner's performance in class can improve.

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## INTRODUCTION

Winterveldt is a small township situated in Pretoria and has a large population. It is occupied by residents who speak all the South African indigenous languages, namely English, Afrikaans, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Setswana, Sepedi, Sesotho, and Nguni languages (isiZulu, isiNdebele, and isiXhosa). Consequently, the convergence of all these language speakers situated in Pretoria has led to the use of Sepitori (Pretoria Sotho) and Tsotsitaal. Ditsele and Mann believe that there is undisputed evidence that the use of the so-called UCVs 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.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thabo Ditsele and Charles Mann, "Language Contact in African Urban Settings: The Case of Sepitori in Tshwane," *South African Journal of African Languages* 34 (March 2014): 159–65, 159. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2014.997052>.

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.<sup>2</sup> The motivation for the research arose because of the observations made during the researcher’s years of study in one of the high schools and as one of the residents of Winterveldt. These observations led to the conclusion that learners use UCVs to communicate at home and school instead of Setswana. These languages affect the performance of learners in subjects, especially Setswana L1, because learners are exposed to these languages from birth, and parents communicate with their children using these UCVS (Sepitori & Tsotsitaal). Accordingly, they do not see the need for speaking standard Setswana. This affects their Setswana performance at school and could also cause the extinction of the standard Setswana, which they must promote by communicating in it at home and school. 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 Lambert 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.<sup>3</sup> 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 we live today plays a vital role in which language we become competent.

Undoubtedly, learner’s competence in their mother tongues is decreasing due to these UCVs. 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.<sup>4</sup>

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.”<sup>5</sup> 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, it may be more beneficial to encourage the cross-use vocabulary for learners of Setswana L1 who use a vocabulary used in one and not the other language. 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.<sup>6</sup>

Some scholars have researched the rapid growth of UCVs and how they bestow a high status and coolness on such speakers, and also how they should be accepted and adopted into standard Setswana. Even though UCVs 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 UCVs of language. Instead of focusing on the rapidly growing UCVs, 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.

Importantly, people appear to associate Tsotsitaal with criminal activities.<sup>7</sup> The history of Tsotsitaal is linked to the development of gangs. In the 1930s, in the freehold townships of the western

<sup>2</sup> Jeff Siegel, “Literacy in Pidgin and Creole Languages,” *Current Issues in Language Planning* 6, no. 2 (May 15, 2005): 143–63, 143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664200508668278>.

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

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

<sup>5</sup> Thabo Ditsele, “Why Not Use Sepitori to Enrich the Vocabularies of Setswana and Sepedi?,” *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 32 (April 1, 2014): 215–28, 224. <https://doi.org/10.2989/16073614.2014.992652>.

<sup>6</sup> Ditsele, “Why Not Use Sepitori to Enrich the Vocabularies of Setswana and Sepedi?,” April 1, 2014. 224.

<sup>7</sup> Kgomoetso Jennifer Tshotetsi, “The Influence of Tsotsitaal on Setswana: An Investigative Study at Itsoseng in the North West Province,” 2016.

areas, youth gangs emerged because of the bleak economic prospects that young men faced in the townships. These gang members used a specific style inspired by American films, magazines, comics, and fashions.<sup>8</sup> These gangs' style was expressed in their clothing, nicknames for individuals and gangs, and Tsotsitaal.<sup>9</sup> Tsotsitaal emerged in the Western native township, Sophiatown. At that time, it frequently consisted of a mixture of Afrikaans grammatical base, supplemented by a lexicon characterised by borrowings from the Bantu languages. Furthermore, Tshotetsi believes that Tsotsitaal made its way to Soweto after the Soweto uprising in 1976. In turn, Makhudu, in Mesthrie believes that tsotsitaal originated because of language contact within multilingual settings in 19th-century South Africa. Accordingly, Tsotsitaal is associated with the townships.<sup>10</sup>

The main aim of the study was, first, to find out if there was an interference about the UCVS concerning the speaking and writing competence of Setswana L1 Grade 10 learners. Second, this study tried to formulate ways of preventing this interference and promoting the use of Setswana L1 in schools so that it maintains its official status. To achieve the aims mentioned above, the following objectives were realised, namely, to:

- Examine the possible interference of UCVs with the speaking and writing competence of Setswana L1 Grade 10 learners.
- Determine the differences between the UCVs and Setswana.
- Determine the roles that educators and learners can play in preventing the interference of the UCVs on Setswana HL.
- Explore ways of promoting the use of standard Setswana in schools so that it maintains its official status.

This section provided the context of this study, which included the background and rationale, the aims and objectives, the population and sample, the anticipated problems, the research methods, the language phenomena relevant to this study and the ethical issues in brief. The following section will discuss the theoretical framework and review the literature related to the topic of study.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the theoretical framework and the literature review related to the topic of this study are discussed. 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.

This means that in this section, the researcher examined the role played by other researchers who studied the topic previously to investigate the influence of Sepitori and Tsotsitaal in other South African indigenous languages and not Setswana per se.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The Behaviourist Theory of Language Acquisition, The Social Integrationist Theory, and the Cognitive Theory were used as the framework to achieve the study's aims and objectives.

### Behaviourist theory of language acquisition

All learning, whether verbal or non-verbal, takes place through the same underlying process. Learners receive linguistic input from speakers in their environment, and positive reinforcement for correct repetitions and imitations. As a result, language habits are formed.<sup>11</sup> The behaviourist theory accepts that "newborn children take in the oral language from other human good examples through procedures, including impersonation, rewards, and practice. Human good examples in a newborn child's life, condition, give, boosts and rewards."<sup>12</sup> At the point when a student is learning the oral language or copies

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<sup>8</sup> Barney G Glaser, "The Grounded Theory Perspective: Conceptualization Contrasted with Description.," (*No Title*), 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Glaser, "The Grounded Theory Perspective: Conceptualization Contrasted with Description," 70.

<sup>10</sup> R. Mesthrie, "From Second Language to First Language: Indian South African English," in *Language in South Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 337–55. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511486692.018>.

<sup>11</sup> Patsy Lightbown and Nina Spada, *How Languages Are Learned* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 23.

<sup>12</sup> D. Ray Reutzel and R.B. Cooter, *Teaching Children to Read: Putting the Pieces Together*, 4th ed. (Merril/Prentice-Hall, 2004).

the sounds or discourse patterns, they are normally applauded and given recognition for their endeavours. In this way, recognition and fondness turn into prizes. Be that as it may, the behaviourist theory is examined for various reasons. If prizes play such a fundamental segment in language improvement, should something not be said about the parent who is negligent or not present when the kid endeavours discourse? The question could be asked if the discourse attempts would stop in the absence of rewards should an infant's language learning be motivated by rewards.<sup>13</sup> Different bodies of evidence against this theory incorporate "learning the utilization and significance of theoretical words, proof of novel types of language not demonstrated by others, and consistency of language obtaining in people."<sup>14</sup> The language acquisition theory also applies in Winterveldt, where children hear and imitate the varieties of languages to which they are exposed, in this case, Sepitori and Tsotsitaal.

### **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.<sup>15</sup> 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 securing is impacted by the collaboration of various elements – physical, semantic, psychological, and social."<sup>16</sup> 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 affects 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 how an infant learns a language is both organic and social.<sup>17</sup>

### **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.<sup>18</sup>

Malik suggests that Piaget's acquisition of language takes place within the context of a child's mental or cognitive development.<sup>19</sup> 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."<sup>20</sup>

### **Background on Urban Contact Varieties (UCVS)**

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.

<sup>13</sup> Reutzel and Cooter, *Teaching Children to Read: Putting the Pieces Together*. .

<sup>14</sup> Reutzel and Cooter, *Teaching Children to Read: Putting the Pieces Together*. .

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> Reutzel and Cooter, *Teaching Children to Read: Putting the Pieces Together*. .

<sup>17</sup> Reutzel and Cooter, *Teaching Children to Read: Putting the Pieces Together*. .

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> 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>.

<sup>20</sup> 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."

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 contributions to UCVs.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup>

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Text analysis***

Text analysis was employed in the study. 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 check if learners knew the differences between UCVs and standard Setswana.

### **Interviews**

A focus group of ten learners, one from each school and four teachers, two from each high school, were interviewed to determine their knowledge about UCVs and to test whether they could identify the possible interference of UCVs in their speaking and writing competencies.

### **Observations**

During the observations, ten learners, five from each school, were given a topic to present on and a tape recorder was used to collect the data.

### **Oral presentations and rubric**

The researcher also used an oral presentation. Ten Grade 10 learners (five from each school) were given a topic for an oral presentation in Setswana for a minute each. The presentations were assessed with a rubric by the researcher. This research instrument was used to address research Question 1 (What is the possible interference of UCVs in the oral performance in the Setswana Home Language of Grade 10 learners?).

### **Writing task**

A writing task was 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. Accordingly, their essays were analysed to address research question 1 (what is the possible interference of UCVs in the written performance in the Setswana home language of Grade 10 learners?).

### **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?).

## **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

### **Essay findings (N=20)**

All 20 essays were read to identify the UCVs (including phrases and clauses) and to establish the origin of such terms. The UCVs researched mainly emerged from Setswana, Northern Sotho, and isiZulu as it

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<sup>21</sup> Chris Hurst, "The Multiplicative Situation," *Australian Primary Mathematics Classroom* 20, no. 3 (2015): 10–16.

<sup>22</sup> Hurst, "The Multiplicative Situation"; Thabo Ditsele, "Why Not Use Sepitori to Enrich the Vocabularies of Setswana and Sepedi?," *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 32 (March 2014): 215–28, <https://doi.org/10.2989/16073614.2014.992652>; 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, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110891614.119>.

is a mixed language that developed from contact between these languages. As such, it is difficult to differentiate between these UCVs and Standard Setswana. As is the case with Setswana, UCVs 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 but used Setswana terms. Of the three who did not write any Sepitori/Tsotsitaal terms in their essays, two were from school A, and 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 UCVs in their essays, but that was not the case as these schools had the lowest number of learners who used/wrote UCVs in their essays.

The following table presents seven UCVs in all the essays across the two schools. These terms, which are not formally accepted writing of Setswana, emerged from Northern Sotho, isiZulu, and Afrikaans.

**Table 1: 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. This case suggested that they had acquired synonymous Sepitori and Setswana terms 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.<sup>23</sup> The data also suggested that the Setswana written by female learners is better than 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.<sup>24</sup>

### **Interview Findings (N=14)**

Four teachers and ten Setswana Grade 10 learners from School A and School B were interviewed on their knowledge and understanding of the UCVs 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 home, as a follow-up to the questions they were asked on the difference between UCVs 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 teachers and Grade 10 learners understood and could respond to them and that they were based on UCVs and their influence on Setswana as discussed in the literature review.

### **Teachers findings (N=4)**

The following questions were posed to four teachers in face-to-face interviews. The four Grade 10 Setswana teachers that were interviewed comprised two from School A and two from School B, which were sampled, and the findings are also presented.

<sup>23</sup> 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?," March 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Xiufang Xia, "Gender Differences in Using Language.," *Theory & Practice in Language Studies (TPLS)* 3, no. 8 (2013).

**Question 1: Is there any other language that learners often speak other than Setswana in the classroom during the Setswana lesson? Give a reason.**

All four Setswana teachers responded that most learners started the lesson communicating in Setswana since this was a Setswana lesson. They also mentioned that when they became comfortable during the lessons, they started communicating using Sepitori and Tsotsitaal. T1 in school A reported that learners used Sepitori during the Setswana lessons, and they did not see anything wrong with this practice. T2 and T3 from School B shared that female learners used Setswana during the Setswana lessons, while male learners used Sepitori and Tsotsitaal during Setswana lessons more frequently than female learners. It is, therefore, evident that Setswana female learners paid more attention to standard languages in contrast with the Setswana male learners. This is because of the attitude they had towards the indigenous languages, and another reason was the influence of the environment in which they lived where Setswana was being influenced by the non-standard varieties that the community communicates in their everyday lives.

**Question 2: In your opinion, do you think that learners previously acquired languages influence their learning Setswana.**

Three out of the four teachers believed that learners had previously acquired languages that influenced their learning Setswana. The main reasons they provided were as follows:

*“Yes, because language and society are inseparable; the language that we communicate in is influenced by the society we live in, Winterveldt is occupied by people who speak different languages, and as a result, they communicate using non-standard languages in order to understand each other. Learners from this area tend to acquire the non-standard language and use it in school, and this influences their learning Setswana”* (T3 from School B).

*“Absolutely, because learners learn Sepitori/Tsotsitaal as a first language and that makes it difficult for them to learn standard Setswana”* (T2 from School A).

*“I think learners previously acquired languages influenced their learning Setswana, because most learners from Winterveldt are not native Setswana speakers, in my class for instance I have isiZulu and Sepedi native speakers since the UCVs emerge from these languages; these learners mostly use UCVs in class, since their first acquired languages are not Setswana”* (T1 from School A).

The remaining teachers felt that the learners' previously acquired languages did not influence their learning of Setswana because learners could learn more than one language and could be competent in it regardless of their acquired languages. (T4 from School B)

**Question 3: Do you think learners can be able to differentiate between standard Setswana and urban contact varieties (UCVs)? Explain why**

Three teachers felt that learners could not differentiate standard Setswana and UCVs. Their reason was that when marking learners' essays and during the oral presentations, they come across Sepitori and Tsotsitaal terms. This is because learners do not speak the standard language, so they would not understand the difference. These findings are supported by Tegegne (2015: 267) when he/she points out that many materials that are used in schools are prepared in the standard language and learners who speak the standard language, therefore, it is easier for them to read and understand the standard language and UCVs. Teacher 3 From School B abstained from answering this question.

**Question 4: What is the possible interference of UCVs in speaking and writing Setswana by Grade 10 learners?**

Two teachers, T1 from School A and T3 from School B, felt there was no interference with regard to UCVs in speaking and writing in Setswana of Grade 10 learners. They provided the following reasons:

*“There is no interference of UCVs in speaking and writing Setswana, yes, these UCVs are growing, but they don't interfere in learning Setswana. I have learners in my class who come*

*from families where both parents are not Tswana and communicate using Sepitori/Tsotsitaal, but they excel in writing and speaking Setswana” (T1 from School A).*

*“No, I don’t think there are inferences of UCVs in writing and speaking Setswana. Learners choose which language they use for example when we were just having an informal conversation with learners in class they use informal or UCVs terms, but when it comes to oral presentations or essay writing they use formal/ Standard language. This proves that there is no interference of UCVs in writing and speaking Setswana” (T3 from School B).*

The remaining two teachers T2 from School A and T4 from School B, felt that there was possible interference of UCVs in speaking and writing Setswana and also cited some examples.

*“The possible interference of UCVs can be on the loan words, there are many loan words from Afrikaans and English that are accepted and used in Setswana some of the words that are loan words are there in Setswana, but most learners prefer using loan words instead of Setswana words, for instance, learners prefer to use loan words (lefenstere) instead of Setswana word (letlhabaphefo.” (T2 from School A).*

*“This interference of UCVs includes grammatical errors. Learners do not follow Setswana grammatical rules when writing and speaking due to these UCVs, for instance, they use the wrong concords or the wrong conjunctions, and some learners code-switch between Setswana and these UCVs” (T4 from School B).*

***Question 5: How can learners be made aware of the difference between the UCVs of languages and Setswana?***

T2 and T4 stated that learners know the difference between UCVs and Setswana. T2 said that learners knew the difference; they just chose to be ignorant and use UCV terms anyway. T4 felt learners knew the difference because when they communicated in an informal setting, they used the standard language. T3 felt that learners could be made aware of the difference by penalising them when they use UCV terms instead of Setswana terms, *“I used to not penalise them, I only show and highlighted the correct words in Setswana. We can also encourage learners to read more Setswana books.”*

T1 suggested that learners should be given multiple choice tests to test their knowledge of the difference between these UCVs and Setswana and they should also be educated on the Setswana terms that are allowed or rather accepted in formal writing and during oral presentations.

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

Three teachers discussed ways of promoting the use of the Setswana language and maintaining its official status. One teacher felt nothing could be done to encourage the use of Setswana in schools and thought there was no need to maintain its official status.

*“I think we should minimise the use of UCVs in schools. This will reduce the influence on Setswana and also promote the use of Setswana and maintain its official status. We cannot afford to lose our beautiful indigenous language because if we lose it, we lose our culture since cannot separate language and culture” (T3 from School A).*

*“There are certain ways to promote the use of Setswana and promote its official status, for instance, we can educate learners and teachers on the importance of Setswana and encourage them to read more Setswana books. Also, during parent meetings, communicate in Setswana with parents, and also appeal to parents to use Setswana when communicating with learners both in informal and formal settings. Letters to parents and staff should be written in Setswana and, lastly, penalise learners who use UCVs terms in class. If we practice these ways, our language will maintain its official status” (T2 from School A).*

*“I think if Setswana HL is given the same treatment and attention as other subjects like maths, physics, life sciences and accounting, it will promote the use of Setswana, for example, these*

*subjects are given eight hours or more per week and Setswana is given four hours or less per week, so this simply means Setswana is not taken seriously.”*

*“Nothing can be done to promote the use of Setswana in school, Setswana is already influenced by Sepitori and a bit of Tsotsitaal, most learners and students prefer using Sepitori or English to communicate instead of trying to maintain its official status. I think we should focus on accepting the use of these UCVs because most learners who do not use Setswana, as a home language, in school are not Batswana and also language is dynamic, [so] we should make peace with the development of UCVs.”*

### **Learners Findings (N=10)**

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 urban contact varieties (UCV) and Setswana?**

The majority of learners, 90% or nine out of ten, felt there was no difference between UCVs and Setswana. The remaining learners thought there were differences. Accordingly, a respondent substantiated her argument based on the following reasons.

- *UCVs are not standardised, so they are not allowed to be used in formal settings, you get penalised when you use UCVs instead of Setswana.*
- *UCVs 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 helping 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 UCVs in school or stop communicating in UCVs 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 the 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 UCVs; our focus must be on the growth of UCVs, not trying to promote the use of a dying language” (LM5).*

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

*“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 are exposed to Sepitori/Tsotsitaal; I think they should just accept Sepitori and Tsotsitaal for use during Setswana lessons, in essays and during presentations” (LM8)*

This finding is supported by Ditsele who argued that Sepitori terms are used to enhance the Sepedi and Setswana vocabulary.<sup>25</sup>

### **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 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).*

Four learners, however, indicated that they could communicate 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).*

The remaining two 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).*

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<sup>25</sup> Ditsele, “Why Not Use Sepitori to Enrich the Vocabularies of Setswana and Sepedi?,” March 2014.

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

An overwhelming majority, 70 % or seven out of ten learners, thought that there is no difference between Setswana and UCVs and were surprised that that question was asked.

Two learners were however able to tell the difference between UCVs and Setswana with reference to the following responses and some examples.

*“There are differences between UCVs 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 UCVs 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.” (LF1)*

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

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:

*“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.” (LM6)*

*“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 many varieties are more similar to Setswana, so that makes it difficult to learn Setswana or the standard varieties of a language.” (LF8)*

*“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.” (LF2)*

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

*“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.” (LM5)*

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

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

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

*“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.” (LM9)*

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

### Oral Presentation Findings (N=10)

Learners were given a topic on which to do an oral presentation; each of the ten learners was recorded when presenting to identify UCV terms, clauses, and phrases to establish the language from which such terms were driven.

The majority of learners (80 %, or 8 out of 10) spoke or rather used Sepitori terms during their presentation, albeit to varying degrees. This means that a small minority (20%, or 2 out of 10) did not use UCV terms during their presentation; both came from School A (south of Winterveldt). High-frequency UCV terms, which are not acceptable in formal Setswana presentations, were drawn from Afrikaans, Sepedi, and Southern Sotho. These findings are supported by Mojela when he asserts that Sepedi and Southern Sotho are inseparable from Setswana.<sup>26</sup> Nkosi, in her study on Northern Sotho HL learners, found that Sepitori terms cannot be separated from Sepitori terms accepted in formal writing and speaking.<sup>27</sup> Table 2 presents 15 UCV terms with high frequencies across the two schools.

**Table 2: High frequency of UCV terms**

| UCV 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.<sup>28</sup> Table 3 presents five loan words that learners used during their presentations.

**Table 3: 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          | Tlhotlhagodimo       |
| Patella      | Betal          | Afrikaans          | Duela                |
| Bereka       | Werk           | Afrikaans          | Dira                 |
| Afota        | Afford         | English            | Bokgoni jwa go duela |

<sup>26</sup> Victor Maropeng Mojela, "Prestige Terminology and Its Consequences in the Development of Northern Sotho Vocabulary" (University of South Africa Pretoria, South Africa, 1999), 253.

<sup>27</sup> Nkosi, "The Technological Process as Framework for the Improvement of Instruction of Technology."

<sup>28</sup> 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.

|        |      |           |            |
|--------|------|-----------|------------|
| Polane | Plan | English   | Leano      |
| Flopa  | Flop | English   | Dira phoso |
| Kereya | Kry  | Afrikaans | Fitlhela   |

There are also UCV clauses and phrases that were common amongst all ten learners across both schools. Table 4 presents the phrases and clauses that most learners used during their oral presentations.

**Table 4: UCV Clauses/ Phrases**

| UCV clauses/phrases  | Setswana equivalence  | English equivalence   |
|--|---|---|
| Banyana ba katjeko ba botsisa thata ka dilo tsa kaosane                | Basetsana ba gompiano ba botsa thata ka dilo tsa segompiano                       | 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 e 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. Then, their tests were analysed to check whether learners knew the difference between UCVs 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, which 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 UCVs and Setswana.

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

## **DISCUSSION**

The first aim of this study was to prove that UCVs do influence Setswana, especially at school with regard to the writing and speaking of Grade 10 learners, because the 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.

Secondly, this study attempted to indicate that Setswana dominates Sepitori and Tsotsitaal, as the latter language, namely, Tsotsitaal, is based on both Afrikaans and isiZulu. This statement does not rule the fact out that other languages, such as Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho and isiZulu are used in UCVs, but in this investigation, most of the vocabulary is written and pronounced as Setswana words. All the deliberations in this study show that these UCVs are currently based in Setswana, which is why they have such a strong influence.

As much as UCVs have a positive influence, they also have a negative influence. Firstly, it affects 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. 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.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- More research should be done on the influence of UCVs not only on highschools but also on Higher institutions
- Learners and teachers must be taught the difference between standard language and UCVs
- Workshops must be organised for Language teachers and curriculum developers on the importance of African indigenous languages.
- The government and the Department of Education must employ or rather hire native Setswana speakers to teach Setswana HL at Winterveldt.
- The media must increase programmes promoting the importance of Setswana so that people can be encouraged to use Setswana in public and school without feeling illiterate and must be taught the importance of language maintenance.

## CONCLUSION

According to the data, it is evident that UCVs had a significant influence on the written and spoken outputs of the learners and most learners and teachers could not differentiate between Setswana and UCVs. It was unreasonable to keep these UCVs away in Setswana classrooms since learners and some teachers ordinarily speak Sepitori and Tsotsitaal at school, regardless of the subject they taught.

These UCVs 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 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 UCVs. 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 and some teachers contains UCV terms, and when used in sentences, are relevant to the meaning of these UCVs, thus demonstrating the fact that UCVs contain Setswana terms, and this influences Setswana.

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