

Linguistic Contribution of Northern Sotho to Sepitori: Perspectives of Speakers of the Language brought up in Tshwane, South Africa



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ABSTRACT

Various scholars indicated that Sepitori resulted from language contact in Tshwane, especially between Northern Sotho and Setswana, which are mutually intelligible. Previous research has focused on the influence of Sepitori on the standard varieties of Northern Sotho and Setswana, and not the other way around and this was a gap in research, which needed to be addressed. This study looked at how Northern Sotho contributed to the development of Sepitori by establishing lexical items, which were drawn from Northern Sotho. The first set of data was gathered from *YouTube* by extracting statements with Sepitori lexical items; the statements were said by Sepitori-speaking comedians. After that, the statements were discussed with 16 participants to establish whether they regarded them as Sepitori lexical items with origins from Northern Sotho, be it the standard variety or non-standard varieties referred to as dialects; their responses constituted the second set of data. Participants confirmed that Sepitori lexical items which were before them originated from Northern Sotho. Interestingly, they were unaware that there are lexical items which Northern Sotho shared with Setswana and Southern Sotho because they only attributed such to Northern Sotho, and that demonstrated their limited knowledge of Setswana and Southern Sotho. The study has demonstrated that Northern Sotho is one of the most significant languages in the development of Sepitori, the other being Setswana. This study has the potential to encourage more researchers to conduct research on non-standard varieties spoken in South Africa particularly as they continue to gain traction in the linguistic landscape of South Africa.

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INTRODUCTION

The authors spent considerable time in Soshanguve (i.e., a township located in north-western Tshwane) and observed that despite the township being linguistically rich, its residents spoke Sepitori as a lingua franca regardless of their linguistic background. Sepitori is largely influenced by Northern Sotho and Setswana (also known as Sepedi).¹ They were curious to establish the significance of Northern Sotho’s influence on Sepitori. This curiosity was further influenced by the fact that no previous study had investigated the influence, which Northern Sotho and Setswana had on Sepitori, but the other way round, particularly in classroom situations.

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): 159–65.

They were also curious about how speakers of Sepitori can switch from this variety to their home languages or even Sepitori, which some residents consider to be their home language, as shown by Álvarez-Mosquera, Bornman and Ditsele.² Ditsele states that Sepitori's ancestral languages are Northern Sotho and Setswana, and the variety also comprises coinages from Afrikaans and English.³ The authors agree with this assertion. They have noticed that while some Sepitori clauses have the same meaning as Northern Sotho ones, they have undergone morpho-phonological changes. For example:

Northern Sotho:	Ke ba boditše.
Sepitori:	Ke ba boditse.
English:	I told them.

This morpho-phonological change appears to have been influenced by Setswana because in this language 'boditse' means 'asked' (not 'told').

Research on Sepitori has largely focused on this variety's influence on Northern Sotho and Setswana, and not the other way round. This being a gap, the aim of this study is to fill this void by conducting research among people who identify themselves as home language speakers of any of the dialects of Northern Sotho and grew up in Tshwane townships and villages where they spoke Sepitori. This study therefore seeks to answer the following four research questions:

1. Are there Northern Sotho lexical items that undergo morpho-phonological changes before they settle as Sepitori's lexical items?
2. Are there Northern Sotho lexical items that undergo semantic changes before they settle as Sepitori's lexical items?
3. Are there Sepitori coinages that could be attributed to Northern Sotho (be it from standard or non-standard varieties)?
4. Are there lexical items that were drawn from Northern Sotho and settled in Sepitori without undergoing changes of any kind?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section consists of key concepts and their definitions, which will help the authors understand, interpret and analyse the relevant data gathered for the study. It also includes scholarly literature, and existing theories that will be used in the study. A conceptual framework also helps the authors realise gaps that previous studies did not touch on. This framework provides the authors with a guide as they go through the literature review.⁴ A 'conceptual framework' also helps readers to easily understand how the author determined what concerns to focus on and how to pursue their study.⁵ The literature review is part of the thesis where there is extensive reference to related research and theory in a field; it is where connections are made between the source texts that the research draws on and positions themselves among these sources.⁶

Northern Sotho

It is a term used to refer to that form of Northern Sotho which is based on the Pedi dialect, and which has been standardised mainly in accordance with resolutions of the Northern Sotho Language Board regarding spelling rules, word division, etc.⁷ Standard Northern Sotho is often referred to as the official language or official Northern Sotho, that is, the language which is officially recognised by the Language Board and which is taught in schools and at universities, and which is used in radio and television broadcasts, official government documents, etc.

² Pedro Álvarez-Mosquera, Elirea Bornman, and Thabo Ditsele, "Residents' Perceptions on Sepitori, a Mixed Language Spoken in Greater Pretoria, South Africa," *Sociolinguistic Studies* 12, no. 3–4 (May 2, 2019): 439–59, <https://doi.org/10.1558/sols.33643>.

³ 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.

⁴ Ranjit Kumar, *Research Methodology*, 4th ed. (London: SAGE, 2014).

⁵ E. Alana James and Traceesa H Slater, *Writing Your Doctoral Dissertation or Thesis Faster*, 1st ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2014).

⁶ Diana Ridley, "The Literature Review: A Step-by-Step Guide for Students," 2012.

⁷ L.J. Louwrens, *Dictionary of Northern Sotho Grammatical Terms* (Pretoria: Via Afrika, 1994).

Sepitori

According to Ditsele and Mann, Sepitori is not a written language, but a spoken language of Pretoria. They also note that Sepitori's ancestral languages are Northern Sotho and Setswana.⁸ Ditsele states that it is a non-standard variety of the Tshwane metropolitan municipal region.⁹

Linguistic landscape in Tshwane

The City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (CTMM) has officially adopted languages as a form of communication between the municipality and its residents. While its language policy promotes multilingualism, English is used for its internal communication.¹⁰ CTMM has eight (8) official languages as follows (ranked in descending order of demographic numbers): Northern Sotho (19.9%), Afrikaans (18.8%), Setswana (15.0%), English and Xitsonga (both at 8.6%), isiZulu (8.5%), isiNdebele (5.7%), and Tshivenda (2.3%). Ditsele and Mann note that Black residents of CTMM use Sepitori to communicate among themselves and Schuring submits that there is no dispute about that fact.¹¹

Ditsele and Mann also note that Sepitori is mutually intelligible with Northern Sotho and Setswana, which means that it is also mutually intelligible with Southern Sotho because it is one of the three languages in the Sotho-Tswana group.

Contact languages

Matras states that 'contact languages' are languages that function as a new medium form of communication when the need arises in a cross-language interaction among population groups in a variety of settings ranging from minimal social contact and just occasional encounters for trade, on to regular interethnic communication in a common socio-economic framework, and on to intense social contacts among groups speaking different languages within the same community and even the same household.¹²

Lingua franca

According to Matras, 'lingua franca' refers to languages that are used for interethnic communication, that is, in interactions in which participants have diverse background languages. A lingua franca is a language which is used usually by people whose mother tongues are different to enable communication between them.

Multilingualism

Aronin states that multilingualism is used to refer to the use of three or more languages by a person or society. She continues to state that it also refers to the presence of several languages in one country, community or city.¹³ This is the ability to communicate in several languages.

Identity

According to Fearon, in ordinary language, at least, one can use 'identity' to refer to personal characteristics or attributes that cannot naturally be expressed in terms of a social category, and in some contexts certain categories can be described as 'identities' even though nobody sees them as central to their personal identity.¹⁴

Language and Identity

According to Dillabough, identity relations are shaped by social and structural relations and are situated in language. Through language, identity relations are embedded intersubjectively. Language allows one to identify or associate themselves with a certain group of people, and in this current study, participants

⁸ Ditsele and Mann, "Language Contact in African Urban Settings: The Case of Sepitori in Tshwane."

⁹ Ditsele, "Why Not Use Sepitori to Enrich the Vocabularies of Setswana and Sepedi?"

¹⁰ Republic of South Africa, "Language Policy of City of Tshwane (as Amended)," 2012, file:///C:/Users/DitseleT/Downloads/Language-Policy-of-the-CoT-27092012.pdf.

¹¹ Gerard Kornelis Schuring, "Die Omgangs-Sotho van Die Swart Woongebiede van Pretoria" (University of Johannesburg, 1985).

¹² Yaron Matras, *Language Contact* (New York City, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 275.

¹³ Larissa Aronin, "What Is Multilingualism," *Twelve Lectures in Multilingualism* 1, no. 1 (2019): 3–34.

¹⁴ James D.III Fearon, "What Is Identity (as We Now Use the Word)," *Unpublished Manuscript, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif.* 1999, 1–43.

can take one of the two identities depending on whom they are talking to.¹⁵ This means that the participants may portray themselves either as speakers of Northern Sotho or of Sepitori, depending on the circumstances in which they find themselves.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

What is language change? It is a linguistic situation that occurs when speakers of different languages interact with each other and bring their languages respective languages into interaction as well. It is generally accepted among scholars that hybrid languages, contact languages and lingua francas develop because of a situation where people who speak different languages come into contact leading to the creation of new languages.

In the case of this study, the focus is on the contribution of Northern Sotho to a contact language and lingua franca of the Black residents of Tshwane called Sepitori. Many scholars have conducted research on contact languages, but for the purposes of this study, the authors selected the work of a few scholars due to their pointed relevance to this one. This study was grounded on research conducted by Msimang (isiZulu versus tsotsitaal), Hurst (isiXhosa versus tsotsitaal), and Kamanga (Chibrazi versus languages of Malawi).¹⁶ These studies provided the conceptual framework of this study.

METHODOLOGY

Chosen approach

This study employed a ‘mixed method’ approach which is a type of research where the researcher is given the opportunity to maximise the strength of both quantitative approaches (e.g., generalisability) and qualitative approaches (e.g., in-depth analysis of a small number of cases) while minimising the weakness of both quantitative approaches (e.g., lack of participant's voice) and qualitative approaches (e.g., lack of generalisability). For example, DeCuir-Gunby and Schutz submit that the researcher can use qualitative data as a case study of a particular group(s) of participants that were identified from a quantitative data analysis.¹⁷

This approach helped the authors discover and gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study, which is the linguistic contributions of Northern Sotho to Sepitori while looking at the frequency at which those linguistic contributions appear in Sepitori. The frequency will be based on numerical measurements of specific aspects of phenomena; it abstracts from particular instances to seek general descriptions or to test causal hypotheses. The authors looked at words or phrases that went through morpho-phonological and semantic changes when they settled as Sepitori.

Research Instruments

According to Wilkinson and Birmingham, ‘research instruments’ are simply devices for obtaining information relevant to one’s research project.¹⁸ They also state that there is no single research method or instrument that is inherently superior to any other. In human and social sciences, there are various research instruments that include questionnaires, interviews and observations, just to mention a few. In this study, focus group interviews have been selected to gather data. Anderson notes that a ‘focus group’ is a group comprising individuals with certain characteristics who focus discussions on a given issue or topic.¹⁹ Denscombe states that a ‘focus group’ consists of a small group of people, usually between six

¹⁵ Jo-Anne Dillabough, “Degrees of Freedom and Deliberations of ‘Self’; Pedagogies, the Gendering of Identities in Teaching,” in *Revolutionary Pedagogies Cultural Policies, Institutional Education, and the Discourse of Theory*, ed. Peter P. Trifonas (New York City, NY: Routledge, 2000), 312–15.

¹⁶ C. T. Msimang, “Impact of Zulu on Tsotsitaal,” *South African Journal of African Languages* 7, no. 3 (January 24, 1987): 82–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.1987.10586689>; Ellen Hurst, “Style, Structure and Function in Cape Town Tsotsitaal,” 2008; Chimwemwe Kamanga, “Who Speaks Chibrazi, the Urban Contact Vernacular of Malawi?,” *Language Matters* 45, no. 2 (May 4, 2014): 257–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10228195.2014.910249>.

¹⁷ Jessica T. DeCuir-Gunby and Paul A. Schutz, *Developing a Mixed Methods Proposal: A Practical Guide for Beginning Researchers*, 1st ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2017).

¹⁸ David Wilkinson and Peter Birmingham, *Using Research Instruments: A Guide for Researchers* (, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁹ Garry Anderson, *Fundamentals of Educational Research* (London: The Falmer Press, 1990).

and nine in number, who are brought together by a trained moderator (a researcher) to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about a topic.²⁰

Sample Methods

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delpont, there are only two types of sampling techniques, which are ‘probability sampling’ and ‘non-probability sampling’.²¹ They also submit that ‘probability sampling’ is based on randomisation while ‘non-probability’ does not implement randomisation. Furthermore, ‘random sampling’ is the only technique available that will ensure an optimal chance of drawing a sample that is representative of the population from which it was drawn. This study employed ‘non-probability sampling’ since “the odds of selecting a particular individual are not known because the researcher does not know members of the population” as noted by Gravetter and Forzano.²²

According to De Vos, et al., in ‘non-probability sampling’, there are seven sampling procedures that include: accidental sampling; purposive sampling; quota sampling; dimensional sampling; target sampling; snowball sampling; and spatial sampling.

This study is limited by nature, meaning that no one can provide the relevant data that will result in the study achieving its main objective. As such, ‘purposeful sampling’ which is also known as ‘judgement or purposive sampling’ was chosen. Emmel notes that ‘purposeful sampling’ rests on the in-depth study of information-rich cases, towards learning a great deal about research questions and the issues considered by the researchers to be of central importance.²³ ‘Purposeful sampling is suitable in picking distinctive cases that are specifically enlightening.

Study’s Population

Data were gathered from 16 participants (females and males) who grew up at townships and villages in Tshwane. They were aged between 18 and 30 years. The chosen age range represents people who largely grew up in post-apartheid South Africa (i.e., in or after 1994). All of them self-identified as home language speakers of Northern Sotho and had studied the language at school (for a detailed list of all participants, see Table 1).

Table 1: Participants

No.	Code	Sex	Age group (in years)	Highest level of studying Northern Sotho	Time spent in Tshwane
1	F1	Female	18-20	Up to Grade 12	All her life
2	F2	Female	18-20	Beyond Grade 12	Most of her life
3	F3	Female	21-25	Beyond Grade 12	All her life
4	F4	Female	26-30	Up to Grade 12	All her life
5	F5	Female	26-30	Up to Grade 12	All her life
6	F6	Female	26-30	Up to Grade 12	All her life
7	M1	Male	21-25	Beyond Grade 12	A few years
8	M2	Male	21-25	Up to Grade 12	All his life
9	M3	Male	21-25	Up to Grade 12	All his life
10	M4	Male	18-20	Up to Grade 7 (primary school)	All his life
11	M5	Male	18-20	Up to Grade 7 (primary school)	A few years
12	M6	Male	18-20	Up to Grade 12	A few years
13	M7	Male	26-30	Up to Grade 12	All his life

²⁰ Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide: For Small-Scale Social Research Projects (Open UP Study Skills)* (McGraw-Hill, 2010).

²¹ A.S. De Vos et al., *Research at Grass Roots: For the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*, 4th ed. (Pretoria: Van Schalk, 2011).

²² Frederick J Gravetter and Lori-Ann B Forzano, *Research Methods for the Behavioral Sciences* (Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2003).

²³ Nick Emmel, *Sampling and Choosing Cases in Qualitative Research*, 1st ed. (Singapore: SAGE, 2013).

14	M8	Male	26-30	Beyond Grade 12	Most of his life
15	M9	Male	21-25	Up to Grade 12	All his life
16	M10	Male	21-25	Up to Grade 7 (primary school)	All his life

Source: Authors

Approach to Data Collection

The authors identified comedians who spoke Sepitori and sourced their videos from *YouTube*. To create a corpus, they selected and transcribed statements, which comprised Northern Sotho lexical items. These statements constituted the first set of data. The next set of data was obtained by putting selected statements before participants (organised in focus groups), and asking them to identify lexical items with origins in Northern Sotho, be it the standard variety or non-standard ones (or dialects of the language).

Ethical Considerations

The research ethics committee at Tshwane University of Technology approved this study on 7 December 2018 and allocated it this reference number: FCRE/APL/STD/2018/14.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Statements were compiled from *YouTube* videos by Sepitori-speaking comedians from Tshwane. The comedians have been coded as Comedian 1, Comedian 2 and Comedian 3. Statements drawn from their work were presented in that chronology.

Comedian 1

Regular Northern Sotho

Statement 1	Ne ke re ko betšha ka licence, wa hana wa re o nyaka meriri.
Northern Sotho	Ke ne ke re ke go tisa ka laesense, wa gana wa re o nyaka meriri.
English	I wanted to spoil you with a licence, but you refused and said you wanted your hair done.

Nyaka (to want) is a Northern Sotho verb and is used as is in Sepitori. Of interest is that the noun *meriri* (hair) is a plural form of *moriri* and is used in all three Sotho-Tswana languages. However, in the context of Sepitori, the plural form is preferred as opposed to the singular form used in Sotho-Tswana languages for the context of this sentence.

Morpho-phonological changes

Statement 2	Mpotse hore o minang?
Northern Sotho	Mpotše gore o re'ng?
English	Tell me what you mean?

The Sepitori verb *mpotse* is derived from a Northern Sotho verb *mpotše* (tell me). By contrast, *mpotse* is also a Setswana verb, but means 'ask me' not 'tell me'. While it was influenced by Setswana at the morpho-phonological level, it retained the semantic meaning of Northern Sotho.

Statement 3	Dumelang, ke khopela le tlo dribang haye.
Northern Sotho	Dumelang, ke kgopela le tle go otlela go ya gae.
English	Hello, may you come and drive home.

The Sepitori verb *khopela* is derived from a Northern Sotho verb *kgopela* (to ask), and it is used to show politeness. It went through a morpho-phonological change where the Sotho-Tswana digraph [kg-] became [kh-] in Sepitori.

Statement 4	Aowa! Ne re re motho wa hafa.
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Northern Sotho	Aowa! Re be re re motho wa gafa.
English	No! We thought s/he was crazy.

Hafa is a Sepitori verb derived from a Northern Sotho verb *gafa* (to be crazy or to lose it). It went through a morpho-phonological change of replacing the consonant [g] with [h] in Sepitori. *Aowa* is a Northern Sotho noun (for 'no'). It is used in the same sense as it is used in Sepitori and it did not undergo any semantic or morpho-phonological changes.

Semantic shifts

Statement 5	Shut up! Le dimpa tsa maratha!
Northern Sotho	Homola! Le dimpa tše kgolo!
English	Be quite! You with big belly!

Maratha is Northern Sotho noun, which literally means 'old torn clothes'. In the context of this Sepitori statement, the noun means 'big belly'. This means that it has undergone a semantic shift.

Comedian 2

Regular Northern Sotho

Statement 6	Le ntlwaela, ne le sa bolele, ke bolela ke le i-one kwa, o ka re ke stlaela
Northern Sotho	Le ntlwaela gampe, be le sa bolele, ke bolela ke le tee kua, o ka re ke setlaela.
English	You were too much for me, you did not speak out, I spoke along there, as if I am a fool.

Both *bolele* and *bolela* are verbs in Northern Sotho and they mean 'to speak' – the first is a negation of the second. By contrast, both are also used in Setswana to mean 'not to report' and 'to report', respectively.

Morpho-phonological changes

Statement 7	Chomi, mara o mmoditse waitse! O ne o sa mo hemise.
Northern Sotho	Mogwera, mara o mmoditše wa tseba! O be o sa mo hemiše.
English	Friend, you told him/her and you know! You did not give him/her a break.

The Sepitori verb *mmoditse* is derived from a Northern Sotho verb *mmoditše* (told him/her). By contrast, *mmoditse* is also a Setswana verb, but means 'asked him/her'. While it was influenced by Setswana at the morpho-phonological level, it retained the semantic meaning of Northern Sotho.

Comedian 3

Regular Northern Sotho

Statement 8	Mo a re bethane ka ditladi, ke tla ho thuba tlhogo.
Northern Sotho	Mo ga re bethane ka ditladi, ke tla go thuba hlogo.
English	Here we do not magically strike each other with lightning, I will blow up your head.

Bethane is a Northern Sotho verb and is used as is in Sepitori. It means 'to hit each other'. In Sepitori, a Setswana noun *tlhogo* (head) is used as opposed to a Northern Sotho one, *hlogo*.

Statement 9	Casper wa re fora, and wa yaka.
Northern Sotho	Casper wa re fora, e bile o maaka.
English	Casper is deceiving us, and he is lying.

Fora (to deceive or lie) is a Northern Sotho verb and is used as is in Sepitori. It has not undergone any changes as it was adopted from Northern Sotho in Sepitori.

Statement 10	A ke itse hore e thoma bjang?
Northern Sotho	Ga ke tsebe gore e thoma bjang?
English	I do not know how it starts?

Thoma (to start) is a Northern Sotho verb and is it used in the same manner as Sepitori, which means that it did not undergo any changes. In Sepitori, a Setswana verb *itse* (to know) is used as opposed to a Northern Sotho one, *tsebe*.

There were 12 usable Sepitori verbs and nouns which could be traced back to Northern Sotho. There were no other parts of speech in the data.

Data from Focus Groups

After analysing data from the three comedians, the authors interviewed 16 participants organised in a focus group. The exercise was to establish the following two objectives:

1. Their ability to correctly identify Sepitori linguistic items that were drawn from Northern Sotho (be it the standard or non-standard varieties); and
2. Their overall impression of Sepitori relative to Northern Sotho.

Regular Northern Sotho

Statement 1: Ne ke re ko betšha ka licence, wa hana wa re o nyaka meriri (Comedian 1).

Participants identified the Sepitori and Northern Sotho verb *nyaka* which means ‘to want’. Furthermore, they noted that in Setswana and Southern Sotho, the equivalent verb used is *batla*. One participant noted the following.

Participant	Response
F4	I think <i>nyaka</i> is Northern Sotho, while <i>batla</i> is Setswana.

Statement 6: Le ntlwaela, ne le sa bolele, ke bolela ke le i-one kwa, o ka re ke stlaela. (Comedian 2).

Participants were able to tell that *bolele* and *bolela* are Northern Sotho verbs for ‘to speak’. They pointed out that *bolela* does not exist in Setswana and its equivalence is *buu*. However, *bolela* exists in Setswana, but unlike in Northern Sotho, it means ‘to report’. Some made these remarks.

Participant	Response
F4	<i>Bolela</i> is from Northern Sotho for ‘to speak’ while <i>stlaela</i> in Northern Sotho means a ‘stupid person’, and it is a noun; its synonym is <i>lešilo</i> .
F5	<i>Bolela</i> is there in Northern Sotho for ‘to talk’, and <i>setlaela</i> is there in Northern Sotho, but the Sepitori version omitted the vowel ‘e’ between [s] and [t], making it <i>stlaela</i> .

With regards to *ntlwaela* (being familiar with a person), and *stlaela* (fool) written as *setlaela*, they suggested that the verb and noun originated from Northern Sotho, but this is not the case as the two are also used in Setswana and Southern Sotho in the same manner as in Northern Sotho.

Statement 8: Mo a re bethane ka ditladi, ke tla ho thuba tlhogo (Comedian 3).

Participants identified *bethane* (to hit each other) as a Northern Sotho verb. Below is what they had to say.

Participant	Response
M2	Well, in Sepitori I use <i>phyatla</i> for breaking a glass and <i>roba</i> for ‘breaking a heart’. <i>Tladi</i> is from Northern Sotho for ‘lightning’.
M3	<i>Thuba</i> is there in Northern Sotho for ‘breaking a glass or heart’ if one is from the Polokwane area. <i>Bethane</i> is from Northern Sotho for ‘hitting’ which is <i>betsa</i> or <i>itaya</i> in Setswana.

While they attributed *tladi* (lightning) and *thuba* (to break) as a noun and verbs belonging to Northern Sotho, that is not the case because both words are used in the same manner in Setswana and Southern Sotho.

Statement 9: Casper wa re fora, and wa yaka (Comedian 3).

The participants were able to identify that *fora* is a Northern Sotho verb for ‘to deceive or lie’. Some of them said the following.

Participant	Response
F5	I think <i>fora</i> is from Northern Sotho while <i>yaka</i> is from Setswana.
M3	I know that in Northern Sotho they use <i>o na le maaka</i> and <i>fora</i> so that means <i>fora</i> is from Northern Sotho.

They stated that the Setswana equivalent of *fora* is *yaka*, but in reality, *yaka* is a Sepitori verb derived from the noun *maaka* which means ‘lies’ in Northern Sotho and Setswana.

Statement 10: A ke itse hore e thoma bjang? (Comedian 3).

They identified *thoma* as a Sepitori and Northern Sotho verb for ‘to start’. Below are the views they expressed.

Participant	Response
F5	I think <i>thoma</i> is from Northern Sotho since in Setswana they use <i>tshemollo</i> , so it must be Northern Sotho.
F6	<i>Thoma</i> is a Sepitori word with Northern Sotho origin, so I agree with the other speaker.

They also noted that the Setswana equivalent for *thoma* is *tshemollo*. Not quite; the Setswana verb for ‘to start’ is *simolola* and colloquially spelled *simolla*.

Morpho-phonological changes

Statement 2: Mpotse hore o minang? (Comedian 1).

Participants were able to identify *mpotse* (tell me) as a Northern Sotho verb which in the language is *mpotše*. Some of them stated that there was a change in spelling (which the researcher took as a change of morphology), which affected its pronunciation due to Setswana’s influence. *Mpotse* exists in Setswana although it means ‘ask me’. Below, are some of the views expressed by participants.

Participant	Response
M7	Yes, <i>mpotse</i> is from Northern Sotho, but it changed its spelling leading to a change in pronunciation.
M8	<i>Mpotse</i> is from Northern Sotho, which uses <i>mpotše</i> for ‘tell me’ and for Setswana is <i>mpolelle</i> , which in Northern Sotho means ‘say something on my behalf’.

Minang? is borrowed from English (what do you mean?) and it is colloquially used across the three Sotho-Tswana languages, thus cannot be attributed only to Northern Sotho.

Statement 3: Dumelang, ke khopela le tlo dribang haye. (Comedian 1).

Participants were able to recognise *khopela* is a Northern Sotho verb, with the morpheme [kg-] in *kgopela* having changed to the Sepitori spelling and sound [kh-]. Below, are some of the views expressed by participants.

Participant	Response
M5	<i>Dribang</i> is a borrowed term from English, it is <i>otlelang</i> in Northern Sotho.

F4	<i>Khopela</i> must start with [kg-], so it is from Northern Sotho, but it changed a little when [kg-] became [kh-].
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One of them pointed out that *dribang* is a borrowed term from English (to drive). While this observation was noted, it should be clarified that *dribang* applies to Northern Sotho much as it applies to Setswana and Southern Sotho. They also identified *dumelang* as a Northern Sotho word for ‘hello’ but acknowledged that it was used in Setswana and Southern Sotho as well, thus cannot be attributed only to Northern Sotho.

Statement 4: Aowa! Ne re re motho wa hafa (Comedian 1).

Hafa was identified by participants as a Northern Sotho verb for ‘crazy’. They stated that the consonant [-g-] was replaced with [-h-], hence the change in spelling and pronunciation. Here are some of their views.

Participant	Response
F5	There are no Northern Sotho words from the above statement, but I think <i>hafa</i> is from Northern Sotho.
F6	Since ‘crazy’ in Setswana is <i>hlanya</i> that means that <i>hafa</i> is from Northern Sotho. These words are nouns.

Contrary to what the participant thought, *hlanya* is actually a Southern Sotho noun and not a Setswana one. In the latter, the noun used is *tšenwa*.

Statement 7: Chomi, mara o mmoditse waitse! O ne o sa mo hemise (Comedian 2).

Participants stated that *mmoditse* had to originate from Northern Sotho since this was the only language that uses *mmoditše* in the same context as Sepitori. They pointed out that Setswana uses *boleletse* for this context. They stated that *marā* was a Northern Sotho conjunction borrowed from Afrikaans (maar or ‘but’). They also pointed out that *hemise* (to breath) is a Northern Sotho verb derived from *hemiše*. Some of them noted.

Participant	Response
M3	Well! I think <i>marā</i> is a borrowed word from Afrikaans into Sepedi, then moved into Sepitori. <i>Hemisa</i> comes from <i>hema</i> and means ‘to breath’ in Northern Sotho.
M7	I think <i>mmoditse</i> is derived from <i>botsa</i> , which is <i>botša</i> in Northern Sotho. Others have already mentioned that it is <i>bolella</i> in Setswana.

However, the reality is that *marā* and *hemise* cannot be attributed solely to Northern Sotho because they are also used in Setswana and Southern Sotho in the same manner as in Northern Sotho.

Semantic shifts

Statement 5: Shut up! Le dimpa tsa maratha! (Comedian 1).

Participants were able identify *maratha* as a Northern Sotho adjective for ‘old torn clothes’. The adjective was used to qualify a ‘big belly’ referred to in this context, which is different from that of Northern Sotho.

Identifying Northern Sotho in Sepitori statements

As indicated earlier, there were a total of 12 usable Northern Sotho terms which were drawn from comedians. Based on the analysis, participants were able to correctly identify 11 out of 12 terms, which translates to 92% of the terms originating from Northern Sotho. While participants’ ability to identify Northern Sotho terms used in Sepitori terms was impressive, their knowledge of terminologies of Setswana and Southern Sotho was inadequate; they suggested terminologies of the two languages in the discussions and attributed them solely to Northern Sotho when some of them were shared among the three Sotho-Tswana languages.

The overall impression of Sepitori

The following three questions were discussed with participants.

Question 1: When you communicate, how do you navigate between Northern Sotho and Sepitori?

An overwhelming majority of participants pointed out that their navigation between the two depended on who they were communicating with at the time. They also pointed out that they mostly communicated in Northern Sotho when talking to their elders (viz., parents, grandparents, and older relatives). The other environment in which they communicated in Northern Sotho was in formal domains like classrooms. Otherwise, they ordinarily communicated in Sepitori. A small minority of participants stated that they communicated in Sepitori all the time and did not switch to Northern Sotho under any circumstances. These views were held by participants across all four variables. Below, are some of the views expressed by participants.

Participant	Response
M3	I also used to speak Sepitori a lot except when I was in a Northern Sotho classroom; that is where I tried to speak Northern Sotho. I also speak to my mother in Northern Sotho.
F3	I speak a lot of Northern Sotho when I am at school, especially in a Northern Sotho home language class. At my house we speak Northern Sotho and no Sepitori at all, so I speak Sepitori only with my friends.

Question 2: Where do think Sepitori originates from, and from which languages?

Most participants stated that they were not aware of the origins of Sepitori. However, a few of them pointed out that Northern Sotho and Setswana contributed to the creation of Sepitori. Most of them believed that many Sepitori words have origins in Afrikaans, English and isiZulu. Wagner did not find any isiZulu lexical items in Sepitori, so it was interesting to note that some participants believed that such items were many.²⁴

Some claimed that all languages contributed to the formation of Sepitori and even invoked the name of their township, Soshanguve, which is an acronym for Sotho-Tswana (**So-**), Shangaan or Xitsonga (**-sha-**), Nguni (**-ngu-**) and Tshivenda (**-ve**). To test their theory about all languages having contributed to the formation of Sepitori, the authors asked them to identify any Tshivenda or Xitsonga lexical items present in Sepitori, but they were unable to come up with any. This suggests that they presumed that the acronym necessarily translated into a conglomeration of lexical items from different languages. Schuring, Malimabe and Ditsele point out that by far, Northern Sotho and Setswana contributed to the formation of Sepitori, followed by Afrikaans, English and Southern Sotho, albeit to a relatively lesser extent.²⁵ Below, are some of the views expressed by participants on the composition of Sepitori.

Participant	Response
M1	I think it is Afrikaans mixing different languages such Setswana and isiZulu, since Soshanguveans are from different places and speak different languages.
F1	Well, what I heard is that here in Soshanguve we have mixed cultures and different languages. So, I think all the languages found in the name Soshanguve.

Question 3: Rating yourself out of 10, how proficient would you say you are in both Sepitori and Northern Sotho?

Some participants stated that growing up in Tshwane did not affect how they acquired Northern Sotho, so they were equally proficient in the two. Others noted that they lacked adequate exposure in Northern

²⁴ Valencia Kebolelang Wagner, "Transfer Effects of Sepitori on the Language Performance of Setswana Home Language High School Learners in Tshwane: Some Case Studies" (Tshwane University of Technology, 2018).

²⁵ Schuring, "Die Omgangs-Sotho van Die Swart Woongebiede van Pretoria"; Refilwe Morongwa Malimabe, *The Influence of Non-Standard Varieties on the Standard Setswana of High School Pupils* (University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 1990); Ditsele and Mann, "Language Contact in African Urban Settings: The Case of Sepitori in Tshwane."

Sotho and thus were not as proficient in it as they were in Sepitori, to which they were adequately exposed. They claimed that the environment they were brought up in did not present them with enough opportunities to acquire Northern Sotho and be proficient in it, as such, they rated themselves higher in Sepitori, a variety they were exposed to all their lives. Here are some of their comments.

Participant	Response
F3	I score myself 5 out of 10 on Sepitori and for Northern Sotho, it would be 10 out of 10 because that is the language that I know and understand more than any language.
F4	I will say I am an eight out of ten since I have spoken Sepitori my whole life and Sepedi in school. It is a three since I am not that good with Sepedi.

Major Findings

The following are the study's major findings:

1. Sepitori lexical items, which originate from Northern Sotho, are mainly verbs and nouns as opposed to other parts of speech (e.g., adjectives, adverbs, etc.)
2. Setswana influenced Northern Sotho terms, which undergo morpho-phonological changes and settle as Sepitori terms.
3. Many Sepitori terms that are used in Northern Sotho are shared with the other two Sotho-Tswana languages (viz., Setswana and Southern Sotho), they cannot be attributed solely to Northern Sotho.

DISCUSSION

Regarding Research Question 1, data from the comedians showed that there were Northern Sotho lexical items that underwent morpho-phonological changes before settling as lexical items in Sepitori. This means that such Sepitori lexical items whose origin can only be attributed to Northern Sotho, changed at the levels of morphology and phonology. The participants were able to identify Northern Sotho lexical items that underwent morpho-phonological changes before they settled as lexical items in Sepitori. Data showed that the morpho-phonological change in Northern Sotho lexical items, which settled as lexical items in Sepitori, was due to the influence from Setswana. This is reasonable because Sepitori developed out of contact between home language speakers of Northern Sotho and Setswana. By comparison, studies done by Malimabe and Wagner, which focused on Setswana, show that Northern Sotho influenced the Setswana spoken in Tshwane more than any other language.²⁶

When looking at Research Question 2, only one semantic shift was picked up in the data from the comedians. Be that as it may, this shows that there are Northern Sotho lexical items that underwent semantic changes before they settled as lexical items in Sepitori, albeit not prominently picked up in the data. The participants were able to identify the semantic shift from Northern Sotho to Sepitori in the only example, which was available to this study.

Considering Research Question 3, the authors did not find any Sepitori coinages that could be attributed to Northern Sotho, be it from the standard variety or non-standard varieties commonly referred to as dialects. The authors found that many Sepitori coinages are attributed to Afrikaans and English than to Northern Sotho and Setswana or any other language. Such coinages were not reported on because they fall outside the focus of this study.

Regarding Research Question 4, data from the comedians illustrated that there were lexical items, which were drawn from Northern Sotho and used in Sepitori without having undergone any changes of any kind. Such lexical items were mainly verbs and nouns compared to other parts of speech, such as adjectives, adverbs, etc. The participants were able to identify such lexical items, which did not undergo changes of any kind.

The authors found that there were many Sepitori lexical items which were used in all three Sotho-Tswana languages (viz., Northern Sotho, Setswana and Southern Sotho), for example, 'meriri' (hair), 'tlwaela' (familiarity), etc. However, the participants were unaware that they were shared lexical items,

²⁶ Malimabe, *The Influence of Non-Standard Varieties on the Standard Setswana of High School Pupils*; Wagner, "Transfer Effects of Sepitori on the Language Performance of Setswana Home Language High School Learners in Tshwane: Some Case Studies."

and attributed them only to Northern Sotho, demonstrating their limited knowledge of Setswana and Southern Sotho.

Malimabe submits that linguistically, Sepitori is based on a dialect of Setswana called Sekgatla, to which a large number of grammatical and lexical subsystems from Northern Sotho were added, a few from Southern Sotho, as well as adoptives from Afrikaans and English.²⁷ While this study's focus was on Northern Sotho and Sepitori only, data confirmed Malimabe's assertion and that of other researchers (e.g., Ditsele,; Ditsele and Mann,; and Wagner) that imputing languages in Sepitori were largely Northern Sotho and Setswana.²⁸ This was also proven by the fact that many lexical items, which the authors initially thought to be sourced from Northern Sotho, were in fact also used in Setswana, thus could not be attributed to Northern Sotho.

Finally, the authors agree with Ditsele that Sepitori should be used to enrich the vocabularies of both Northern Sotho and Setswana since the two are the former's ancestral languages. Ditsele referred to Sepitori as 'vocabulary feeder' to the regional standard varieties of Northern Sotho and Setswana as spoken and written in Tshwane and neighbouring regions, where Sepitori is spoken as a home language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Many studies on non-standard varieties in South Africa have studied them largely from a sociolinguistics perspective. The authors of this study conducted research on Sepitori from the perspectives of morphology, phonology and semantics, albeit on a smaller scale. There is a need for more studies which are grounded in other areas of Linguistics, such as syntax, pragmatics, etc. Such research would deepen the understanding of non-standard varieties, particularly as they continue to gain traction in the linguistic landscape of South Africa.

This study is the first of its kind on two fronts. First, it isolated Northern Sotho as one of the inputting languages in Sepitori, and second, it focused on the influence of Northern Sotho in Sepitori and not the other way around as other studies had done. While the authors acknowledge the literature on Sepitori about the dominance of Northern Sotho and Setswana in Sepitori, further research needs to establish lexical items, which were drawn from languages such as Xitsonga, Tshivenda and Nguni languages from a perspective of people who identify with these languages as part of their heritage. This gap in research on Sepitori makes this a niche area.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Sepitori has different varieties spoken in different Tshwane townships. For example, the variety spoken in Mamelodi (east of central Pretoria) appears to have lexical items drawn from a Northern Sotho dialect of Setokwa, and such lexical items do not appear in the variety of Sepitori spoken in Soshanguve, where this study was conducted. That said, there is a need to conduct further research to establish whether indeed Sepitori has different varieties.

Some of the participants in this study indicated that their families no longer had ties with home language speakers of Northern Sotho who lived mainly in the provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga. Such participants did not show strong affinity to Northern Sotho or cultural practices associated with speakers of this language. Further research is necessary to establish how loss of contact over the years influences people who live in urban settings such as Tshwane, relative to the people who live at rural areas where their ancestors once lived.

CONCLUSION

Being the capital city of South Africa makes Pretoria is a very significant city in the country, and languages spoken in this city will be prominent by association and default. This explains why Sepitori is a very prominent Sotho-Tswana language in the linguistic landscape of the country. More research needs to be conducted on Sepitori, particularly when it is so closely related to two Sotho-Tswana languages, that is, Northern Sotho and Setswana, which have official status in South Africa.

²⁷ Malimabe, *The Influence of Non-Standard Varieties on the Standard Setswana of High School Pupils*.

²⁸ Ditsele and Mann, "Language Contact in African Urban Settings: The Case of Sepitori in Tshwane"; Peter Wagner and Karen Small, "Promoting Inclusivity in University Classrooms: The Role of Accent in Student Engagement," *Teaching English as a Second Language Journal* 45, no. 1 (2021): 13–26.

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