



Promoting Ubuntu and women's rights through noun pedagogy in the IsiZulu home language classroom

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ABSTRACT

In language classes, words that hurt other people's feelings, words that make other students feel uneasy or feel discriminated against, are used. It cannot be denied that learners adopt language informally from their communities, and the language use is solely from the communities. South African research indicates that most women are victims of abuse. Abuse does not promote Ubuntu. This abuse starts from the language, which is known as verbal abuse, and then it grows in stages. Hence, this research seeks to investigate how teachers teach learners about humanity and respecting the rights of women in IsiZulu HL and the content embedded in it, investigating how nouns are taught, used and applied to girl learners both in class and in the community. This study used a qualitative case study design within an interpretive paradigm. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations with four isiZulu HL teachers. Data analysis was carried out using the thematic analysis approach, and the study was guided by Afrocentric theory. The findings reveal that teachers employ an Afrocentric approach, yet classroom discussions frequently surface deeply discriminatory nouns. This study also underscores the need for collaboration. The participants quoted discriminatory nouns from the learners. This study recommends greater collaboration between the school and the community, positing that fostering respect and Ubuntu cannot be the responsibility of teachers alone.

Keywords: Ubuntu, Women's Rights, Collaboration, Abuse and Afrocentric Philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

The difference in how the community raises boys and how they raise girls is the reason women are often disrespected and undermined.¹ Mzondi confirms in his study that the power that males have, as well as the disrespect females receive, is acceptable in our communities that still follow the traditional customs.² Communities that still follow the old ways believe that the Almighty gives men power to hold higher positions in families and in different spheres of the community compared to women.³ This belief is what makes some of the men undermine women, view them as worthless people and think that nothing good

¹ Tracy Llanera, "The Misogyny Paradox and the Alt-Right," *Hypatia* 38, no. 1 (2023): 157–76.

² Modisa Mzondi, "Clergy Vestment: An Analysis Of The Ecclesiological And Theological Journey Of African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches In South Africa," 2024.

³ Beth Allison Barr, *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth* (Baker Books, 2021).

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can come from them.⁴ Paddock et al., in their recent research, which has to do with social media platforms, reveal that young adults and adolescents interact through text and images.⁵ This interaction sometimes led to discrimination and loss of respect and looking down upon each other through comments, messages and reposting with different content.⁶ Nicolaides revealed in his writing that sometimes the use of language can lack Ubuntu and violate human rights, as Paddock et al. confirm that the use of text and images in social media perpetuates this problem of violating women's rights and language that lacks Ubuntu.⁷ This study looks at how nouns can be taught to promote Ubuntu and women's rights.

The way children are raised in communities should be fair and truthful and should be able to transform the way of thinking and the beliefs in our communities.⁸ It is an absolute truth that man was created before woman, but that does not mean he should look down upon a woman because she is also God's creation.⁹ The undermining of women is sometimes taken as something that is supposed to happen, and it should always be like that, whereas it destroys the nation, it destroys a person's dignity and the world we live in.¹⁰ In the classroom, teachers should promote the idea that all people, as equal creations, deserve respect. This involves using pedagogical methods that prevent students from using language that undermines women's rights or diminishes their worth. Fostering this respect is crucial for developing a compassionate youth capable of honouring women.

Some classrooms make girls ashamed when they use the female gender in rude or disrespectful ways. As you teach nouns in isiZulu Home Language classes, you usually only talk about grammar and how to use the language. It does not consider the social and cultural meanings that language can have. This means that there are missed opportunities to use noun instruction to promote Ubuntu and fight gender biases that hurt women's rights. We need to deal with this issue so that language learning in the isiZulu Home Language classroom supports Ubuntu and protects women's rights.

Language has the power to build and the power to destroy.¹¹ Therefore, nouns are words that should be used with extreme caution to avoid discriminating and denying women's rights inside classrooms. A noun is one of the parts of speech that is the backbone of any language, and it names something that can be seen as well as something that cannot be seen.¹² Since the world is filled with different things, this shows that there are a variety of nouns in the world. This makes us end up with different nouns such as natural nouns, borrowed nouns, and those that are commonly named.

This research aims to teach and promote humanity as well as respect for women's rights in learners who learn IsiZulu Home Language. This will be done by looking at how nouns are taught to promote Ubuntu and women's rights. The reason for looking at nouns specifically is that they are naming words used by language users to call people. Most African communities, including the Zulu people, promote humanity.¹³ Humanity does not allow discrimination against certain people or a lack of respect.

⁴ M. Wollstonecraft, "Vindication of the Rights of Woman Digireads.," 2018; Gerard Emmanuel Kamdem Kanga, "African Customary Law and the Issue of Institutionalised Women's Rights Abuse in Southern Africa," *Journal of Law, Society and Development* 11 (December 3, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.25159/2520-9515/15584>.

⁵ Danielle L Paddock, Beth T Bell, and Jennifer Cassarly, "'OMG You Look Amazing': A Systematic Examination of the Text-Based Interactions Surrounding UK Adolescent Girls' Self-Images on Instagram," *Body Image* 52 (2025): 101839.

⁶ Paddock, Bell, and Cassarly, "'OMG You Look Amazing': A Systematic Examination of the Text-Based Interactions Surrounding UK Adolescent Girls' Self-Images on Instagram."

⁷ Aliko Nicolaides, "Generative Knowing: Principles, Methods, and Dispositions of an Emerging Adult Learning Theory," 2022; Paddock, Bell, and Cassarly, "'OMG You Look Amazing': A Systematic Examination of the Text-Based Interactions Surrounding UK Adolescent Girls' Self-Images on Instagram."

⁸ Sandra Fourie and Lesley Wood, "Incorporating Education for Sustainable Development through Community-Based Education in the Foundation Phase," in *Collaborative Community Partnerships across Education Settings* (AOSIS, 2025), 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2024.BK432.01>.

⁹ Vhumani Magezi and Peter Manzanga, "A Public Pastoral Assessment of the Interplay between 'She Was Created Inferior' and Cultural Perceptions of Women by Christian Men in Zimbabwe as Accessory to Gender-Based Violence," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 42, no. 1 (March 25, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v42i1.2139>.

¹⁰ Linda Naicker, "Gender Justice, Ecological Responsibility and Sustainable Development in Africa: A Theological Perspective," *Pharos Journal of Theology*, no. 106.2 (March 2025), <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.106.2010>.

¹¹ Sally McConnell-Ginet, *Words Matter* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108641302>.

¹² R. Nordquist, "Definition of English as a Second Language (ESL)." (ThoughtCo, August 27, 2020).

¹³ Xinyao Fan, "Research on the Relationship Between Emotion and Language Based on Citespace - Taking WOS Data as an Example (2016-2025)," in *2025 10th International Conference on Modern Management, Education and Social Sciences (MMET 2025)* (Atlantis Press, 2025), 908–18, https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-475-4_101.

For this reason, this research supports mutual respect of rights and humanity when teaching takes place inside the classrooms amongst learners of IsiZulu Home Language. This research aims to address the following question: Which teaching methods do IsiZulu Home Language teachers use to teach nouns to promote humanity and respect women's rights?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section examines the work of other writers who have written about language and gender, as well as respect for women's rights. It is important to review what different writers from various countries say about language and gender in relation to the degradation of women, the consequences of such language use, and how humanity and respect for women's rights can be promoted.

The Interconnection of Language, Power and Gender

Sociolinguistic studies discovered that language plays an enormous role as a primary medium to promote social power and gender ideologies.¹⁴ Language choices promote equity and reinforce hierarchies; for example, Talbot reveals that language transmits cultural values of respect or discrimination, which are often intertwined with economic and political structures.¹⁵ This happens by passing words that do not sit well with each other or words that show honour and respect. This is evident when Zajda uses contempt or criticising terms that target specific genders. Such discriminatory language undermines the basic principles of human dignity.¹⁶ It is vital to note that education systems do not operate separately from their societies, as McGlazer cautions that formal education can make people separate from one another due to levels of life, and the standards of life contribute to their separation.¹⁷ This body of literature emphasises that teaching language, including nouns, must involve awareness and careful use of words related to power in a society.

Gender inequality in African languages and cultures

Language reflects patriarchal ideas, which means that our language shows a pattern of male dominance. Udenze wrote about the reckless use of language that disgraces women.¹⁸ Here, Udenze looked at the language used in published compositions such as magazines, newspapers, and police reports. This shows us that the way language is used sometimes marginalises the feminine gender. There is a convergence of ideas with Klaa, who also revealed that women should be overly respected because they keep the homes standing and warm them up, but the community tends to destroy their hard work by making them victims of crime, scamming them of their hard-earned money to feed their families.¹⁹ This teaches us that even though the women's role is seen in homes and economically, the community has a tendency to destroy them by not giving them respect. Udenze and Klaa, in their writings, differently they discussed the marginalization of women in language across Africa, which is a concern in this study as to how classrooms handle this issue during teaching and learning.²⁰

On the other hand, Ndlovu wrote about gender in the Ndebele clan, where nouns were revealed by looking at whether that noun is of a male or female.²¹ Ndlovu also looked deeply at what is said by

¹⁴ Norman Fairclough, "Critical Discourse Analysis," in *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2023), 11–22, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003035244-3>; McConnell-Ginet, *Words Matter*.

¹⁵ Daniel Talbot, "From Powerful Knowledge to Capabilities: Social Realism, Social Justice, and the Capabilities Approach," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 59, no. 2 (April 15, 2025): 219–39, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopedu/qhae050>.

¹⁶ Joseph Zajda, "Discourses of Globalisation and Education Reforms: Overcoming Discrimination," 2022, 105–18, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-96075-9_8.

¹⁷ Ramsey McGlazer, "'A Stratagem for Self-Oblivion': Rosselli, Real Talk, and the Abolition of the 'I,'" *The Yearbook of Comparative Literature* 65 (December 1, 2023): 164–93, <https://doi.org/10.3138/ycl-65-008>.

¹⁸ Silas Udenze, "Exploring Nigeria's Endsars Movement through the Nexus of Memory," *AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research*, December 31, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.5210/spir.v2023i0.13508>.

¹⁹ Cherifa Klaa, "Role of African Women in Development and Economic Life: Reality and Challenges," *International Journal of Inspiration & Resilience Economy* 4, no. 1 (2020): 1–9.

²⁰ Udenze, "Exploring Nigeria's Endsars Movement through the Nexus of Memory"; Klaa, "Role of African Women in Development and Economic Life: Reality and Challenges."

²¹ Sambulo Ndlovu, "The Toponym Bulawayo and Ideologies of Ndebele Language Purism in Zimbabwe," *International Journal of Language and Culture* 10, no. 2 (December 31, 2023): 209–23, <https://doi.org/10.1075/ijolc.00051.ndl>.

each noun as well as the elements that contribute to the change in the creation of a word.²² This tells us that there are roots of words that are used to create nouns of the masculine and feminine gender. Looking at those roots, it is very important to ensure that those nouns are created correctly and used correctly without opposing *Ubuntu* and violating women's rights. This reveals that there is a gender bias in African linguistic and cultural contexts.

This is confirmed by Gumbo, who made it visible that women's place in the Ndebele culture is determined by the opinions created in communities about women, as they are treated like children; no word of theirs is respected.²³ This shows us that according to the Ndebele social norms, a woman is dictated to and does not have that much power to make decisions as she sees fit. The way language is used should be carefully dealt with to ensure that degrading words are not used.

Critically, Chiliza and Masuku had converging ideas as above; they wrote a paper on Zulu idioms that show the curse of women by men.²⁴ Chiliza and Masuku continue to touch on the matter of respecting the things a woman should not call out by name, that is, that there are names a woman is not supposed to mention.²⁵ This shows us that in the Zulu culture, a person who should show respect is a woman, which makes it less important how she should be respected. A woman respects even the words; there are words she is not allowed to say. This study will insightfully ensure that it teaches *Ubuntu* and women's rights to learners at an early stage. The above section proves that the problem being studied can be understood properly if one acknowledges the specific culture and its language.

Using *Ubuntu* to Improve Language Teaching

Ubuntu can help in addressing many predicaments in education, especially in language teaching. Ngubane & Makua made an insightful observation that *Ubuntu* can transform teaching approaches and promote social cohesion and inclusivity.²⁶ This concept of *Ubuntu* can make changes in so many problematic areas, such as discrimination and abuse. This study is trying to get the methods used in teaching the noun that can help promote *Ubuntu* and women's rights, and yet Ngubane and Makua were dealing with *Ubuntu* transforming educational practices in South Africa.²⁷

Mnqayi and Ntuli connect the principles of *Ubuntu* used in the community, humanity, respect, and shared responsibility with teaching approaches that aim to free learners from oppression, inequality and passive learning.²⁸ This shows that it is important to instil *Ubuntu* in learners and a younger stage. This is an indication that there is a need to teach *Ubuntu* to young children; there is a need to evaluate how learners are taught *Ubuntu* and women's rights through the teaching of nouns.

Olawumi et al. wrote about placing the philosophy of *Ubuntu* in pre-service teacher education.²⁹ They explored a combination of *Ubuntu* philosophy in teacher education that includes preparing future teachers in training with *Ubuntu* -oriented values in education. This tells us that there is a need to train teachers about *Ubuntu*. Sefotho worked on *Ubuntu* translanguaging as a systematic approach to language teaching in multilingual classrooms in South Africa.³⁰ This research aims to apply *Ubuntu* principles through *Ubuntu* translanguaging as a pedagogical framework to improve multilingual language teaching

²² Ndlovu, "The Toponym Bulawayo and Ideologies of Ndebele Language Purism in Zimbabwe."

²³ Mishack Thiza Gumbo, "The Technology In Indigenous People's Culture: A Case Of Ndebele Culture In South Africa," *TPM-Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology* 32, no. S4 (2025): Posted 17 July (2025): 2048–59.

²⁴ Tholakele Henrietta Chiliza and Mfundo Mandla Masuku, "Manifestation of Gender Inequality in Some Zulu Proverbs That Reflect Patriarchal Domination of Women (by Men) within the Zulu Cultural Context," *Indilinga African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems* 19, no. 1 (2020): 58–69.

²⁵ Chiliza and Masuku, "Manifestation of Gender Inequality in Some Zulu Proverbs That Reflect Patriarchal Domination of Women (by Men) within the Zulu Cultural Context."

²⁶ Nomalungelo I Ngubane and Manyane Makua, "Intersection of *Ubuntu* Pedagogy and Social Justice: Transforming South African Higher Education," *Transformation in Higher Education* 6 (2021): 113.

²⁷ Ngubane and Makua, "Intersection of *Ubuntu* Pedagogy and Social Justice: Transforming South African Higher Education."

²⁸ Ayanda Mnqayi, Ziphozonke Ntuli, and Ntobeko Shoji, "Ubuntu Pedagogy: Lessons from Paulo Freire," *OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development* 18, no. 12 (2025): 677–82.

²⁹ Kayode Babatunde Olawumi, Mzuyanda Percival Mavuso, and Ntombozuku Stunku Duku, "Situating *Ubuntu* Philosophy in Pre-Service Teacher Education," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 23, no. 8 (August 30, 2024): 605–23, <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.23.8.31>.

³⁰ Malephole Philomena M Sefotho, "Ubuntu Translanguaging as a Systematic Approach to Language Teaching in Multilingual Classrooms in South Africa.," *Journal for Language Teaching/Ijenali Yekufundzisa Lulwimi/Tydskrif Vir Taalonderrig* 56, no. 1 (2022).

practices in South African classrooms. This was based on the application of Ubuntu principles; it shows that our classes need to be monitored as to how they promote Ubuntu, which is where this study will close the gap.

Broader Ubuntu Scholarship Applicable to Language Teaching

Choane wrote about translating the principles of Ubuntu, which are interconnectedness, communalism, mutual care, dignity and collective responsibility, into concrete teaching methods, classroom dynamics and assessment strategies.³¹ The emphasis was placed on respecting each other to maintain interconnectedness. It was also noted that, above all these factors mentioned, human dignity in practising all these factors was noted. This research revealed that Ubuntu is an important part and plays an important role in the smooth running of teaching and learning, including assessments. The gap is that my study is interested in Ubuntu and women's rights.

Ringstaff focused on how Afrocentric education implemented through a communal framework can serve as a liberatory practice for black students within the classroom setting.³² One of the most essential things about this article is that it talks about how to use the ideas of Afrocentric emancipation in real-life classroom situations, such as lesson plans, curriculum design, and teacher practices. Real-life classrooms have to do with how lessons are conducted, but my study will be focusing on non-pedagogy in terms of teaching Ubuntu and making aware of women's rights among learners.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is informed by Afrocentric theory. The Afrocentric theory was discovered by Molefi Kete Asante in 1980. This theory places African culture, knowledge systems, and lived experience at the centre of learning. Afrocentricity connects to isiZulu Home language, Ubuntu values, women's rights and women's dignity.³³

Afrocentric educational settings encourage teachers not to marginalise children by causing them to question their own self-worth, by seeing themselves as the subject rather than objects of education.³⁴ They continued to mention that it also does not condone degrading others' perspectives, but it recognises African languages as complete, sophisticated systems of knowledge, not as deficient versions of colonial languages.

Titi mentioned that Afrocentricity strongly supports mother tongue education, especially in the early schooling era.³⁵ Learning through African languages encourages conceptual understanding, cognitive development and cultural continuity. Titi also mentioned that Afrocentric education values communalism and Ubuntu, viewing learning as a shared social responsibility rather than an individual competition.³⁶ This theoretical framework is relevant to this topic because it covers all the important aspects of this research topic.

In the isiZulu Home Language classroom, the Afrocentric approach serves as a framework for analysing how nouns embody cultural values, social identities, and gendered significations. As a result, this theoretical framework is relevant in this study because naming usually portrays the character, value and historical background of a person. Employing an Afrocentric approach to educate on nouns can simultaneously foster Ubuntu and champion women's rights. Students should reflect on how specific nouns or address phrases maintain dignity, respect, and connection, while others may reinforce stereotypes or damage women.

³¹ Mamkhosi Choane, "The Significance of Ubuntu Pedagogy: Transforming Teaching and Learning at the University of the Free State in South Africa," *Journal of Education and Learning Technology* 6, no. 1 (2025): 96–101.

³² Tytianna Nikia Maria Ringstaff, "Afrocentric Education for Liberation in the Classroom: It Takes a Village to Raise a Child," *Education Sciences* 13, no. 6 (May 23, 2023): 532, <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13060532>.

³³ Oscar Oliver Eybers, "Afrocentricity and Decoloniality in Disciplinarity: A Reflective Dialogue on Academic Literacy Development," *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning (CrisTaL)* 11, no. 2 (2023): 48–64.

³⁴ Vuyokazi S Nomlomo and Oluwatoyin Ayodele Ajani, "Reimagining African Languages in Teacher Education: A South African Perspective," 2025.

³⁵ Neziswa Titi, "A Pedagogy of Authenticity: Inclusivity, Belonging and Care in Decolonial Undergraduate Education.," *Transformation in Higher Education* 10 (2025): 580.

³⁶ Titi, "A Pedagogy of Authenticity: Inclusivity, Belonging and Care in Decolonial Undergraduate Education."

Language choices, including nouns, are not neutral; they affect the portrayal of individuals and the formation of social interactions. Teaching about nouns promotes Ubuntu and women's rights. Students are urged to reflect on how nouns can express respect, dignity, and connection, while also analysing how specific nouns may reinforce stereotypes or belittle women. It assists students in understanding how nouns can influence social reality and provides them with the essential tools to use language that embodies respect and equality.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research used interviews with four participants who teach IsiZulu Home Language in schools. Four participants were selected on purpose because they all teach Zulu in grades 10 and 11, which are the grades that this research focused on. Therefore, these participants were selected because they have the necessary and necessary essentials for this research, which are ways of teaching a noun in a way that promotes the use of language without discrimination.³⁷

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four educators who teach the IsiZulu home language and helped me to produce information about teaching a noun as a way of advocating for humanity and the respect of women's rights. In these interviews, the educators quoted words that discriminate based on gender from the prescribed books they use when they teach. An audio recording was made during the semi-structured interviews, which lasted an hour for each participant. In addition, classes were observed for these four participants to confirm what they had said during interviews. An audio recording of the class observation was also made.

The results of the four participants are validated using gender-discriminative words given by the teachers during these interviews, which are taken from Zulu books that the teachers use when they teach. The books from which the teachers quoted discriminatory words include those selected because they consist of nouns that reveal the discrimination of women in the Zulu language. These words have been explained together with the plots that come from what the participants say to emphasise methods of teaching that the participants see fit when teaching a noun, intending to promote humanity and the respect of women.

During observation of classes, some of these things were demonstrated during teaching and learning. The information produced is outlined using a method of interpreting and clarifying by plots. Dawadi says that researchers who are interpreters carefully examine the way that allows them to reach the greater depth of knowledge they need at the time.³⁸ This qualitative research revealed the truth about teaching nouns in IsiZulu Home Language to promote humanity and respect for women's rights. The information produced is clarified using a method of interpretation using plots because this method can put together similar plots so that they can be clarified following a selected perspective and theory.

To create authenticity in research, the information derived from participants consists of different interviews recorded and presented as is and validated using the perspective of interpreting, the Afrocentric theory, as well as different compositions by different writers.

This research is taken from the broader research conducted when the researcher was completing his Doctoral degree at the university. The university authorised the commencement of this research under the following correct research protocol: HSSREC/00003918/2022.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This section serves to present the research findings that address the main question of this study. These findings are extracted from the interviews and classroom observations with the participants. The names used for the participants are pseudonyms; they are not real. The results of this study show what happens during the teaching of nouns, which results in indicating different attitudes towards treating women in an IsiZulu HL lesson.

³⁷ Sukairaj Hafiz Imam et al., "Automatic Speech Recognition for African Low-Resource Languages: Challenges and Future Directions," in *Proceedings of the Sixth Workshop on African Natural Language Processing (AfricaNLP 2025)*, 2025, 89–94.

³⁸ Saraswati Dawadi, "Thematic Analysis Approach: A Step by Step Guide for ELT Research Practitioners," *Journal of NELTA* 25, no. 1–2 (2020): 62–71.

This research used thematic analysis. Lochmiller defined thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data.³⁹ He further explained that it produces a generalized understanding of coded data based on the recurring application of codes and patterns associated with those codes. This study was analysed by thematic analysis. Similar facts are coded to summarise themes.

During semi-structured interviews, most of the important information was written down, while a voice recording was also used to ensure that any details that might have been accidentally omitted were captured. These measures made it easier to compile and present trustworthy and reliable information. The trustworthiness of the data was ensured, and the data was not translated in a way that would alter its meaning; instead, it was interpreted without interfering with what the participants.

The themes from the data analysis are as follows: educators' effort in encouraging reserved learners in IsiZulu HL classes, classroom practices that lead to discrimination of women, educators' perspective on the promotion of Ubuntu in their classrooms, and approaches used in class when teaching nouns compared to informal learning of nouns from the community.

Educators' Efforts in Encouraging Reserved Learners

When the participants were asked about which methods of teaching they use to teach nouns to advocate for humanity and the respect of women's rights, they answered as follows:

Ms Biyela:

I choose the communicative method because learners become part of everything that happens when learning takes place. I make sure that during the discussions, every learner gets a chance to talk since it is a human right to express oneself. I make sure that everybody exercises this right because there are those, especially, who do not want to be part of building knowledge together with other learners due to their own reasons.

When asked why it is important to allow everyone access to their right to participate in class during teaching and learning, she expressed that:

Ms Biyela:

The communicative method and the teaching discussion method do not encourage learners to keep quiet. It also helps those learners who are shy to speak because they fear being a laughingstock; they end up speaking because they know they are protected, especially those with impairments that are not acceptable in communities, such as being plus-sized, which makes them feel ashamed of themselves.

When the participant was asked about the reasons that make other learners reserved, she answered in this manner:

Ms Biyela:

This behaviour is usually practiced by girls with physical problems, e.g., too thin or too big. As a result, they become reluctant to work, especially in giving correct answers or sharing their ideas about the lesson, because they are afraid of being called names, e.g., Umconjwana (too thin), Isidudla (too big/too fat).

Mrs Cele:

I use the question-and-answer method in my teaching of nouns because it helps me give my learners a chance to demonstrate the knowledge they have about nouns. During their answering of questions, it helps me to see their level of understanding. It also helps me to encourage reserved learners who do not want to talk in class. I believe that once the learner is active in class, he understands better. Once the learner becomes passive in class, the level of understanding drops. It is important

³⁹ Chad Lochmiller, "Conducting Thematic Analysis with Qualitative Data," *The Qualitative Report*, June 20, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.5008>.

to give them a chance to participate while learning, and it is their right to express themselves.

Mr Duma:

I believe in using new teaching methods, such as the critical observation method, because it makes all learners think. The disadvantage of this method is that, for those who are lazy, they can become passive. I always try to make everyone speak after observation. It sometimes becomes difficult to force them to express themselves. The answers after observation need to be channelled in the correct way. These participants raised one concern: the passive learners in class who do not want to express themselves. Another participant raised an issue of being reserved due to physical appearance and their reasons for being reserved.

Classroom practices that lead to discrimination against women.

There was another theme that transpired during interviews with the participants. During the interview, there were two participants who touched on this theme, and they raised this.

Mr Duma:

It happens sometimes when you use a discussion method; the lesson diverts and takes the route you never planned. I remember in one of the noun lessons, when we were discussing nouns that were used in class, which made learners ask questions that surprised me as a teacher. The discussion was about the nouns derived from verbs. When I was explaining verbs as doing words, I tried to further explain that there are good deeds, e.g. from the verb ukufunda to the noun isifundiswa. The bad ones could be the verb gebenga to the noun isigebengu. There are shameful deeds and very grateful deeds. We had to differentiate good and bad naming words derived from verbs. During our brainstorming, examples like isifebe and isoka came out. We ended up discussing that the bad action done by females is not given the same weight when performed by males; they are doing the same thing, and yet the same action, if performed by males, is given different weight in terms of naming words. That showed that males are given special treatment as compared to women. The situation became tense because it showed that females are discriminated against by the communities they are living in and serving. There were so many words that were used as examples, which show that women are discriminated against by their communities, e.g., iseqamgwaqo. And isindindwa (a female person with no direction). This word is usually used to describe females who do not behave well in terms of character.

The researcher asked the next participant to highlight the classroom practice that leads to discrimination against women due to the use of different methods of teaching or any other classroom practice. This is how he responded:

Ms Hlela:

When teaching nouns, I often use the integrated learning method. This method is useful when you want learners to be cautious of certain things when learning takes place. There was a time when we compared the stages of development in women with how they are called when they reach a particular age. We were looking at all the stages of development of a woman and the nouns associated with that. In this lesson, we had to branch the use of suffixes and their impacts on nouns. Some of the nouns that were found are as follows: 'itshitshi' (a virgin), 'iqhikiza' (a young maiden who leads the virgins), 'umfazi/ unkosikazi' (wife), as well as 'isalukazi' (an old lady). The lesson diverted such that there was a use of words that are not acceptable, like the word "female called Umazalelekhaya (meaning female having babies with different fathers. This is not acceptable in Zulu culture; the truth is

some males do the same to different females. A female who is not lucky to get married is given an ugly name formulated after a dog” umgodonganukwanja”. This is a terrible name to be used on human beings. When naming males having the same problem, it is called “isigwadi”, meaning not sharp; with females, it needs to be sharpened like a knife.

Educators' perspective on the promotion of Ubuntu in their classrooms.

The educators were asked how they instilled and promoted Ubuntu and women's rights in their classrooms.

Ms Biyela alluded that:

When I teach nouns relating to family, community and identity, I make sure that I place emphasis on respect, equality and kindness. By doing so, my learners begin to realise that isiZulu is not only about communication but a guide for human behaviour. They learn that language carries value.

Mrs Cele indicated that:

During discussions and reading activities, I always encourage learners to question gendered assumptions in literature. This approach helps in developing critical thinking and helps them to look at women as equal members in the community.

Mr Duma raised that:

The experience taught me that in my teaching, I need to use classroom activities that promote cooperation in working together and an ability to understand and share feelings for one another.

Miss Hlela explained that:

I try to incorporate women's rights and Ubuntu in isiZulu lessons because it helps us address issues such as disrespect, name-calling and discriminatory language. I find that when learners understand the cultural value of Ubuntu, they become more open to treating girls with respect and recognising them as equals.

This showed us that teachers do their work of having classes that promote Ubuntu and women's rights.

Approaches used in teaching a noun in class

This was discovered during the classroom observations, and the findings from all the participants are as follows:

From Ms Biyela, it was observed that the approach was Afrocentric in the sense that the examples that were used were African-centred examples, e.g. abantu, omama, odade, ubabekazi, insizwa, etc.

From Mrs Cele, it was noticed that the Afrocentric approach was used, whereby learners were encouraged to identify nouns that represent Ubuntu, e.g. umusa, umphakathi, ukuhlonipha, uzwelo, isihe, etc.

From Mr Duma, it was clear that this participant believed in Critical Discourse Analysis.⁴⁰ Learners were instructed to discuss and question how language

⁴⁰ R. Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse-Historical Approach," *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, 2015, 1-14.

constructs power and promotes Ubuntu. This was well discussed until they had to write sentences using empowering nouns, e.g. undlunkulu, intokazi, etc.

From Miss Hlela, a collaborative learning approach was used where they had to role-play scenarios where learners use respectful noun forms when addressing or describing women.

DISCUSSION

This research study is exploring the teaching of the noun in isiZulu Home Language classrooms to promote Ubuntu and women's rights. It applied the qualitative study approach in terms of data collection tools and the interpretation of data. The data collected reveal that the classes of isiZulu Home Language can make a difference in cautioning how learners use nouns recklessly, unaware that it hurts. The way teachers handle their lessons can make a big difference.⁴¹

The findings from interviews showed that most participants had common problems, which were a result of using communicative and discussion methods of teaching. Classes have a common problem of reserved learners during teaching and learning.⁴² Having experienced educators helps them to participate up to the end of the lesson. After the interviews, the classes were also observed; this involvement of learners was witnessed by the researcher. Most of the learners who were questioned and dragged out of their shells to be part of the lessons were girls. This showed that what Talbot said in the literature review was really revealed by the behaviour of learners who look down upon themselves in class.⁴³ It was also confirmed by Zajda that language used irresponsibly causes problems such as criticism and damage to human dignity.⁴⁴ Furthermore, what teachers said during interviews about passive learners was witnessed in action during classroom observations.

The findings show that because of the use of the discussion method in one of the classes, the lesson was derailed and shifted to a discussion about negative behaviours committed by males versus those committed by females. All these bad and good actions are given naming words, which are called nouns, and yet they have different impacts in terms of language usage. This aligns with Ndlovu from the literature review, who said that there are roots of words used to create nouns of masculine and feminine gender.⁴⁵ Other nouns are named after certain actions.

It was discovered that participants also use the integrated learning method, which was used in teaching nouns based on stages of development in a female's life. The lesson was diverted so that words that are not acceptable and have surfaced in the community were used. The teacher had the opportunity to instil and reprimand the unacceptable use of words. In that way, he got a chance to plant the seed of Ubuntu and women's rights, especially as he sensitised their conscience.⁴⁶ This is not acceptable in Zulu culture, because the truth is, some males do the same to different females. When using Afrocentric theory, the teaching of nouns becomes a tool to promote Ubuntu and women's rights.⁴⁷

The findings show that inside classes, the teacher can emphasise respect, equality, and kindness during the teaching of isiZulu classes. The same educator showed that learners begin to realise that isiZulu is not only about communication but also a guide for human behaviour. They learn that language carries values of one's culture, which is very important to be transferred correctly to young people.⁴⁸

⁴¹ Rune Johan Krumsvik, "Classroom Management in a Time of Upheaval," *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy* 16, no. 3–4 (December 14, 2021): 91–101, <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1891-943x-2021-03-04-01>.

⁴² Claudia Gherghel, Shoko Yasuda, and Yosuke Kita, "Interaction during Online Classes Fosters Engagement with Learning and Self-Directed Study Both in the First and Second Years of the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Computers & Education* 200 (July 2023): 104795, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2023.104795>.

⁴³ Talbot, "From Powerful Knowledge to Capabilities: Social Realism, Social Justice, and the Capabilities Approach."

⁴⁴ Zajda, "Discourses of Globalisation and Education Reforms: Overcoming Discrimination."

⁴⁵ Ndlovu, "The Toponym Bulawayo and Ideologies of Ndebele Language Purism in Zimbabwe."

⁴⁶ Mustafa Adsız and Serkan Dinçer, "The Analysis of Classroom Management Challenges Faced by Teachers in Online Classrooms," *TechTrends* 69, no. 2 (March 31, 2025): 345–61, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-025-01042-8>.

⁴⁷ Choane, "The Significance of Ubuntu Pedagogy: Transforming Teaching and Learning at the University of the Free State in South Africa."

⁴⁸ Anila Hasnain, John Hajek, and Rohan Borschmann, "The Association between Cultural and Linguistic Maintenance and Mental Health in Migrant Adolescents: A Scoping Review," *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 70, no. 8 (2024): 1360–78.

When using Afrocentric theory, learners are encouraged to analyse how certain nouns address terms that affirm dignity, respect, and interconnectedness, while others may perpetuate stereotypes or undermine women.⁴⁹

It was discovered that classroom activities, especially pair and group activities, promote cooperation with each other, and that results in Ubuntu. They also bond as they work together, making them alert when they talk to each other.⁵⁰ The theoretical framework of Afrocentricity, used in this research, equips them to use language in ways that uphold respect, equality, and human dignity.⁵¹ This confirms this cooperation and the ability to work together to promote Ubuntu amongst each other. Even if the teachers are trying to teach Ubuntu through lessons, parents and the community also need to play their part, as the African philosophy states that it takes a village to raise a child.⁵²

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations made by the researcher:

- Encourage the concept of collaborative learning to foster respect for women's rights and Ubuntu.
- Using classroom activities to provide instruction on women's rights as well as on the concept of Ubuntu.
- Consolidate integrated learning approaches that reflect cultural and developmental stages.
- Students who actively participate in a class can help both students and instructors become closer to one another and enjoy the session from the beginning to the end.
- It is imperative that educators continue to receive training and develop their abilities in gender-sensitive instructional techniques.
- The ability to maintain strong discipline and control over the classroom is of the utmost importance when using discussion-based techniques.

CONCLUSION

This study looked at how teaching nouns in the isiZulu Home Language classroom can help promote Ubuntu and women's rights. Employing a case study qualitative research approach, the findings indicated that learners frequently use nouns in ways that signify underlying societal attitudes, occasionally inflicting injury, notably upon girls, unknowingly. The results show how important teachers are, since the decisions they make about how to educate affect how interested students are and how aware they are of how to use polite language. Classroom observations corroborated that numerous female students often exhibit quietness or withdrawal, reinforcing research that highlights the influence of gendered socialisation on student confidence. However, proficient educators can encourage them to participate actively and facilitate genuine engagement with the course.

The study also indicated that while discussion-based tactics are useful, they can lead to sensitive gender disputes in class. However, these times are important for teachers to call out bad language and promote the values of Ubuntu and respect for all genders. Integrated learning and Afrocentricity let students think about how nouns and naming practices can either protect people's dignity or make stereotypes stronger. Teachers who used these tactics well helped students understand that language is more than just a way to talk to each other; it is also a way to share cultural values and promote equality.

It was clear that working together in pairs and groups helped students get along better and taught them values that are in line with Ubuntu. The results show that schools cannot teach these values on their own; families and communities must also support and model them, especially because communities play a part in authorising names, words and nouns. The Afrocentric idea was confirmed that a kid is raised by the whole village. In conclusion, the study shows that teaching isiZulu nouns can be a powerful

⁴⁹ Ngubane and Makua, "Intersection of Ubuntu Pedagogy and Social Justice: Transforming South African Higher Education."

⁵⁰ Fan, "Research on the Relationship Between Emotion and Language Based on Citespace - Taking WOS Data as an Example (2016-2025)."

⁵¹ Choane, "The Significance of Ubuntu Pedagogy: Transforming Teaching and Learning at the University of the Free State in South Africa."

⁵² Ringstaff, "Afrocentric Education for Liberation in the Classroom: It Takes a Village to Raise a Child."

way to promote Ubuntu, respect, and women's rights in the classroom when it is directed by Afrocentricity and based on cultural values.

Disclosure and conflicts of interest

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