

# Furthering the Aim of Multilingualism through Integrated Terminology Development\*

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**Abstract:** This article aims at giving a brief account of how the activities of the Unit for isiXhosa, one of the five units of the Stellenbosch University Language Centre, contributes to the development of integrated technical terminology lists for all departments of the University. After the reason for this terminology development has been explained, a description is given of the six trilingual terminology lists that have been compiled so far. On a discussion of the problem of finding suitable isiXhosa terminological equivalents follows an exposition of the methodology used in compiling these lists. Finally it is shown how the collaboration with various bodies benefits the Unit for isiXhosa. The article concludes by stating how these lists have been received and are made known.

**Keywords:** MULTILINGUALISM, TERMINOLOGY DEVELOPMENT, EQUIVALENTS, SUBJECT AND LANGUAGE PRACTITIONERS, ACADEMIC LANGUAGE, TRANSLATION, TERM-FORMATION, TECHNICAL TERMINOLOGY, WORD LISTS

**Opsomming: Bevordering van die doelwit van meertaligheid deur geïntegreerde terminologieontwikkeling.** Hierdie artikel beoog om 'n kort verslag te gee van hoe die bedrywighede van die Eenheid vir isiXhosa, een van die vyf eenhede van die Taalsentrum van die Universiteit van Stellenbosch, bydra tot die ontwikkeling van geïntegreerde tegniese terminologielyste vir alle akademiese departemente van die Universiteit. Nadat die rede vir hierdie terminologieontwikkeling verduidelik is, word 'n beskrywing gegee van die ses drietalige terminologielyste wat reeds sover saamgestel is. Op 'n bespreking van die probleem om gepaste isiXhosa terminologiese ekwivalente te vind, volg 'n uiteensetting van die metodologie wat gevolg word by die samestelling van hierdie lyste. Laastens word aangetoon hoe die samewerking met verskillende liggame die Eenheid vir isiXhosa bevoordeel. Die artikel eindig deur te vermeld hoe hierdie lyse ontvang is en bekend gestel word.

**Sleutelwoorde:** VEELTALIGHEID, TERMINOLOGIEONTWIKKELING, EKWIVALENTE, VAK- EN TAALPRAKTISYNS, AKADEMIESE TAAL, VERTALING, TERMVORMING, TEGNIESE TERMINOLOGIE, WOORDELYSTE

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## Introduction

The University of Stellenbosch, being an Afrikaans institution in its tuition, is faced with the challenge of catering for other students, especially isiXhosa-speaking students, who have no previous knowledge of Afrikaans. In April 2003 the Stellenbosch University Language Centre established a Unit for isiXhosa, alongside the other five existing units, two of which are aimed at Afrikaans and English. The other three units are the following:

- The Unit for Document Design focuses on research on document design, text structure, text quality, professional communication, scientific writing skills and related topics.
- The Writing Laboratory takes a client-centred approach to create a space where all students and staff of the University can participate in academic discourse about writing.
- The Language Service offers translation, editing, copywriting, transcription and whisper interpreting services to clients on and off the University campus.

The two units dealing with Afrikaans and English have the following objectives:

- The Unit for Afrikaans chiefly aims at empowering students of the University to enable them to utilize generic language and thinking skills in a strategic and responsible manner within different contexts.
- The Unit for English aims at assisting students to acquire and polish reading, writing and speaking skills necessary for successful academic performance.

To these two units have been added another for isiXhosa:

- The Unit for isiXhosa functions in close co-operation with the Department of African Languages. It has the special task of contributing to the promotion of isiXhosa as an academic language, creating opportunities to further the use of isiXhosa in general. In this way the University of Stellenbosch has responded to the Constitution of South Africa, which provides for multilingualism and the development of the South African linguistic heritage. By setting the Unit for isiXhosa this task, the University wishes to contribute to the development of the indigenous languages of South Africa, IsiXhosa especially being the most important indigenous language in the Western Cape region.

## The services rendered by the Unit for isiXhosa

The Unit for isiXhosa offers a twofold service to the realization of isiXhosa.

Firstly, it is responsible for the development of language skills in isiXhosa. In collaboration with the Department of African Languages, short acquisition courses are presented to both the University staff and students. These courses provide them with multilingual skills in communicating with isiXhosa speakers in their own language. Visiting overseas students gain access to these courses through the International Office, which promotes and supports the international mobility of academic staff and students by developing and implementing the University's international relations. These communication skills are especially beneficiary to non-South African students as their own institutions sometimes require them to learn something about the languages and cultures of the particular countries when they are doing projects among the communities there.

Secondly, the Unit for isiXhosa is responsible for the development of integrated technical terminology lists for the academic departments of the University of Stellenbosch. These lists are compiled with the main aim of providing academic support to students with isiXhosa as mother tongue so that some of their academic material can be learnt in their own language. Through this project, it is hoped that students will gain a better understanding in their study activities. This concurs with the remarks of Dlodlo (1999: 328): "The use of mother languages of instruction ... should facilitate the extension of educational opportunities in science and technology at colleges and universities, particularly to those students from rural communities whose command of the English language is limited." The fact that departments of African languages at South African universities are closing down because student numbers have fallen drastically, has been highlighted from time to time. This dwindling of numbers in other Southern African countries has also been noticed by Dlodlo (2005: 8), who emphasizes the importance of the development of African languages by saying that "our indigenous languages are dying — our languages must be used extensively to empower people".

IsiXhosa, belonging to the Nguni family of languages, is one of the official languages of South Africa and next to English and Afrikaans the most used language in the Western Cape. Apart from the Western Cape, it is spoken in five other provinces, namely: Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Free State, North-West and Gauteng.

Together with other South African indigenous languages, isiXhosa is hampered by several factors which diminish its status. As Alberts (2000) indicates, the government, through its policies prior to 1994, marginalized the indigenous languages of South Africa, preventing them from gaining the same powerful status as English and Afrikaans. This state of affairs made its speakers lose confidence in isiXhosa as a language of wider communication, allowing themselves to be absorbed by other dominant languages. It is important to restore the people's confidence in their own language. This idea is supported by Hoffmann and Ytsma (2004: 32) who observe that language is the main instrument for upholding or promoting a group's ethnic identities.

### **The reason for terminology development**

The isiXhosa terminology project aims at providing, especially for students, basic technical vocabularies in different subject fields through the translation of terms. In this way, they will acquire the necessary vocabulary needed to communicate scientifically in these particular subject fields. The compilation of these terminological lists will enable isiXhosa-speaking students to learn the basic concepts of these subject fields in their own language.

Sharing knowledge is one of the purposes of this project. The idea is to improve communication by enabling the target group to have this developed terminology at their disposal to designate the same concepts with the same terms. This will help to clear up the confusion and to avoid the misunderstanding caused by the use of different terms for the same concept.

Apart from the fact that, according to Hoffmann and Ytsma (2004: 62), language is a symbol of identity as well as a means of promoting ethnic identities, it is a resource of multilingualism which will give its speakers access to a greater body of knowledge and larger social circles. It is a kind of knowledge that will enable them to have a better understanding of other members of society through a language culture.

By using a sociolinguistic approach, this project has been developed to create new terms in isiXhosa, a development which reflects the influx of new ideas into the language to such a degree that, as community members, they have acquired a new way of looking at reality and a new self-awareness. It will forge a link between the community and the technical world as Cluver (1989: 199) suggests. "The aim of terminology development," says Alberts (2000: 238), "is to support ... the formulation, development, implementation of a national policy and strategies concerning technical languages with a view to the promotion of scientific and technical communication."

This will hopefully lead to determined efforts by the target groups of the different terminology lists to revitalize and revive their language, so that, in spite of its utilitarian function, it will also become a source of pride. In the environment of the University of Stellenbosch, where isiXhosa comes only third, after Afrikaans and English, these lists will regulate usage, mitigate misunderstanding, and improve communication.

It is the primary objective of this terminological project to assist isiXhosa students in understanding Afrikaans and English textbooks in their own language, which may result significantly in increasing their academic performance, because cognition and conceptualization will have taken place through their home language. This terminological project is accomplished in an integrated way, being performed in close collaboration with the different academic departments and faculties to ensure that the terminology in common use is provided. The Unit has already developed seven trilingual terminology lists, which can broadly be divided into two groups: (a) Generic terminology lists which comprise an Academic list, an Administrative list, and a list of Faculties, Departments and Academic Divisions together with Administration and Ser-

vices, and (b) Subject-specific terminology lists which include lists of Sociology, Social Work, Psychology and Law terms.

All these lists have been published in booklet format, with the exception of the list of Faculties, Departments, and Academic Divisions together with Administration and Services which is available electronically on the website of the Language Centre: <http://www.sun.ac.za/taalsentrum>. The reason for its electronic format is that it can easily be changed and added to when necessary. This is also the only list which does not contain short definitions in English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa of all the terms listed.

#### (a) Generic terminology lists

##### Academic list

*Isigama sobuNgcali beMfundo/Generic Academic Terminology/Generiese Akademiese Terminologie* comprises 147 entries of terms commonly used in the University environment. The terms were collected from various sources of an academic nature. This is the only list having a reference register at the back to guide the user in finding the English and isiXhosa equivalents for the Afrikaans terms. It was published in 2004 with C.B. Basson as co-compiler.

##### Administrative list

*Isigama sobuNgcali boLawulo/Generic Administrative Terminology/Generiese Administratiewe Terminologie* contains 206 terms which a student may encounter in the administrative environment of the University of Stellenbosch. The list is meant for isiXhosa students who do not understand Afrikaans and who have English as a second language. The main purpose for compiling this list was to help these students to find their way through the process of administration at the University. In the initial conceptualization of this list, the publication *WE-TUS: Wegwyser vir Engelse Taalgebruik aan die US*, compiled by Walter Winckler and Mattie van der Merwe, was used as a guideline. The list, co-authored with C.A. Basson, was published in 2004.

Before publication, the Academic and Administrative lists were submitted electronically to various subject and language specialists for evaluation and editing. Later, a workshop was organized for coordinating and considering the comments of these practitioners on these lists before they were finally adopted for publication.

##### Faculties list

This list which comprises 183 entries, is divided into two parts: first, *IiFakhalthi, amaSebe namaCadelo eMfundo/Faculties, Departments and Academic Divisions/Fakulteite, Departemente en Akademiese Afdelings* (with 147 entries), and second,

*ULawulo neeNkonzo/Administration and Services/Administrasie en Dienste* (with 36 entries).

Except for the terms taken from the calendar (prospectus) of the University of Stellenbosch, it lists the names of the faculties, departments, centres and other academic divisions collected from the University website where they are presented in both Afrikaans and English. To these the isiXhosa terms were added later. After compilation this list was made available electronically to all the faculties and departments, giving them the opportunity to comment on the isiXhosa equivalents provided. Most departments found these acceptable, with the exception of a few that preferred to use the transliterated equivalents. For example, the Faculty of Arts preferred to use *ifakhalthi yeAthsi* instead of *ifakhalthi yobuGcisa*, which was found not comprehensive enough to include all the departments falling under it. The Department of Logistics also preferred to use the transliterated term *iLojistiki* rather than any of the other names suggested.

#### **(b) Subject-specific terminology lists**

##### **Sociology list**

*Isigama seSosiyoloji/Sociology Terminology/Sosiologie-Terminologie* consists of 344 entries. The English entries together with their definitions were drawn from the third edition, published in 2004, of Margaret L. Andersen and Howard H. Taylor's book *Understanding a Diverse Society* with the permission of Wadsworth Publishing Company. The isiXhosa and Afrikaans equivalents were added later. The terminology presented is aimed at first-year students in Sociology. It was published in 2005 with Erina Basson as co-author.

##### **Social Work list**

*Isigama sobuNtlalontle/Social Work Terminology/Maatskaplikewerk-Terminologie* contains 325 entries. The isiXhosa version was added to the existing English and Afrikaans taken from the *New Dictionary of Social Work/Nuwe woordeboek vir maatskaplike werk* compiled by the Terminology Committee for Social Work. The terminology is meant for use by first-year students taking Social Work as subject.

##### **Psychology list**

*Isigama esingengabula-zigcawu kwiSayikholoji/An Introduction to Psychology Terminology/'n Inleiding tot Sielkunde-Terminologie* consists of 514 entries. The list is divided into nine chapters: psychology as a science and a profession, physiological psychology, sensation and perception, state of consciousness, learning, memory, intelligence, thinking and language, and motivation and emotion. The terms were initially drawn from the book *Psychology: An Introduction for Stu-*

*dents in Southern Africa* by D.A. Louw and D.J.A. Edwards, the second edition of which was published in 1997 by Heinemann. Both isiXhosa and Afrikaans equivalents were added later. The list is meant for first-year students in Psychology. The original list in English, compiled by Dr Judora Spangenberg, a former lecturer at the Department of Psychology, University of Stellenbosch, was reworked to its present form. Published in 2006, it was co-authored with Deirdré Roos.

### **Law list**

*Isigama sezoMthetho/Law Terminology/Regsterminologie* comprises 283 entries divided into four chapters: family law, customary law, criminal law and an introduction to law. The family law terms were extracted by Prof. S. Human from the book *Introduction to South African Family Law* which she co-authored with J.A. Robinson and A. Boshoff and which was published in 2002. Ms M. Nel compiled the criminal law terms from the third edition of C.R. Snyman's book *Criminal Law* which was published in 1995 by Butterworth, while a senior student Phozisa Nana was responsible for the definitions. Phozisa Nana also provided the terms and definitions in English for the chapter on customary law. The terms for the chapter "Introduction to law" were extracted by Prof. Lourens M. du Plessis from his book *Introduction to Law* published by Juta. The terminology is aimed at first-year Law students. The Latin terms are presented untranslated, while the English terms and definitions are translated into isiXhosa and Afrikaans. The publication year is 2007 and the co-author Deirdré Roos.

### **The provision of equivalents**

The isiXhosa equivalents provided in these lists are of a mixed nature. Indigenous equivalent terms were used in so far as they were available. Though there are some transliterated term equivalents, most of the equivalents consist of a brief translation of the source language terms so that there is a one-to-one meaning relation between the source language and target language equivalents. "Borrowing directly from European languages, by phonetic transcription," says Dlodlo (2005: 325), "should be avoided since such borrowed words do not convey any meaning initially and such a method produces clumsy-sounding Nguni science words." The syntax, word structure, vocabulary and sound system of English are so different from those of African languages that a useful scientific vocabulary cannot be created by transliteration. This agrees with Mphahlele (2001) who argues for the use of translated equivalents rather than transliterated ones. He supports his argument by saying that, because of the one-to-one meaning relation, the terminology user would be able to deduce the meaning of the source language terms.

However, sometimes it was impossible to find suitable translation equiva-

lents for concepts unknown in the isiXhosa vocabulary. As a result the terminologist was confronted with the challenge of transliterating the terms for these new concepts into isiXhosa. These adoptives were adapted and naturalized to be identified, written and articulated as isiXhosa words.

### **The compilation methodology**

These terminology lists are compiled according to priorities determined by needs assessments. The requests from the departments are referred to the head of the Unit for isiXhosa who liaise with the head of that specific department to discuss the detailed specifications pertaining to the envisaged project.

When the director of the centre for funding has given the go-ahead for a project, the unit instructs the head to find a suitable person to provide a documented list of terms and their definitions in the source language, usually English. The list is handed to the Unit and the terminologists provide translation equivalents and definitions in isiXhosa and in Afrikaans. These terminological projects concur with the linguistic theory of Catford (1965) which states that a translation should have the same effect on a target language reader as the source language would have had on a source language reader.

The terminological list is then sent electronically to two subject-field specialists who are lecturers from the specific departments, one for isiXhosa and one for Afrikaans. They are responsible for quality control, giving their feedback in writing. After the necessary corrections have been made, these lists are sent to the language specialists in English, isiXhosa and Afrikaans for editing and proofreading the sections dealing with their specific languages, for checking the orthography, spelling, punctuation, etc. The edited lists are then entered into the Unit's database.

Finally these lists go to the Unit for Document Design, where they are converted into pdf files, the cover pages are prepared and then sent to the printers. When printed in booklet form, they are officially presented to the relevant departments. These departments then decide how these publications should be treated, for example whether they should be put on WebCT, as the Department of Sociology has done.

### **Collaboration with various bodies**

The Unit for isiXhosa has effective partnerships and working relationships with various bodies. The nature of its work requires the Unit to have contractual ties for collaboration purposes, e.g. with departments and other institutions on the campus of the University of Stellenbosch. It has a networking relationship with the language specialists from the provincial and national bodies, who help through their professional service with translation, proofreading and editing.

One of the fruitful working relationships it enjoys is with the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB). When the unit for isiXhosa hosted its first



terminology training in February 2006, the presenter Dr M. Alberts was from PanSALB.

The three-day workshop was held in close collaboration with the Department of African Languages at the University of Stellenbosch. Language practitioners of the indigenous South African languages were invited to speak on the principles, procedures and practice of terminology and terminography in the African languages.

The aim of the workshop was to equip language practitioners with all the basic skills needed to carry out a project through all the stages of the terminological process. It was a hands-on workshop that focused among others on the following topics: the cognitive, linguistic and communicative dimensions of terminology, word-forming principles, needs assessment, the consultation and planning of technical dictionaries, and the practice of term list compilation.

It was attended by participants from all over South Africa. It turned out to be a multilingual terminology training session, as the following languages were represented: Afrikaans, isiXhosa, isiZulu, isiNdebele, Sesotho, Setswana, and Sepedi. As a result of this diversity, the communication was in English.

The workshop proved to be a problem-solver for the participants who communicated the difficulties they encounter in their daily work as language practitioners. Dr Alberts's theoretical and practical sessions developed the participants' knowledge and expertise with regard to terminology development. They were all encouraged to discover and regard terminology development as a solution to language development.

### **The impact of the wordlists**

The response to the wordlists compiled so far by the Unit for isiXhosa were positive throughout the University of Stellenbosch and even from other universities positive feedback was received. Especially the Departments at which the wordlists are aimed have done much to advertise these wordlists in specialized journals and on departmental web pages. They were also brought to the notice of dignitaries in specific government departments related to some of the subject fields which these lists cover.

The services and products of the Unit for isiXhosa are publicized and made known by means of brochures, bulletins and open days, and sold through effective marketing strategies.

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