

Study Unit 1 – Cultural & Historical Background of African Languages

ORIGINS

African Languages = Bantu Languages / Proto-Bantu (Ur-Bantu)



One single parent language

SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND PRACTICES

- social group in which a person exists is regarded as important for the success of the individual
 - the word 'uncle' cannot simply be translated into an African language without the specification as to what nature of the relationship is
 - mother's brother = *umalume*
 - father's younger brother = *utatomncinci*
 - father's older brother = *utatomdala*

LANGUAGE & INTERPRETATION OF REALITY

Blue & Green = -luhlaza

I missed the train = Ndilahlekelwe yimela yam

THE FOLKTALE

FOLKLORE

- Verbal art
- Preserved & handed down by word of mouth from one generation to another
 - Examples: folktales, myths, fables, legends, praise poems, folk songs, proverbs, idioms, riddles
- 4 types of narrations – folktales, myths, fables, legends
- Most common type of narration = folktales

VALUE & PURPOSE OF FOLKTALES

- Narrated to entertain, educate & instruct children & adults
- Social values are instilled & encouraged
- Children learn to relate to their natural & social environment through the spoken word
- They have timeless messages & universal qualities
- A means of introducing subjects for discussion
- Nature of stories – embody the inherited wisdom – social, personal & moral – of the people whose world we see through the filter of folklore

STORYTELLER – AUDIENCE INTERPLAY

- Interruptions – not a sign of disrespect but rather one of politeness = the audience assures the storyteller that he/she still has their attention
- Oral communication is highly valued
- Storytelling constitutes a crucial part of daily life
- Listeners usually consist of an extended family & the grandmother is usually the narrator

THE STRUCTURE OF A FOLKTALE

- Introduction = “*Kwathi ke kaloku*” or “*Kwahlala kwahlala kwayintsomi*” = Long, long ago / It is said that a long long time ago / Once upon a time)
- End = “*Phela phela ngantsomi*” = Here ends the story
- Purpose of the narration is to invite further debate & thought on issues of life

THEMES OF FOLKTALES

- Theme that educates or raises awareness on important issues in life
 - Dangers of jealousy
 - Arrogance
 - Greed
 - Unfaithfulness
 - Cruelty
 - Laziness
- Importance of qualities
 - Wisdom
 - Bravery
 - Cooperation
 - Love
 - Kindness
 - Patience
 - Obedience

TYPES OF FOLKTALES

- Must be classified according to themes of characters
 - Cannibal tales
 - Trickster tales
 - Monster or ogre tales
 - Human tales
 - Animal tales

THE FUTURE OF FOLKTALES

- Slowly declining
- Stories will continue to be told
- Settings and characters will change
- New styles & new forms
- Provide entertainment & to pass on knowledge

PRAISE POETRY

- ❖ *Composed in honour of a specific person or people*
- ❖ *Either a praiser will compose a poem for a chief or individual chief may compose own poem*
- ❖ *Usually chanted at ritual ceremonies & gatherings*
- ❖ *Intended for adults, not children*

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

- Rhythm is an important factor in all poetry = sense of movement created by the writer's use of emphasis & tempo
- Movement is created by means of syllable length & high tone
- 7 vowel sounds
- Alliteration & assonance are the easiest sound patterns
- Repetition of sound can suggest certain movements or feelings in a poem

THEMES & FUNCTIONS

- Social function = expressing a nation's deepest thoughts about matters of common interest
- Embrace a person's philosophy of life
- Tell about a person's character
- Express criticism or protest
- There to be enjoyed

COMPOSERS

- Orally composed, recited & carried on to the next generation

FORMULAE & LINGUISTIC DEVICES

- Introduction, response, conclusion
- Compound nouns, comparisons, repetition of words & phrases, metaphor, figures of speech, imagery
- Perceptions, reflections & experiences strike us as being original & artistic

- Free to manipulate syntax of the language to suit poet's purpose as long as a pleasing effect on the reader or listener & doesn't become too forced or unnatural
- Form of expression

SONGS

FUNCTION

- Sung for various reasons at various occasions
 - In work groups
 - When asking for rain
 - In times of war
 - Weddings
 - Traditional ceremonies
 - For children
- Serve to encourage workers & to combat tiredness
- Increase the effectiveness of an action by setting a continuous pace
- Recreation of amusement
- Children's songs may be used in children's games or to train them to develop certain skills

STRUCTURE

- Not rigid
- Flexibility & variability characterise the tune & the text

RIDDLES

FUNCTION

- Form of entertainment & combat boredom
- Fulfil a very important social & moral function
- Play a significant educational role – stimulate & sharpen the intellect of the young = be able to listen carefully & come up with a well thought-out answer
- Encourage the youth to study their environment & their culture

SETTING & PARTICIPANTS

- Takes place in the evening around a fire
- Performers & audience are normally children
- Team
- Audience does not remain passive – take turns to propound a riddle

NATURE & STRUCTURE

- Questions that should be answered
- Simple statements
- A stereotyped phrase is usually used to introduce a riddle
- Start by saying “*Qashi-qashi*”

PROVERBS

- Express general truths
- To warn, advise or encourage to do good
- Comment on a social situation where a person interacts with another person
- Serves as a didactic function
- Impact may be positive (encouraging/advisory) or negative (warning/judgemental)
- Serves as an effective & picturesque way of putting across ideas
- Message reflects on the culture of the people

IDIOMS

- Linguistic forms which add colour to speech & render expressions more effectively
- Enrich a person's language
- Euphemism = polite way of saying things
- Fixed pattern of words which go together
- Not as rigid in form as proverbs
- Change form
- The meaning cannot be logically or literally ascertained from its component words

Study Unit 2 – Comprehension, Translation, Creative Writing & the

Media

COMPREHENSION TEST ‘uvavanyo lokuqonda’

- PURPOSE = test whether you are able to read with understanding
- Entails being able to state not only what is said, but also to interpret what is meant in a written passage

TRANSLATION ‘ukuguqulela’

- AIMS
 - Express ideas or thoughts expressed in the original text
 - Produce a translation which is stylistically good
 - Preserves the meaning of the original as closely as possible
 - Properly informed
- Literal translation = no two languages are the same & therefore not possible to translate word for word but rather rephrased in order to convey the intended meaning. (Will help you to understand what the passage is all about)
- Idiomatic translation = reproducing the contents as a meaningful, stylistically well-formed whole

PARAPHRASING

- “sameness of meaning”
- To reproduce the content of a passage in your own words
- AIM = to determine whether you know the translation of words, whether you have mastered certain grammatical structures & whether you understand the content of the text
- Move from literal translation to a free translation

CREATIVE WRITING

- Dialogue = very important in foreign languages = equip a person with everyday communication skills
- Knowledge of proverbs, idioms & idiomatic expressions
- ESSAY = a text that deals with a single topic, written in a natural style & forms an integrated whole within the limits of the prescribed number of pages/words
- LANGUAGE USAGE & CONTENT = simple, correct language...short & well planned sentences...mood & tense...same line of thought throughout
- Planning
- Structure = introduction, body, conclusion
 - DIALOGUE
 - Plan the structure & content
 - Thoughts are exchanged on a certain topic
 - Topic is introduced
 - Conversation centres around the topic
 - Concluded by a farewell
 - WRITING A LETTER
 - Example - formal letter, informal letter, request, report
 - Address
 - Body of letter
 - Conclusion
 - Name of writer
 - PARAGRAPH
 - Form a unit = all sentences must be connected to one another & centred on main thought
 - Main thought must be developed clearly & logically
 - First sentence – introduces the main thought
 - Clear & brief
 - Short but well-considered sentences

AFRICAN LANGUAGES IN THE MEDIA

- AUDIO-VISUAL = Television
- AUDITIVE MEDIA = radio – most affordable medium
- PRINTED MEDIA = printed word serves to inform, teach, instruct, advertise & entertain
- INTERNET = multidimensional – sight, sound, animation, written medium