

Assessing Social Media Submissions Presented as Sepitori on *#LearnPitori*

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Abstract. Sepitori is a mixed language which Black residents of Tshwane speak as a lingua franca. In June 2017, *#LearnPitori* took South Africa by storm soon after a twitterati posted what s/he deemed to be Sepitori and called out other twitterati to make their submissions. As social media platforms, such as *Twitter*, accept contributions from all members of the public regardless of how informed or knowledgeable they are about the subject matter at hand, there was a need to establish, from speakers of Sepitori, whether they would equally regard submissions to *#LearnPitori* as Sepitori. The exponential non-discriminative snowballing sampling method was used to recruit participants, and fourteen of them participated in the study. Data analysis showed evidence of a blurred line between Sepitori and tsotsitaal in the analyzed *#LearnPitori* statements, as well as from participants. Also, the study found that participants were not aware that Sepitori, as a Matrix Language, has tsotsitaal embedded on it, inasmuch as it would be the case with recognized languages from a ‘language purism’ perspective.

Keywords: Mixed Languages, Non-Standard Varieties, Social Media, Sepitori, Tsotsitaal

Languages: Sepitori (also known as ‘Pretoria Sotho’)

1.0 Introduction

The City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (commonly referred to as ‘Tshwane’) is one of the significant regions in South Africa because its largest city, Pretoria, is the administrative capital of the country. While Tshwane refers to a larger region (a municipality) and Pretoria to a smaller one (a city), the two are commonly used interchangeably. Tshwane is the preferred reference for the purposes of this article because it incorporates Pretoria.

I wish to acknowledge Mr. Phenyo Modiha, my graduate student, who in June 2017 informed me about the existence of and hype around *#LearnPitori*. I also wish to acknowledge Mrs. Tebogo Ditsele, as well as Messrs. Dira Thokwane, Nicky Mokone and Tebogo Lebodi for their insights. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the contribution made by my study’s participants.

Black residents of Tshwane communicate in a lingua franca which they call Sepitori, which simply means “the language of Pretoria” (Ditsele and Mann, 2014:159). Earlier researchers such as Schuring (1985) called it ‘Pretoria Sotho’ because a majority of Black people who reside in Tshwane are of Sotho-Tswana (viz. Northern Sotho, Setswana and Southern Sotho) heritage.

In June 2017, a *Twitter* user (referred to as ‘twitterati’) posted what s/he deemed to be Sepitori, and invited others to do so on *#LearnPitori*. The hashtag trended on social media and also caught the attention of both the local media in Tshwane and national media. The hashtag also caught attention of this researcher, leading to this study, which is aimed at analyzing submissions to it through fourteen people who grew up in Tshwane speaking Sepitori, with a view to establish whether these speakers would regard submissions to *#LearnPitori* as Sepitori or not. This analysis of data drawn from a social media platform follows another which was done by Deumert (2018). Her study took a qualitative approach and analyzed language used on *Twitter* and *Facebook* from a sociolinguistic perspective, an approach also followed in this study.

Regarding *#LearnPitori*, a local newspaper in Tshwane, *Pretoria East Rekord* (2017), notes that “[e]very once in a while, a #hashtag comes along that unites us all in laughter. Last week, the *#LearnPitori* (Learn Pretorian) trended on the net and the reactions are priceless. S’pitori is a type of slang that has evolved in the city’s townships among millennials.” Furthermore, a national television network, *eNCA* (2017), submits:

It is well known that Pretoria’s Black residents have perfected the art of speaking their own language. *Twitter* users have taken to the social media platform to school those that are not from the city on ‘Sepitori’ using the hashtag *#LearnPitori*. The ‘language’ is a combination of Setswana and Sepedi,² as well as some other South African languages. These residents of the City of Tshwane still prefer to call it Pretoria.

On the one hand, the newspaper’s understanding of Sepitori is that, first, it is ‘slang’, and second, it was recently developed by people who were born between the mid-1990s and the early 2000s – the ‘millennials’. On the other hand, the understanding of the television network is that Sepitori is formed out of contact between two mutually intelligible languages, that is, Setswana and Northern Sotho, as well as other languages spoken in South Africa. There is a need to review the literature on Sepitori, in order to establish whether the two media platforms’ understanding of Sepitori is consistent with the research on it.

² Rakgogo and Van Huyssteen (2018) showed that speakers of different dialects of Northern Sotho prefer this reference as opposed to Sepedi, one of the dialects of that language which was elevated to represent all the dialects.

2.0 Literature Review

2.0.1 What is Sepitori?

The first known research study on Sepitori was done by Schuring (1985). That was followed by Malimabe (1990) and Nkosi (2008). A big wave of research on Sepitori began in the mid-2010s, led by Ditsele (2014), and Ditsele and Mann (2014). Subsequently, more research was done by Álvarez-Mosquera, Bornman and Ditsele (2018), Bornman, Álvarez-Mosquera and Seti (2018), Ntuli (2016) and Wagner (2018).

Schuring (1985:x) submits that Sepitori is a once-dominant Sekgatla dialect of Setswana of Hammanskraal (a smaller region within Tshwane), with additions mainly from Northern Sotho, Afrikaans and English. Malimabe (1990:10) qualifies the presence of Afrikaans and English by stating that adoptives³ from these languages mainly appear in Sepitori. She also adds that Sepitori has a few words from Southern Sotho. Webb, Lafon and Pare (2010:281) suggest that the terminology of Nguni languages (viz. isiNdebele, isiZulu, isiXhosa and siSwati) was making inroads into Sepitori.

Ditsele (2014:220), notes the following about the ‘age’ of Sepitori:

It is unclear as to when it emerged as a variety, but what is certain is that it is linked to the age of Pretoria (Schuring 1985:x), a city that was established by the Dutch in 1855. With an assumed existence of over one and a half centuries, there can be little doubt that Sepitori has had many generations of first language [L1] speakers.

Ditsele and Mann (2014:160) argue that Sepitori is a ‘mixed language’ developed out of contact between speakers of Setswana and Northern Sotho. They use the example below to demonstrate the interactions of Setswana (in bold), Afrikaans (underlined>, Northern Sotho (uppercase) and English (in italics) in Sepitori.

Sepitori:	Ka mo itse <u>dié man</u> ; o rata ho APARA setlhako se <i>one</i> .
Setswana:	Ke a mo itse monna yo; o rata go rwala setlhako se le sengwe.
N. Sotho:	Ke a mo tseba monna yo; o rata go APARA seta se le tee. ‘I know this man; he likes to wear one shoe.’

The above sentence suggests that even when Sepitori is not recognized as a language from a ‘language purism’ perspective, it has a grammar which enables its speakers to separate people who grew up speaking it in Tshwane from those who learned it later in life, two groups which Álvarez-Mosquera

³ Madiba (1994:4) defines ‘adoptives’ as “those foreign linguistic forms that have received formal acceptance and reflect widespread use in the recipient language”.

et al. (2018:444) refer to as ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, respectively. The two groups acknowledged that Sepitori is recognizable as a distinct language, albeit mutually intelligible with Sotho-Tswana languages, a view they presented as follows (Álvarez-Mosquera et al. 2018:454):

In addition to everyday or common-speaking contexts, participants noted that Sepitori is used in newspapers, as well as on radio and television. With regard to radio, local stations (e.g. Mams FM, Tshwane FM, TUT FM, etc.), Sepitori is freely spoken by announcers and callers. When it comes to television, local movies with characters who speak Sepitori are broadcast on a paid channel called DStv (viz. several Mzansi channels). Increasingly, there are stand-up comedians who tell their jokes mainly in Sepitori, such as Kagiso Lediga and Shamponizer, to name but a few.

Mixed languages associated with major cities in South Africa are perceived to be prestigious among Black urban dwellers, despite being non-standard varieties (Calteaux 1996:51–54) while they regard standard varieties of Southern Bantu languages⁴ as less prestigious and inferior to mixed languages (Webb 2010:161–162). In the case of Sepitori, it is perceived to be more prestigious than standard varieties of Southern Bantu languages as noted by Mosquera et al. (2018:454) that it “enjoys overt prestige within and outside greater Pretoria, and it is a marker of urbanization, sophistication, and being streetwise”. Bornman et al. (2018:30) note this about Sepitori’s prestige:

People who migrate to this metropolitan area [Tshwane] adopt it [Sepitori] to distance themselves from their rural backgrounds. Even speakers living outside the municipal borders try to learn and speak Sepitori, seeking not only to add it to their linguistic repertoires, but also to gain its concomitant positive social features such as urbanity, street-wisdom, social recognition and/or ‘coolness’.

Malimabe (1990:13) concurs and remarks that people who migrate to Tshwane quickly learn to speak it to avoid being labelled ‘country bumpkins’. In some instances, those who had recently arrived in Tshwane were able to conceal their places of origin and/or ethnic backgrounds through speaking Sepitori.

A conclusion is thus reached that *Pretoria East Rekord*’s understanding of what Sepitori is, is inconsistent with the literature. This is because the literature points to Sepitori not being ‘slang’ but a mixed language with a grammar and had developed out of contact between speakers of Setswana and

⁴ In most literature in South Africa, the term ‘African languages’ is preferred to ‘Southern Bantu languages’ spoken in the country because during the apartheid era, ‘Bantu’ was used as a derogatory reference for a Black African.

Northern Sotho over a century ago, thus cannot be attributed to being developed by the millennials. With regards to *eNCA* (2017), their understanding of what Sepitori is, is consistent with the literature.

Evidence shows that Sepitori means different things to different people, and may even go by different names such as ‘Mamelodi Lingo’ (Ntuli 2016) or ‘Mamelodian’ (Bornman et al. 2018:37). Participants in a study by Álvarez-Mosquera et al. (2018) held different views on what the term ‘Sepitori’ means. ‘Insiders’ regarded it as a language in its own right with L1 speakers. One insider (Álvarez-Mosquera et al. 2018:445) noted that his parents arrived in Tshwane at a very young age and picked Sepitori as an L1; it was then passed down to him from birth. In fact, his grandparents were the last generation in his family to be L1 speakers of Northern Sotho. As for ‘outsiders’, they believed that Sepitori could not possibly have L1 speakers because it was a mixture of all languages. One of the ‘outsiders’ submitted (Álvarez-Mosquera et al. 2018:447):

Sepitori is a tsotsitaal ... Ja, I think it’s a tsotsitaal because there is a lot of mixtures like, I think from Jozi [Johannesburg], they are speaking tsotsitaal, and also Pretoria it’s tsotsi [tsotsitaal] like Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, ... they mix it together then it becomes a tsotsitaal.

‘Outsiders’ believed that Sepitori was an arbitrary ‘mixing of languages’ as noted by one who said “there’s no mistake, anything goes” (Álvarez-Mosquera et al. 2018:446). They were adamant that Sepitori speakers belonged to a particular class reflected by their fashion sense and type of music they enjoyed. This could be likened to Hurst (2008) who argues that tsotsitaal speakers belong to different groups and each of them share certain characteristics including ‘style’ or ‘performance’ and lexical items or ‘jargon’. Álvarez-Mosquera et al. (2018) conclude that ‘outsiders’ blurred the line between Sepitori and tsotsitaal, and from where they sat, Sepitori could be defined as the ‘tsotsitaal version of Tshwane’.

Hurst (2015) distinguishes between tsotsitaals (i.e. difference varieties of tsotsitaal) and the urban forms of Southern Bantu languages, which are mixed languages such as Sepitori. She submits that broadly speaking, mixed languages differ from tsotsitaals in that they:

1. Rely on one Matrix Language (ML), unless they involve code-switching;
2. Are not domain-restricted;
3. Are spoken by all generations and genders [sexes]; and
4. Emerged from contact rather than criminal slang.

The blurred line between Sepitori and tsotsitaal, based on the study by Álvarez-Mosquera et al. (2018), makes it imperative for the latter to be discussed as well.

2.0.2 What is Tsotsitaal?

Tsotsitaal is known by a number of alternative names such as flaaitaal, iscamtho, ringas, isiTsotsi, kasitaal and setsotsi; these alternative names are preferred in specific geographic regions, speaker preferences and local practice (Ditsele & Hurst 2016:1). As such, it is known as ‘setsotsi’ in areas where Sotho-Tswana languages or mixed languages developed from them are predominantly spoken (e.g. provinces of Free State, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West and Northern Cape). For the purposes of this article, tsotsitaal has been used as it is the most common among all other terms.

According to Halliday (1975, cited in Hurst & Mesthrie 2013:3), tsotsitaal is a “linguistic phenomenon common to many South African urban townships, which is constituted primarily by lexical variation with anti-linguistic intentions”. Hurst (2009) submits that tsotsitaal, which means ‘tsotsi-language’ was coined in the late 1930s or early 1940s in a Johannesburg suburb called Sophiatown. Deumert (2018) notes:

The name is a combination of *tsotsi*, referring to a small scale criminal, and *taal*, Afrikaans for ‘language’. It translates literally as ‘thug language’ or ‘language of criminals’. However, the social semiotics of this way of speaking are considerably more complex than the explicit reference to criminality. They also involve notions of urbanity, a politics of resistance to oppression, youth and masculinity, the art of being streetwise (referred to locally as being ‘clever’), and performative displays of linguistic virtuosity.

Hurst (2015:143) argues that tsotsitaal should be considered as a set of language resources rather than a ‘language’ in any traditional sense of the term. As such, it can be characterized as a ‘register’ or ‘style’ of speaking, rather than a ‘language’ per se. In other words, it cannot exist independent of an ML it is embedded on. As such, Hurst (2015:143) also notes, tsotsitaals exist in multiple MLs, that is, all the official language of South Africa, as well as many non-official languages in South Africa have their own accompanying tsotsitaal.

Brookes (2014) suggests that Afrikaans is the first ML⁵ of tsotsitaal, and there was a shift to two new MLs, namely, isiZulu and Southern Sotho in the 1950s and the 1960s in Johannesburg when the government split communities according to race under the Group Areas Act (No. 41 of 1950). Ditsele and Hurst (2016:2) submit:

⁵ Ngwenya (1995:15–16) states: “The fact that a number of Coloreds spoke Afrikaans as their mother tongue [home language] and were also leaders of gangsters, automatically made Afrikaans dominate tsotsitaal. It should be borne in mind that the Afrikaans spoken by the tsotsis was not standard Afrikaans.”

As a result of forced removals, generations of people who were born in the Johannesburg suburb of Sophiatown (before they were relocated to Black townships, such as Soweto) spoke an Afrikaans-based tsotsitaal, whilst their offspring who were born in Black townships spoke either an urban isiZulu-based tsotsitaal (in Soweto's historically Nguni sections, such as Zola and Dhlamini) or an urban Sesotho-based [Southern Sotho-based] tsotsitaal (in Soweto's historically Sotho [Sotho-Tswana] sections, such as Meadowlands and Dobsonville).

Hurst (2015) consolidates several studies on tsotsitaal and presents examples based on different MLs, as follows: Tshivenda from Mulaudzi and Poulos (2001); isiXhosa from Mesthrie and Hurst (2013); isiZulu from Rudwick (2005); Northern Sotho from Mokwana (2009); Southern Sotho from Sekere (2004); and Setswana from Cook (2009).

For the purposes of this article, focus will be on tsotsitaals whose MLs are Sotho-Tswana languages, as follows:⁶ Example 1 from Mokwana (2009), Example 2 from Sekere (2004), and Example 3 from Cook (2009). A more contemporary example was drawn from Ditsele and Hurst (2016:5) for Setswana, and presented as Example 4.

(1) 'Where is that stupid person?' (Mokwana 2009)

Tsotsitaal: E kae *bari* yela?
N. Sotho: Se kae *setlatla* sela?

(2) 'My boy, you are stupid more than other stupid.' (Sekere 2004)

Tsotsitaal: *My laiti*, o *bari* e fetang *dibari* tse ding.
S. Sotho: *Ngwaneso*, o *sephoqo* se fetang *diphoqo* tse ding.

(3) 'But in the shops, other are three-hundred and something, you know?'
(Cook 2009)

Tsotsitaal: Kana mo dishopong, tse dingwe ke *triikllipa khapol*, waitse?
Setswana: Kana dishopong mot se ke dingwe *bokana R300*, ka waitse?

(4) 'I am HIV positive, and I have informed my friends.'
(Ditsele and Hurst 2016)

Tsotsitaal: Ke *gatile cable*, ene ke *verstanisitse majita*.
Setswana: Ke *na le HIV*, e bile ke *boleletse ditsala tsa me*.

Examples one through four illustrate a point made by Hurst (2015:143) that tsotsitaal is a 'register' or 'style' of speaking and not a language per se, that

⁶ Tsotsitaal lexical items and their equivalents in standard varieties are marked in italics. Those marked in bold did not appear in Hurst (2015), thus were added in this article for clarity and completeness.

it cannot exist independently from its MLs, and in this case, Sotho-Tswana languages.

3.0 Methodology

3.0.1 Data Selection and Collection

Tshwane University of Technology granted permission for this study to be conducted and issued an ethical clearance letter (FCRE/APL/STD/2017/23) dated November 20, 2017. This researcher was also granted permission to use material from *Twitter* as it is in the public domain, but on condition that twitterati handles are not mentioned to ensure anonymity. With regards to the 14 participants, all of them consented.

Social media platforms accept contributions from all members of the public regardless of how informed or knowledgeable they are about the subject matter at hand. As such, the credibility of information posted on them may be suspect. In addition, such information is not subjected to a verification process, such as peer review, to ensure that it is factually accurate and reliable. That being the case, researchers who use material from these platforms need to use their specialist knowledge to separate one that is usable from one that is not.

In the case of submissions to *#LearnPitori*, this researcher used his/her specialist knowledge of Sepitori, tsotsitaal, Sotho-Tswana languages (including colloquialism in them) to select usable material. Put differently, this researcher disregarded material which was far removed from what could remotely be considered to be Sepitori that is, clearly drawn from Nguni languages, Xitsonga and Tshivenda. As discussed above, the literature on Sepitori shows that its linguistic composition is disproportionately skewed towards Setswana and Northern Sotho as succinctly put by Álvarez-Mosquera et al. (2018:453): “While vocabulary from other languages is present in Sepitori (Malimabe 1990; Webb et al. 2010), such vocabulary is so negligible that it cannot be equated with that of Setswana and Northern Sotho.” A total of eight usable statements were extracted from *#LearnPitori* and translated into English, meaning that there were two versions – original ones from *#LearnPitori* and translated ones. That constituted the first set of data.

The second set of data was gathered in two rounds. In Round 1, participants were asked to translate the eight statements in Sepitori (from English). In Round 2, they were given twelve statements, i.e. eight from *#LearnPitori* and four that were made up by this researcher. Then they were asked to categorize each according to one of four options: (a) Sepitori, (b) a mixture of Sepitori and Tsotsitaal, (c) Tsotsitaal, or (d) neither Sepitori nor Tsotsitaal. In an event they did not choose option (a) for any of the statements, they were asked to re-write such statements in Sepitori.

To avoid any detection by participants that statements in both rounds were the same, albeit in different languages, they were mixed up in Round 2. Also,

three more ‘made-up’ statements (which did not appear in Round 1), were added in Round 2 to further avoid detection. The mixing up was important because if participants easily detected the links, there was a chance that they would tailor-make their responses, thereby contaminating the data and effectively defeating the study’s aim.

3.0.2 Approach to Data Analysis

First, participants’ translations of statements in Sepitori from Round 1 were analyzed to establish the similarities and differences with those done by this researcher before this round commenced. It is important to note that this researcher translated the 15 statements into Sepitori before contacting participants, and asked acquaintances who ordinarily spoke Sepitori to amend and/or endorse the accuracy of the translations. For convenience, they are referred to as ‘verified translations’. It is also important to state that in order to avoid data contamination, none of these acquaintances participated further in the study; they did not take part in Rounds 1 and 2.

Second, participants’ categorization of the statements from Round 2 was analyzed. This analysis included looking at alternative translations they gave, in an event they deemed a statement not to be Sepitori. Third, translations from Round 1 were matched against participants’ choices made in Round 2 so as to establish any inconsistencies between them. This cross-checking assisted in identifying published (known) tsotsitaal lexical items (see Table 2), as well unpublished one as far as this researcher was aware (see Appendix A).

3.0.3 Recruitment and Profiles of Participants

The exponential non-discriminative snowballing sampling method was used to recruit participants. This researcher asked people who were brought up in Tshwane and ordinarily spoke Sepitori to identify others with the same linguistic profile as them. Ultimately, eighteen participants were recruited. Fourteen out of the eighteen participated in both rounds of data collection, while the other four only in the first round, thus their data was deemed unusable. A questionnaire was used to gather data from participants and it comprised Section A, which sought their ‘biographical details’ and Section B, which presented the statements with instructions. All correspondences with participants were done via email.

Table 1: Participants' Biographical Details

Highest Level of Education		Residence (Relative to Pretoria CBD)		Age Group		Sex	
Grade 12	1	Northern Areas	3	20-29	6	Female	8
Diploma (3 Year)	4	Northwestern Areas	8	30-39	3	Male	6
Bachelor	5	Western Areas	3	40-49	5		
Honors Degree and Above	4						
	14		14		14		14

4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

The eight statements (from #LearnPitori) are presented below as statements 1 to 8; these are the statements which participants were asked to categorize in Round 2. Below them are 'verified translations'. Next are English translations, which participants translated into Sepitori in Round 1. Lexical items which are colloquialisms (and settled as tsotsitaal) in the speech of Sotho-Tswana speakers across the country were lifted from participants' translations. They are not unique to Tshwane, thus cannot be attributed solely to 'Sepitori' (see Appendix A).

Statement 1: Ausi ola ke lepyatla.
 Sepitori: Ausi ola o mopila.
 English: That lady is hot!

Seven participants (four females and three males) provided the same or a similar translation to the 'verified translation' in Round 1, while the other seven (four females and three males) gave translations which were the same or similar to the #LearnPitori statement. In Round 2, nine participants (four females and five males) argued that the #LearnPitori statement was 'Sepitori', thus did not offer a translated version. There were five participants (four females and one male) who judged the statement to be either 'tsotsitaal' or a 'mixture of Sepitori and tsotsitaal'. None of the participants regarded the statement to be 'neither Sepitori nor tsotsitaal'. No inconsistencies were spotted when comparing Sepitori versions given by five participants who judged the statement not to be Sepitori (in Round 2) against the translations they offered (in Round 1).

Statement 2: Ke kgopela boys ya ho reka dijo.
 Sepitori: Ke kgopela ranta tse pedi tsa ho reja dijo.
 English: I'm asking for two rand to buy food.

Four participants (three females and one male) gave the same or similar translation as the 'verified translation' in Round 1. Despite using the verb 'kgopela' (to ask), six participants (three females and three males) used 'zozo'

for ‘food’. The remaining four participants (two females and two males) used ‘ngaye’ for ‘I’m asking for’, and ‘gaolo’ for ‘food.’ In Round 2, six participants (two females and four males) stated that the *#LearnPitori* statement was ‘Sepitori’, thus did not offer a translated version. Those who judged the statement to be either ‘tsotsitaal’ or a ‘mixture of Sepitori and tsotsitaal’ were eight (six females and two males). None of them viewed the statement to be ‘neither Sepitori nor tsotsitaal’.

Three inconsistencies were picked up when comparing Sepitori versions given by eight participants who judged the statement not to be Sepitori (in Round 2) against the translations they offered (in Round 1). These three participants (all female) initially gave translations which resembled the *#LearnPitori* statement, but their second translations resembled the ‘verified translation’.

Statement 3:	Dilo tsa ka di nametse RunX.
Sepitori:	Dilo tsa ka di tsamaya pila/sentle.
English:	My matters are running smoothly. My things are going well.

Nine participants (five females and four males) gave the same or similar translation as the ‘verified translation’ in Round 1, while the translations of the other five (three females and two males) were the same or similar to the *#LearnPitori* statement. In Round 2, ten participants (four females and all six males) submitted that the *#LearnPitori* statement was ‘Sepitori’, thus did not offer a translated version. Those who judged the statement to be either ‘tsotsitaal’ or a ‘mixture of Sepitori and tsotsitaal’ were four (all female), thus none of them regarded the statement to be ‘neither Sepitori nor tsotsitaal.’

One inconsistency was picked up from one female participant when comparing Sepitori versions given by four participants who judged the statement not to be Sepitori (in Round 2) against the translations they offered (in Round 1). She initially gave a translation which resembled the *#LearnPitori* statement, but her second translation resembled the ‘verified translation’.

Statement 4:	Ba re o setse ka one-bar.
Sepitori:	Ba re o lwala thata. Ba re o hatelletswe.
English:	They say s/he’s critically ill.

In Round 1, seven participants (five females and two males) gave the same or similar translation as the ‘verified translation’, while the other seven (three females and four males) gave translations which were the same or similar to *#LearnPitori* statement. In Round 2, ten participants (four females and all six males) categorized the *#LearnPitori* statement as ‘Sepitori’, thus

offered no translation of it. There were four participants (all female) who viewed the statement to be either ‘tsotsitaal’ or a ‘mixture of Sepitori and tsotsitaal’. No participants regarded the statement to be ‘neither Sepitori nor tsotsitaal’.

A comparison between Sepitori versions written by four participants (all female) who suggested that the statement was not Sepitori (in Round 2) against the translations they offered (in Round 1) showed that there were no inconsistencies between the two.

Statement 5:	O nkintshitse ghostung.
Sepitori:	O nkintshitse mo mathateng.
English:	You took me out of trouble.

In Round 1, the same or similar translation as the ‘verified translation’ was given by six participants (five females and one male), while eight participants (three females and five males) gave translations which were the same or similar to *#LearnPitori* statement. In Round 2, nine participants (three females and all six males) categorized the *#LearnPitori* statement as ‘Sepitori’, thus offered no translation of it. Five participants (all female) viewed the statement to be either ‘tsotsitaal’ or a ‘mixture of Sepitori and tsotsitaal’, thus none of them viewed the statement to be ‘neither Sepitori nor tsotsitaal’.

In matching Sepitori versions written by five participants (all female) who suggested that the statement was not Sepitori (in Round 2) against the translations they offered (in Round 1), one of them was inconsistent as she initially translated the statement which resembled the *#LearnPitori* one, but her second translation resembled the ‘verified translation’.

Statement 6:	Wa off-rempa nou!
Sepitori:	O tswile tseleng byanong!
English:	You’re out of line now!

In Round 1, seven participants (six females and one male) gave the same or similar translation as the ‘verified translation’, while the other seven (two females and five males) gave translations which were the same or similar to *#LearnPitori* statement. In Round 2, six participants (three females and three males) judged the *#LearnPitori* statement as ‘Sepitori’, thus did not translate it. Seven participants (five females and two males) judged the statement to be either ‘tsotsitaal’ or a ‘mixture of Sepitori and tsotsitaal’, while one participant (male) suggested that it was ‘neither Sepitori nor tsotsitaal’.

No inconsistencies were seen while matching Sepitori versions given by eight participants who judged the statement not to be Sepitori (in Round 2) against the translations they offered (in Round 1).

Statement 7:	Ke ilo shapa 6-9.
Sepitori:	Ke ilo rota (considered blunt). Ke ilo ntsha metsi (considered respectful).
English:	I'm going to pee.

In Round 1, the same or similar translation as the ‘verified translation’ was given by six participants (five females and one male), while four participants (two females and two males) gave translations which were the same or similar to *#LearnPitori* statement. The other four participants (one female and three males) simply replaced ‘shapa’ (to beat/hit) with ‘betha’. In Round 2, there were six participants (two females and four males) who categorized the *#LearnPitori* statement as ‘Sepitori’, thus did not translate it. Eight participants (six females and two males) judged the statement to be either ‘tsotsitaal’ or a ‘mixture of Sepitori and tsotsitaal’, thus none of them viewed the statement to be ‘neither Sepitori nor tsotsitaal’.

In matching Sepitori versions written by eight participants who suggested that the statement was not Sepitori (in Round 2) against the translations they offered (in Round 1), two of them (both female) were inconsistent as they initially translated the statement which resembled the *#LearnPitori* one, but their second translations resembled the ‘verified translation’.

Statement 8:	O shapa ka di-hotwings.
Sepitori:	O nkgā mahwafa. Mahwafa a hae a nkgā.
English:	S/he has smelly armpits.

In Round 1, the same or similar translation as the ‘verified translation’ was given by thirteen participants (all eight females and five males), while one participant (male) did not translate the statement at all. In Round 2, there were seven participants (four females and three males) who categorized the *#LearnPitori* statement as ‘Sepitori’, thus did not translate it. Four participants (all female) were of a view that the statement was either ‘tsotsitaal’ or a ‘mixture of Sepitori and tsotsitaal’, while three of them (all male) viewed the statement to be ‘neither Sepitori nor tsotsitaal’.

There were inconsistencies while comparing Sepitori versions given by seven participants who judged the statement not to be Sepitori (in Round 2) against the translations they offered (in Round 1). In Round 2, four participants did not associate ‘hotwings’ with ‘smelly armpits’ as they did in Round 1; two of them (one female and one male) associated them with ‘spicy chicken’, while the other two (both female) associated them with ‘pretty women’.

5.0 Discussion

At the outset, it is crucial to explore the role played by ethnic identity in shaping identities of South Africans, particularly Black South Africans. All participants confirmed that they grew up and spent all or nearly all their lives in Tshwane. However, they identified themselves with their heritage languages even when they may have been more proficient in Sepitori as opposed to the former, which mainly flow down the paternal lineage.

In South Africa, official censuses (done by Statistics South Africa) presume that citizens are necessarily proficient speakers of languages associated with their heritages, and data on home language are gathered based on official languages only, leading to official censuses being based on heritage languages and not on people's actual language practice. That approach then forces home language speakers of mixed languages to pick one of the official languages as their 'actual' home languages when they may not necessarily be, and in turn, their perceptions may be solidified that they could not 'officially' regard themselves as home language speakers of 'unrecognized languages', such as Sepitori. Interestingly, one participant in a study by Álvarez-Mosquera et al. (2018:444) chose Sepitori as his/her home language, which is very rare.

It should be acknowledged that Statistics South Africa does have an option of 'other', which in context means recognized languages which do not have official status in South Africa, but elsewhere in the world. Were Statistics South Africa to change its approach on home language by availing known 'unrecognized languages' during censuses, there is a chance that many people would acknowledge that they are home language speakers of mixed languages, such as Sepitori.

With that background, an argument could be made that as matters stand, cemented perceptions on what qualifies as one's home language (one with official status) and what does not (one not recognized as a language), translate into association with the former and disassociation with the latter, regardless of speakers' lived reality of being home language speakers of mixed languages. In the case of Sepitori, some participants in a study by Álvarez-Mosquera et al. (2018) were adamant that it could not possibly be a home language or anybody, but a 'language of convenience' spoken by people whose home languages are the nine Southern Bantu languages.

Having identified themselves according to Southern Bantu languages, participants in this study viewed Sepitori as someone else's home language (not theirs), which explains the inclusion of lexical items which the literature acknowledges as tsotsitaal (see Table 2) as opposed to those ordinarily spoken in Tshwane.

Table 2: Tsotsitaal Terms Used by Participants

Statement No.	Lexical items (from Participants)	Meaning (According to Usage)	Cited in Source	Ordinary Sepitori Lexical Items
1 and 4	medi	girlfriend / lady	Mulaudzi and Poulos (2001:6)	ngwanyana / motho
2	baya	to buy	Brook (2010:3)	reka
2	gaola	to eat	Ngwenya (1995:94) as 'gawula'	eja
2	gaya	to give	Brook (2010:3)	efa
2	zozo	food	Ngwenya (1995:135) as 'izoso'	dijo
3	grand	fine	Bembe and Beukes (2007:471)	pila
3	popa	to materialize or to achieve some success	Ditsele and Hurst (2017:4)	tsamaya pila/sentle
3	shapo	smooth(ly) / well	Hurst (2008:163) as 'sharp'	pila / sentle
3	vaya (also 'zaya /zaiya')	to go	Mulaudzi and Poulos (2001:5)	tsamaya
6	bline	a lot	Ngwenya (1995:79) as 'blind'	thata
6	nou	now	Mulaudzi and Poulos (2001:5)	byanong
7	[betha] mfana / shaya ntwana	to pee / to pass urine	Ngwenya (1995:86) as 'ukusha umfana' and 'ukushaya i-six nine'	ntsha metsi / rota

Across all eight statements, on the one hand, female participants contributed a lot more lexical items which are ordinarily spoken in Sepitori as opposed to their male counterparts. On the other hand, male participants contributed a lot more tsotsitaal lexical items than female participants, a phenomenon consistent with studies on tsotsitaal. Ngwenya (1995:27) notes:

Elderly males mix freely with young boys and they are not ashamed to speak tsotsitaal. The status of an individual will determine his choice of language. Another factor which may contribute to the difference in the use of tsotsitaal, is that men socialize more often than women. Men normally meet in places such as on the streets, in shebeens and at soccer matches. Women, generally, don't go to shebeens, so they socialize in a narrower sense of the word than men do.

The fact that 'sex' determined the prevalence of published tsotsitaal lexical items (see Table 2) and unpublished ones (see Appendix A) suggests that this study, like that of Álvarez-Mosquera et al. (2018), confirms a blurred line between Sepitori and tsotsitaal. This blurred line is also noted in previous studies on tsotsitaal prior to a big wave of research on Sepitori in the mid-2010s. In those earlier studies, researchers tended to regard all Black Urban Varieties (Calteaux 1996) as blanket 'varieties of tsotsitaal' as suggested by Ngwenya (1995:18):

It must be mentioned that tsotsitaal is not uniform but differs from one township to the other. What is spoken in Soshanguve, Mamelodi and Saulsville might differ drastically from what is spoken at Umlazi, Lamontville and Soweto. For example, in Pretoria they speak what is called 'Pretoria-Sotho' [Sepitori].

Hurst (2015) submits that tsotsitaal is domain-restricted and spoken by some generations of speakers (i.e. younger ones) and sex (i.e. males), while Ngwenya (1995) argues that it is a 'secret language'. With regards to Sepitori, Álvarez-Mosquera et al. (2018), submit that it is not a 'secret language' at all as it is spoken by all generations of speakers and sexes across all domains, that is, on radio, television, newspapers, and at schools (Malimabe 1990; Nkosi 2008; Wagner 2018), banks and with the police.

6.0 Conclusion

In Round 1, participants were asked to "translate the statements in Sepitori which they grew up speaking". This researcher deliberately avoided stating that they should translate the statements into their 'home language' because there was potential that they would have written standard varieties of Southern Bantu languages (mainly Setswana and Northern Sotho) as opposed to Sepitori. Earlier, a point was made that ethnic affiliation was very strong among Black South Africans, thus by shying away from 'home language', this researcher wanted to avoid translations based on what participants had learned at school (i.e. standard varieties), as opposed to what they ordinarily speak.

A conclusion is thus made that Sepitori is understood to be 'someone else's language' and not the actual speakers', as its actual speakers regard

themselves as home language speakers of official languages associated with their heritages. That being the case, participants disassociate themselves with mixed languages if asked to provide data on them, and they do so from ‘someone else’s perspective’ and not theirs. This conclusion is further evidenced by this researcher’s contact with Sepitori speakers (after Round 2) who when complimented about speaking ‘good Sepitori’, they responded that they did not speak Sepitori, but the Tshwane variety of Setswana (for those who identified themselves as Batswana) or Northern Sotho (for those who identified themselves as Northern Basotho) – strong ethnic identity. Referring to it as a ‘Tshwane variety’ of its ancestral languages is an acknowledgement that it is distinct from other varieties spoken elsewhere.

With regards to #LearnPitori statements, participants moved between tsotsitaal lexical items (published and unpublished) and ordinary Sepitori ones. A conclusion is that made that those who made the submissions equally mixed up a ‘settled’ mixed language (Sepitori) with a ‘register’ or ‘style’ of speaking (tsotsitaal). Research has shown that Sepitori has a grammar and thus a language which is mutually intelligible with other Sotho-Tswana languages (Ditsele & Mann 2014); the fact that it is not recognized as a language from a ‘language purism’ point of view does not disqualify it as a language from a linguistics point of view. Data in this study showed that participants were not aware that Sepitori as a language is an ML on which tsotsitaal is embedded. It is in this unawareness that a blurred line exists between Sepitori and tsotsitaal.

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Appendix A

Statement No.	Lexical Items (from Participants)	Meaning (According to Usage)	Source Language	Original Word	Ordinary Sepitori Lexical Items
1	dese	pretty	English	decent	mopila / pila / montle
1	suster	sister	Afrikaans	suster	ausi / kgaitsedi
2	ndolish	food	English	dough	bread
2	ponto	two rand / R2	English	pound	ranta tse pedi / ranta tse i-two)
3	wete	smooth(ly) / well	English	wet	pila / sentle
4	boda	to die	English	board (one way trip to Heaven)	swa / tlhokofala
4	khawatega	in a bad shape	English	coward	hoha boima
4	sata	to die	Afrikaans	saad (burying a corpse equates to planting a seed)	swa / tlhokofala
4	sika	to be sick / ill	English	sick	lwala
5	jaefe	trouble / problem	English	jive	bothateng
5	jiti	trouble / problem	Unknown	-	bothata
6	[latlha] saete	to lose track/focus	English	sight	tswile mo tseleng
6	spita	too forward	English	speed	phapha