Use of *tsotsitaal* in South African music -

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WHAT IS TSOTSITAAL?

- It is an African Urban Youth Language (AUYL) which first emerged in JHB in the 1930s, and subsequently spread to other parts of South Africa (Hurst, 2009).
- Its earliest recordings were done in Sophiatown (JHB) in the 1940s and 1950s (Hurst & Mesthrie, 2013).
- It is a linguistic phenomenon common to many South African urban townships (Halliday, 1975), and it is mainly spoken by Black males (Hurst, 2013).
- Most research on it has been conducted at GP townships (especially greater JHB) and on the varieties based on Afrikaans, isiZulu and Sesotho.
- The dominant language of an area usually becomes the Matrix Language (ML) of that area’s tsotsitaal version (Brookes & Lekgoro, 2014).
- As such, the tsotsitaal version of Cape Town is isiXhosa-based (Hurst, 2009) and the version in the NW province is Setswana-based (Ditsele & Hurst, 2015).
- Naturally, musicians whose lyrics are in Bantu languages use the tsotsitaal version based on the ML spoken in their areas (townships).
**KWAINO – 1990s FREE YOUTH**

- The early 1990s saw many changes in SA, including the release of Nelson Mandela and elections for all races.
- The lifting of sanctions provided SA musicians with easier access to international music tracks and a radical revision of censorship.
- Freedom of expression meant that for the first time the youth of SA could make their voices heard (Mhlambi, 2004).
- The music genre *Kwaito* emerged during this period and represents a culmination of all these changes – it is a practical manifestation of that freedom of expression for which the youth had longed (Mhlambi, 2004).
- *Kwaito* emerged in 1993/4 with its lyrics predominantly in tsotsitaal versions of Soweto (urban Sesotho-based and urban isiZulu-based).
- Some of best-known *Kwaito* artists are: Mdu Masilela; Arthur Mafokate; Mandoza; *Senyaka Kekana*; Kabelo Mabalane and Speedy.
- *Kwaito* can and should be credited as the first youth voice of the 1990s.
- Alongside *Kwaito*, new genres such as *Hip Hop* emerged in the 1990s – one being *Motswako*.
**MOTSWAKO GENRE**

- “Motswako” means “mixture” in Setswana (go tswaka = to mix)
- Its lyrics are mainly code-switches between English and Setswana (viz. standard, colloquial, *tsotsitaal*, *SeSoweto* and/or *Sepitori*) – hence *Motswako* from this “mixture” of varieties
- It was first sung in the mid-1990s by a rapper from Botswana called Nomadic, and then crossed the border into the NW province (particularly Mafikeng)
- Around the late 1990s, it became popular – first in the North West, then spread to the rest of SA
- This is significant and unprecedented because in SA, trends start from Gauteng (usually JHB) and spread to the rest of SA and the SADC region
- Some of best-known *Motswako* rappers are: HHP, Tuks Senganga, Khuli Chana, Cassper Nyovest, Mo’Molemi, Fifi Cooper and JR
- JR is the only rapper from Pretoria, all are from Mafikeng; Fifi Cooper is the only female rapper (JHB *Motswakolista*?)
- The distribution of English versus Setswana varies from one rapper to the next
Music & Lights – HHP

- Tsotsitaal; colloquial Setswana; standard Setswana; English

- [Original song by Imagination (UK group) – released in 1982]
  - Ke le tlela ka giti, fly like serantabole; Yet ... another hit like it’s wonderful
  - Ke botlhole ... beat you like a Flabba lebole; Ke Mokone ... make Tswana fashionabole
  - Le mpone ... mona never o nkgone; Move hills ka the music ke le mabone
  - Rough skills ha nka ja lebotha I’m gone; Make a few mills get a new deal re tour-re
  - To bo ... Rustenburg to Drakensberg; Le bo ... Freshly Black ka vinyl bag
  - Le bo ... Tsholo Mosaka ka traveller’s cheque; Le bo ... DJ S’bu ka di-Hummer tsa mag
  - Ko bo ... dinner teng tsa Washington; To bo ... gidlang teng ko boHilton
  - We bring the after-party back endleni; Jabba bringing you the life emzeni
    - Joe we live with ...
Music & Lights – HHP

• Tsotsitaal; colloquial Setswana; standard Setswana; English

• It’s lekker ... but bojang nka seke
• Chicks ba bang ba go tswa Pietersburg
• Le ncheke ... I got my cellphone bag
• Le ntrack-e ... ke tladise seno ka jeke
  • Le nthole ... ko morago ga lori
• Ke tlhantsha banyana ba bangwe ba Pitori
  • Mense le bochikita ba ko Labori
  • Re mingila le boMojoman ka dori
    • Ka bo ... 10 to 2 to after 9
• Ko bo ... Bedfordview to Lounge Devine
  • Le bo ... DJ Que le Mastermind
Phumakim’ – Cassper Nyovest

- Tsotsitaal; colloquial Setswana; standard Setswana; English

- I’m out here grinding with majita
  - Grinding with majita
  - Money! Getting money man!
- Ooh ngwanyana bella mpintši tsa ’go (ngwanyana bella mpintši tsa ’go)
  - Baby mthebelele
- Abo ringa more, phumakim’ (lotlhe ga le nchuni niks)
  - Mr Know-it-All, phumakim’ (lotlhe ga le nchuni niks)
- All you thirsty girls, phumakim’ (lotlhe ga le nchuni niks mare xho le ringa ma-ada)
- You Twitter thugs, phumakim’ (lotlhe ga le nchuni niks mare xho le ringa ma-ada)
Mnatebawen’ – Khuli Chana

- Tsotsitaal; colloquial Setswana; standard Setswana; English

  - He, e (X4)
  - He, e (X2)
  - He, e (X4)
  - The strong be silent Shhh...
  - Twin be too grown, be quiet
  - Didimala, phumula maminanyana, bikinyana
  - Woh, but you cannot read between the lines
  - You need to go n’skeema-nyana, teach you how to deal-a-nyana
  - Hustling just ain’t you, ke gopola to just stay true and just do you
  - Sundays just won’t do, I never do what they do, I keep my cool
    - [Chorus]
Bosso ke mang? – HHP

- Tsotsitaal; colloquial Setswana; standard Setswana; English

- **Ba re Bosso ke motho o spinang koloi a sa e namela**
  - Ke a go tšhayela, a sa e namela
- **Ba re Bosso ke motho o spinang koloi a sa e namela**
  - Ke a go tšhayela, a sa e namela
    - Ke moriski
  - O ja rice crispy ka whiskey, ka whiskey
    - Ja, ga o itse
    - Ke moriski
  - O ja rice crispy ka whiskey
    - Ja, ga o itse
    - Daai man ke moriski
# Terminology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tsotsitaal</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Setswana</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jiti</td>
<td>trouble</td>
<td>mathata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lebotha</td>
<td>money</td>
<td>madi, tšhelete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gidla(ng)</td>
<td>sleep</td>
<td>robala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>endleni</td>
<td>at the house/home</td>
<td>kwa ntlong/gae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>majita</td>
<td>friends</td>
<td>ditsala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bella</td>
<td>phone, call</td>
<td>leletsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ringa</td>
<td>speak</td>
<td>bua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niks</td>
<td>nothing</td>
<td>sepe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spina(ng)</td>
<td>spin</td>
<td>dikolosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moriski</td>
<td>risk taker</td>
<td><em>no equivalent</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daai man</td>
<td>that man</td>
<td>monna yole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skeema</td>
<td>befriend</td>
<td>dira botsala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deal-a-nyana</td>
<td>deal at a small scale</td>
<td>gweba-nyana</td>
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TRENDS / SO WHAT?

- Motswako is a genre that ‘swam against the tide’ because it did not originate in JHB, but Botswana and popularised in Mafikeng.
- Before the birth of Motswako, new musicians from outside JHB were scared to sing in varieties other than SeSoweto for fear of not being taken seriously.
- Hip Hop (including Motswako) competes with/ouperforms/over-shadows Kwaito as the youth’s voice – its rappers get invited to open for other musicians.
- While Motswako’s lyrics are largely Setswana/English – or Tswenglish (Setswana-English) as coined by HHP – there are other rappers who mix English with other languages (e.g. Spaza [isiXhosa, English & Afrikaans]).
- Black middle-class children (born-frees) listen to Hip Hop (including Motswako mainly in Setswana/Sepedi/Sesotho-dominated provinces) than Kwaito.
- Inevitably, they learn some tsotsitaal through this music (anecdotal evidence from Pretoria) – more research is needed to confirm the trends set by anecdotal evidence OR even more significantly, how they are exposed to tsotsitaal.
- Hip Hop thus plays an important role in SA’s linguistic landscape.
Heita daar
(tsotsitaal)

Ke a leboga
(Setswana/Sepedi)

Thank you