CODE-SWITCHING IN ISIXHOSA MUSIC: A MECHANISM FOR LANGUAGE PRESERVATION OR SHIFT?

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ABSTRACT

Code-switching, the alternation between two or more languages within a discourse, is a prevalent linguistic phenomenon in multilingual societies. In South Africa, where English often coexists with indigenous languages such as isiXhosa, music has become a key medium for linguistic and cultural expression. This qualitative research paper examines the role of code-switching in isiXhosa music, specifically analysing Amanda Black's song *Kutheni Na* featuring Kwesta, to determine whether such linguistic alternations contribute to language preservation or language shift. Using discourse analysis, this study looks at how isiXhosa, English, and isiZulu are used together in the song's lyrics, looking at the language patterns and the sociocultural reasons for these choices. The analysis is framed by Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model, Fishman's Domain Theory, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to assess the implications of code-switching for isiXhosa preservation or shift. Findings indicate that code-switching in *Kutheni Na* serves expressive and functional purposes. While this interplay of language fusion in the song helps sustain isiXhosa in contemporary music, the growing use of English in South African music is worrying. It might lead to people gradually preferring English in mainstream discourse, which could cause shifts in language use over time. The study suggests that while code-switching in isiXhosa music can support language preservation by maintaining cultural relevance, it also reflects the realities of language contact and the potential erosion of isiXhosa in favour of English.

Keywords: code-switching, isiXhosa music, language preservation, language shift, multilingual society

ABSTRAK

Code-switching atau alih kode, pergantian antara dua bahasa atau lebih dalam sebuah wacana, adalah fenomena linguistik yang lazim dalam masyarakat multibahasa. Di Afrika Selatan, di mana bahasa Inggris sering berdampingan dengan bahasa-bahasa asli seperti isiXhosa, musik telah menjadi media utama untuk ekspresi bahasa dan budaya. Penelitian kualitatif ini meneliti peran code-switching dalam musik isiXhosa, secara khusus menganalisis lagu Amanda Black yang berjudul Kutheni Na yang dibawakan oleh Kwesta, untuk menentukan apakah pergantian bahasa seperti itu berkontribusi pada pelestarian bahasa atau pergeseran

bahasa. Dengan menggunakan analisis wacana, penelitian ini melihat bagaimana bahasa isiXhosa, bahasa Inggris, dan bahasa Zulu digunakan secara bersamaan dalam lirik lagu tersebut, dengan melihat pola bahasa dan alasan sosiokultural dari pilihan-pilihan tersebut. Analisis ini dibingkai oleh Model Penandaan Myers-Scotton, Teori Domain Fishman, dan Analisis Wacana Kritis (AWK) untuk menilai implikasi alih kode terhadap pelestarian atau pergeseran bahasa isiXhosa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa code-switching di Kutheni Na memiliki tujuan ekspresif dan fungsional. Meskipun perpaduan bahasa dalam lagu ini membantu mempertahankan isiXhosa dalam musik kontemporer, penggunaan bahasa Inggris yang semakin meningkat dalam musik Afrika Selatan mengkhawatirkan. Hal ini dapat menyebabkan orang secara bertahap lebih memilih bahasa Inggris dalam wacana arus utama, yang dapat menyebabkan pergeseran penggunaan bahasa dari waktu ke waktu. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun code-switching dalam musik isiXhosa dapat mendukung pelestarian bahasa dengan mempertahankan relevansi budaya, hal ini juga mencerminkan realitas kontak bahasa dan potensi erosi isiXhosa yang mendukung bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: alih kode, music isiXhosa, pelestarian bahasa, pergeseran bahasa, masyarakat multibahasa

A.   INTRODUCTION

Code-switching, the practice of switching between two or more languages within a discourse, is a key feature of multilingual societies. This common practice in diverse communities shows the complex interplay of language and cultural influences (Mona, 2024). In South Africa, with its 12 official languages, including South African Sign Language, people often switch between languages to fit into different social, cultural and professional contexts. While English is widely used in the media, law and commerce, only a small fraction of the population speak English as a first language. Consequently, code-switching is a common phenomenon in everyday South African conversation (Biswas, Yılmaz, van der Westhuizen, de Wet & Niesler, 2022).

Music is a powerful site for linguistic hybridity, combining artistic and cultural expression. South African musicians blend indigenous languages like isiXhosa, isiZulu, and Sesotho with English in various music genres and styles, showing historical influences and modern language trends. Within the isiXhosa music scene, code-switching has become a common practice. Artists mix English with isiXhosa to appeal to more people and to reach wider audiences while staying true to their culture. This makes the music more accessible, but it also raises concerns about how it affects the long-term survival and sustainability of the isiXhosa language. This leads to the following questions: Does code-switching in isiXhosa music contribute to the preservation of isiXhosa by keeping it relevant in popular culture, or does it facilitate language shift by normalising English usage at the expense of isiXhosa fluency?

South Africa has witnessed a decline in the everyday use of indigenous languages, particularly among younger generations who are increasingly exposed to English through digital media, education, and popular culture (Motsaathebe, 2023; Sathekge, 2022; Madima & Makananise, 2024). While government policies

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support multilingualism, the dominance of English in mainstream media raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of indigenous languages. IsiXhosa music serves as a potential space for linguistic resistance, where isiXhosa remains in use despite growing pressure from English. However, incorporating English and other languages through code-switching complicates this dynamic, as it is unclear whether this linguistic hybridity strengthens isiXhosa's presence in contemporary media or signals a gradual shift toward English dominance.

This study examines the role of code-switching in isiXhosa music, focusing on Amanda Black's song *Kutheni Na* featuring Kwesta. By analysing the song's linguistic patterns, the study seeks to determine whether code-switching reinforces the preservation of isiXhosa or accelerates a shift towards English dominance. These findings add value to the ongoing discussions about language preservation, multilingualism and cultural hybridity in South African music. They further provide insights into how artists manage language diversity in a music industry driven by commercial interests. Additionally, the study's findings could help shape discussions on language policy, cultural identity, and the changing role of indigenous languages in modern music.

The main question this study explores is: How does code-switching in isiXhosa music contribute to language preservation or shift? To address this, the study investigates how code-switching is used in Amanda Black' s song *Kutheni Na*, including its patterns, frequency, and purpose, while exploring the sociolinguistic motivations behind language choices in the song. Furthermore, the study assesses the implications of code-switching for isiXhosa language sustainability within the South African music industry.

While code-switching in African music has been explored from various perspectives, such as its role in identity performance, linguistic creativity, and cultural hybridity (Alim, 2008; Mugari, 2014; Banda, 2019; Sarah & Oladayo, 2021; Mathe, 2025), there remains limited empirical research on its specific implications for the sustainability of isiXhosa in contemporary South African popular music. Although studies such as Gobodwana (2019) and Deumert (2010) touch on isiXhosa and multilingual practices in popular media, they do not critically assess code-switching within the lyrical structure of songs or examine its functional role in language preservation. This study addresses that gap by investigating the linguistic choices in *Kutheni Na*, a Xhosa-English-Zulu song by Amanda Black featuring Kwesta. Drawing on Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model, Fishman's Domain Theory, and Critical Discourse Analysis, the study examines whether such code-switching practices preserve isiXhosa's presence in South African popular music or contribute to a gradual shift towards English linguistic dominance.

B.   LITERATURE REVIEW
1.   Code-Switching in Multilingual Contexts

Code-switching is a widely studied linguistic practice that occurs in multilingual communities where speakers alternate between two or more languages within a single conversation, sentence, or discourse (Nteziyaremye, Ndizeye, Nzabakirana, Benimana & Mugisha, 2024). This practice has many purposes, such as ensuring comprehension, signalling identity, and adapting to different social or situational contexts (Byrne, 2024). Alzahrani (2025) points out that code-switching

helps with clear communication, social interactions, and navigating various sociocultural settings. Kasim, Yusuf, and Ningsih (2019) highlight the three main types of code-switching: intersentential switching, which occurs between sentences; intrasentential switching, that happens within the same sentence; and tag-switching, which encompasses adding single words or phrases from another language. The choice to code-switch depends on many factors, like how well the speaker knows the language, who the audience is, the setting of the conversation, and the broader social and cultural environment (van Osch, Tiryakiol, Kolb, Luque & Rothman, 2025).

The reasons for code-switching differ among various language communities, influenced by social, cultural, and psychological factors. Pastor (2025) mentions that people who speak two or more languages often switch languages to ensure comprehension, especially when they communicate with linguistic diverse people. In multilingual societies, individuals frequently alternate between languages depending on the level of formality required, with dominant languages often reserved for professional or educational settings, while indigenous or heritage languages are used in informal contexts (Kipchoge, 2024). Research on Papiamento-Dutch bilinguals in the Netherlands by van Osch, Tiryakiol, Kolb, Luque, and Rothman (2025) found that the frequency and nature of code-switching are significantly influenced by cognitive factors and social environments, reinforcing the idea that speakers use code-switching as a strategic communicative resource.

Code-switching is particularly important in educational and digital spaces, and it is a topic that has been widely discussed. In multilingual classrooms, Kendjaeva (2025) notes that switching between languages can help students understand better and learn languages more easily. However, teachers worry that too much code-switching might make it harder for students to become proficient in the main language of instruction, especially when English is the primary language used in education (Kendjaeva, 2025). Outside of formal education, digital media has become a key area where code-switching is common. Mukenge (2025) points out that social media platforms encourage people to use two or even three languages, allowing them to connect with a wider audience while keeping their cultural ties.
In South Africa, English is the main language used in schools, businesses, and the media. Because of this, people often switch between English and indigenous languages. This practice has sparked a debate among scholars about its long-term impact. Research by Van Vüren (2024) explores how neural network-based language modelling for code-switching is necessary to integrate South Africa's indigenous languages into digital communication effectively. The study emphasises that due to South Africa's multilingual nature, code-switching is vital in everyday interactions, particularly in urban centres where speakers fluidly navigate between languages. Similarly, Bocharova (2024) investigates Afrikaans-English bilingualism in South Africa, demonstrating how code-switching is a communicative resource among white South Africans, particularly in informal settings and within academic discourse.

The prevalence of code-switching is particularly noticeable among urban youth, who frequently blend English with indigenous languages in both spoken and digital communication. According to Teh (2024), the increasing use of English as

a high-status language in South Africa and other multilingual societies could marginalise indigenous languages over time. To this end, Van der Westhuizen (2018) cautions that excessive reliance on English in formal communication and education may contribute to gradually eroding Indigenous languages as younger generations become more accustomed to English dominance. This tension reflects broader concerns about linguistic preservation versus pragmatism in multilingual African societies.

2. Code-Switching in Music

In multilingual societies, code-switching in music is a notable trend where artists switch between languages within a single song, verse, or chorus. This practice has several purposes, such as engaging the audience, expressing identity, and representing culture (Alim, 2008; Alim, 2023; Sarkar & Winer, 2006; Espinal, 2020). Several studies have explored why songwriters and composers incorporate multiple languages in their lyrics. Mugari (2014) notes that code-switching serves as a musical and linguistic style marker in Zimbabwean urban groove music, distinguishing urban music from other genres. Similarly, Ibsen (2024) points out that code-switching in music is not just a style choice; it is a deliberate strategy that musicians use to mirror their linguistic environment, attract different audiences, and showcase their multilingual identities.

Code-switching is a common practice in the global music industry, especially in areas where many languages are spoken (Kadir, 2021; Onuoha, 2024; Azman & Abdullah, 2023; Babalola &Taiwo, 2009). For instance, Ibsen (2024) notes that in Norwegian rap music, artists frequently engage in intrasentential and intersentential switching to represent their multicultural backgrounds and engage both local and international audiences. Similarly, an analysis of conjunto music in Texas highlighted how bilingual artists use code-switching to convey authenticity and cultural allegiance (Loureiro-Rodríguez & Moyna, 2024). Saud (2022) opines that in Nepali folk-pop songs, code-mixing enhances the multilingual flavour, making the songs more appealing to younger audiences and enriching their rhythmic and poetic elements. This mixing of languages in music is a purposeful artistic decision influenced by modern trends, new technology, and changing cultural influences in Nepal's music industry (Saud, 2022:45). This shows a broader trend where musicians who speak multiple languages use them on purpose to emphasise their identity, establish genuineness and connect with different language communities.

In African music, code-switching between languages is important for showing the continent's rich language varieties. Research by Mathe (2025) shows that radio and music programmes in Zimbabwe use code-switching to promote minority languages, helping to keep indigenous languages relevant in modern music. This is particularly important in societies where dominant languages like English often overshadow local languages. Quarcoo, Amuzu, and Owusu (2014) noted that code-switching is consciously employed in Ghanaian Hiplife songs to elicit some reactions from listeners, serving aesthetic purposes and helping musicians comment on social issues. Sarah and Oladayo (2021) suggest that incorporating multiple languages in Nigerian music helps musicians connect with diverse audiences and reflects Nigeria's multilingualism. African musicians mix indigenous languages with English or other global languages to create a blend of languages. This helps strengthen local cultural identity while also making the music accessible to

international audiences.

Additionally, switching between languages in music is not just a language choice but a strong cultural strategy. Tjabaka-Mokapane and Thetso (2024) analyse Sesotho accordion music, demonstrating how artists seamlessly integrate Sesotho and other languages to communicate community values and lived experiences. The study suggests that code-switching enhances lyrical richness and emotional depth, allowing musicians to engage multilingual audiences more effectively (*Tjabaka-Mokapane & Thetso, 2024*). Similarly, in West African Afrobeats music, Okyere (2024) highlights how code-switching between English, Twi, and Nigerian Pidgin reflects a dynamic cultural interplay between Ghana and Nigeria. The study argues that multilingual lyrics are markers of identity and authenticity while broadening the artist's audience reach (Okyere, 2024).

Code-switching in isiXhosa music represents a dynamic linguistic phenomenon where artists blend isiXhosa with other languages such as English, Afrikaans, and Zulu. Gobodwana (2019) analysed the top 10 African language pop songs on *Umhlobo Wenene FM*, one of South Africa's most prominent isiXhosa-language radio stations. The study notes that code-switching in isiXhosa music occurs primarily in bilingual pop songs, where artists blend isiXhosa and English as a stylistic and communicative tool to reflect urban influences, engage younger audiences, and enhance lyrical expression.

Beyond its cultural role, code-switching in African music is often employed as a storytelling and social commentary tool. Nkansah (2024) explores how Ghanaian Hiplife artists use linguistic shifts to engage with sociopolitical themes. His study reveals that the alternation between local dialects and English allows artists to critique governance, economic conditions, and social struggles while connecting with elite and grassroots listeners (Nkansah, 2024).

C.   THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in three key theoretical frameworks: Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model, Fishman's Domain Framework, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (1993) was used to analyse how Amanda Black and Kwesta strategically employ code-switching in *Kutheni Na* to navigate audience engagement, identity representation, and linguistic accessibility. The model suggests that language choices in bilingual or multilingual settings are either unmarked (expected and socially conventional) or marked (a deliberate change in language that shows a shift in meaning or social dynamics) (Myers-Scotton, 1998). By looking at these language shifts, the study assesses if the artists' code-switching between languages keeps the isiXhosa identity or if it leads to gradual shifts towards English dominance in contemporary isiXhosa music. Using the Markedness Model helps the researchers understand why these language choices are made and what they mean for the language sustainability.

To complement the Markedness Model, Fishman's Domain concept assessed whether isiXhosa music, particularly *Kutheni Na*, remains a strong domain for isiXhosa preservation or if code-switching signals a shift toward English dominance in South African popular music. Fishman (1967) argues that minority languages survive when actively used in key domains such as education, media, and cultural institutions. A language shift occurs when dominant languages like English

start replacing indigenous languages in these domains (Fishman, 1991). Applying this framework, the study examines how isiXhosa functions within the domain of music, specifically whether its presence in *Kutheni Na* helps maintain its relevance or whether the increasing use of English in South African popular music weakens its sustainability. It helps the study evaluate whether isiXhosa music continues to serve as a vibrant cultural and linguistic space or is becoming a secondary domain where isiXhosa is gradually overshadowed by English.

Finally, the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework was used to examine how language choices in *Kutheni Na* reflect power dynamics, linguistic hierarchies, and cultural identity in South African music. CDA draws from overlapping theoretical perspectives to explore how power, authority, dominance, and social inequality are constructed, sustained, and resisted in written and spoken discourse (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018). Drawing from Fairclough's (1995, 2013) approach, CDA helps analyse whether isiXhosa remains central to the song's identity or whether English is assuming a more dominant role, particularly in contemporary isiXhosa music. Additionally, CDA helps interpret how market-driven pressures influence language choices in music, determining whether English is strategically used for commercial viability while isiXhosa serves to maintain cultural authenticity.

D.   RESEARCH METHOD
1.   Research Approach and Design
This study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilising discourse analysis within a case study design to examine the patterns and implications of code-switching in Amanda Black's song *Kutheni Na* featuring Kwesta. Qualitative research is particularly effective for studying complicated social and language-related phenomena. It helps the researchers understand how people use language, what they mean, and the cultural context in which the communication occurs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This approach is well-suited for analysing the linguistic choices in musical compositions, as it provides the flexibility to interpret how and why artists switch between languages in their lyrics.

Furthermore, this study employs discourse analysis as a research method to examine the linguistic structure and sociocultural meanings embedded in *Kutheni Na*. This qualitative research method is used to investigate written and spoken language within its social context (Gee, 2014). This approach is particularly relevant for song lyrics, as they serve as a discourse form reflecting cultural identity, audience engagement, and social commentary (van Dijk, 1997). Through discourse analysis, the study uncovers the motivations behind code-switching in the song and assesses whether these linguistic choices contribute to language preservation or shift.

A case study design further enhances this analysis by allowing an in-depth examination of *Kutheni Na* as a representative example of contemporary isiXhosa music incorporating multilingualism. Case studies are valuable in qualitative research as they facilitate a comprehensive exploration of a single case within its real-life context, generating rich insights that inform broader discussions on language use (Yin, 2018). In this study, the case study approach is beneficial for analysing how isiXhosa, English, and isiZulu interact in the lyrics and what their

usage suggests about language sustainability in South African popular music.

2. Data Collection

This study's primary data consists of *Kutheni Na* lyrics, obtained from official sources, such as verified lyric databases and streaming platforms. The lyrics were transcribed and carefully reviewed through repeated listening to ensure accuracy, considering pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm, which may influence the interpretation of language use. Since song lyrics are sung instead of written, the researchers looked at how language features like repetition, connotations, and expressions add to the meaning. The song was selected because of its language diversity; it uses isiXhosa, English, and isiZulu, making it ideal for studying multilingual code-switching.

This study adopts a single-song case study approach, focusing on *Kutheni Na* due to its linguistic complexity, widespread reach, and cultural relevance within the South African music scene. As a multilingual composition, the song exemplifies the linguistic hybridity that characterises much of contemporary South African popular music. Its popularity and visibility across diverse linguistic communities render it a significant artefact for examining the role of code-switching in music-mediated language representation. In line with critical discourse analysis and qualitative textual analysis traditions, which prioritise depth over breadth in the study of meaning and language use, the study draws on this single, information-rich case to critically interrogate the sociolinguistic function of code-switching in popular isiXhosa music (Patton, 2002; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). This focused analysis enables a detailed exploration of linguistic choices, contextual meanings, and broader implications for language sustainability, particularly in the context of isiXhosa's evolving status among youth audiences.

3. Ethical Considerations

This study does not involve human participants; it only uses publicly available song lyrics. The researchers, however, made sure to respect copyright laws and that the quoted lyrics adhered to fair use principles. The study maintains objectivity by strictly looking at language patterns and cultural meanings without making subjective interpretations of what the artists meant.

E. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the discourse analysis of Kutheni Na by Amanda Black featuring Kwesta are presented below. The study focuses on code-switching patterns, isiXhosa, English, and isiZulu distribution, the sociolinguistic functions of language choices, and the implications for language preservation or shift. The findings are structured according to the linguistic patterns observed in the song, followed by an examination of their functions and broader sociolinguistic impact.

1. Code-Switching Patterns in *Kutheni Na*

Code-switching in *Kutheni Na* follows a structured linguistic pattern, where isiXhosa, English, and isiZulu are distributed across different sections of the song. The table below provides a breakdown of the lyrics, categorising each line by language and artist. This representation highlights how Amanda Black predominantly uses isiXhosa, while Kwesta incorporates English and isiZulu in his verse.

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Table 1: Code-Switching Patterns in Kutheni Na

Original Lyrics	Language	English Transla -tion	Artist	Frequen -cy	Types of code switching
Iyho kutheni na?	IsiXhosa	Oh, why?	Amanda Black	x 24	Tag switching
Ban' ozondiphelezela, kolu hambo lok'nyamezela?	IsiXhosa	Who will accompany me on this journey of endurance?	Amanda Black	x 1	No Code-Switching (IsiXhosa)
Mandla ami ayaphela, ayaphela phela	IsiXhosa	My strength is fading, truly fading	Amanda Black	x 1	No Code-switching (IsiXhosa)
Ngakhalis' umlozi, nothing	IsiXhosa/English	I whistled, but nothing	Amanda Black	x 2	Intrasentential
Ndicul' iculo abandiva	IsiXhosa	I sing a song, but they do not hear me	Amanda Black	x 1	No Code-Switching (IsiXhosa)
Nothing, nothing!	English	Nothing, nothing!	Amanda Black	x 1	No code switching (English)
Kodwa impilo bethuna, why it gotta be so cruel?	IsiXhosa/English	But life, people, why does it have to be so cruel?	Amanda Black	x 1	Intrasentential
Kodwa impilo bethuna, I just don't know what to do	IsiXhosa/English	But life, people, I just don't know what to do	Amanda Black	x 1	Intrasentential
Look, I don't wanna write about pain anymore (Nah)	English	-	Kwesta	x 1	Tag-Switching
I'm afraid I might forget to feel the opposite (Eish)	English	-	Kwesta	x 1	Tag-Switching
But I don't wanna lie, that shit would pain me even more (Yeah)	English	-	Kwesta	x 1	Tag-switching
And maybe if I pen it I may just accomplish it	English	-	Kwesta	x 1	No Code-Switching (English)
Kusayiloku phanda kau, same ndaba ndaba since ngisese yintwana kau	IsiZulu	Still hustling, man, the same old story since I was young	Kwesta	x 1	Intersentential

Ngisabhalabhala and I made it out somehow	IsiZulu/English	I am still writing, and I made it out somehow	Kwesta	x 1	Intrasentential
Sometimes I wonder why cause bes'bhaya esingana plan	English/IsiZulu	Sometimes I wonder why, because we bought without a plan	Kwesta	x 1	Intrasentential
Ah! sizobona kuhlangana ni and waar kwakhanya	IsiZulu	Ah! We will see what happens, and then it all became clear	Kwesta	x 1	Intrasentential
And I put it all back in the hood for safekeeping.	English	And I put it all back in the hood for safekeeping	Kwesta	x 1	No code switching (English)
Ngaqubula amagenge i-flag li raise-we	IsiZulu/English	I gathered the gangs, and we raised the flag	Kwesta	x 1	Intrasentential
Sathola into yokuhlafuna instead of daydreaming	IsiZulu/English	We found something to eat instead of just daydreaming	Kwesta	x 1	Intrasentential
And then I lost Pantsula to the same streets, eish	English	And then I lost Pantsula to the same streets, eish	Kwesta	x 1	Tag switching

The lyrics of *Kutheni Na* above exhibit a complex interplay of isiXhosa, English, and isiZulu, reflecting multilingualism. The analysis identifies three primary types of code-switching in the song:

1. Intersentential Switching: This occurs when a language shift happens between sentences or clauses (Rahmat, Othman & Unin, 2019). Examples include:

   (1) Kwesta demonstrates intersentential switching when he moves from English to isiZulu across consecutive lines: *"And I put it all back in the hood for safe keepin'"* (English), followed by *"Ngaqubula amagenge i-flag li raise-we"* (isiZulu).

   (2) Kwesta's verse, where he shifts from English (*"Look, I don't wanna write about pain anymore"*) to isiZulu (*"Kusayiloku phanda kau"*).

   (3) Another example can be observed in the verse transitions from isiZulu-English blend to a full English sentence: "*Sathola into yokuhlafuna instead of daydreaming*" is followed by "*And then I lost Pantsula to the same streets,*" reflecting a switch between distinct sentences in different languages.

2. Intrasentential Switching: This occurs within a single sentence or phrase, seamlessly blending two or more languages (Rahmat et al., 2019). Examples include:

   (1) *"Ngakhalis' umlozi, nothing"* – IsiXhosa starts the sentence, and English is added at the end.

   (2) *"Ngisa bhalabhala and I made it out somehow"* – IsiZulu phrase followed by an English clause.

   (3) *"Sometimes I wonder why cause bes'bhaya esingana plan"* – An English phrase transitions smoothly into isiZulu.

   (4) *"Sathola into yokuhlafuna instead of daydreaming"* – IsiZulu at the start, transitioning into English.

   (5) "*Kodwa impilo bethuna, why it gotta be so cruel*?" – IsiXhosa and English clauses combined within a single sentence, reflecting clause-level switching.

3. Tag-Switching: This occurs when inserting a single word or short phrase from another language within a sentence (Andriani, Agustina & Al Afiyah, 2024). Examples include:

   (1) *"Iyho kutheni na?"* – A recurring isiXhosa phrase repeated throughout the song for emotional emphasis.

   (2) *"Eish"* – An isiZulu interjection used within an English sentence (*"I'm afraid I might forget to feel the opposite (Eish)"*), conveying frustration or distress.

   (3) *"Nah"* and *"Yeah"* – English words inserted into a broader multilingual structure.

2. Patterns and Functions of Code-Switching

In the song "*Kutheni Na,"* there is a clear pattern in how different languages are used. IsiXhosa is mainly used in the chorus, which shows Amanda Black's strong connection to her language and culture. But in the verses, especially in Kwesta's rap part, English and isiZulu are used more. This means that isiXhosa is used for emotional and cultural grounding, while English and isiZulu are used to make the song stylish and engaging for the audience or listeners.

Kwesta's verse, which incorporates isiZulu, English and tag-switching between languages, shows the practices of how young people in urban South Africa often alternate between languages. This style aligns with South African hip-hop, where artists blend languages to enhance their lyrics' flow and maintain authenticity. They use code-switching and code-mixing of languages to make their lyrics fashionable and connect with different listeners and audiences (Theledi, 2023). According to Maduna (2009:4), 'the ability of South African rappers to mix languages and re-work common language indicates that the power of these musicians lies in their ability to transform ordinary language into one that is intense, resonant and captivating'.

This structured switching between languages aligns with Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (1993), which says that people choose languages based on social expectations and what they need to communicate (Rose, 2006). In this case, Amanda Black, mainly using isiXhosa, emphasises cultural preservation to keep

her culture and language alive, while Kwesta's multilingual use reflects stylistic flexibility and fits urban trends. This mix of languages creates a unique musical identity that keeps cultural values and connects with a wide audience.

The findings suggest that *Kutheni Na* code-switching is a language and artistic tool. It reinforces isiXhosa's presence in contemporary music while fitting into the multilingual urban culture. However, the prominence of English in Kwesta's verse raises questions about language shift, especially in popular music genres, where English continues to dominate.

3. Linguistic Functions of Code-Switching

a. Emotional Expression

IsiXhosa is mainly used in the chorus, where Amanda Black repeatedly keeps singing, "*Iyho kutheni na*?" ("Oh, why?"), which expresses feelings of distress, longing, or questioning. Repeating isiXhosa phrases makes the song more emotional and connected to the culture. Native languages often have a deeper emotional and psychological meaning for people who speak them (Finlayson & Slabbert, 1997). This aligns with Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (1993), where language choice reinforces cultural identity. The unmarked choice here is isiXhosa because it aligns with what an isiXhosa-speaking audience expects. Repeating the phrase often intensifies the song's emotive impact and keeps the listener connected to the culture and language of the song.

IsiXhosa is also used in parts of the song describing personal struggles, like "*Mandla ami ayaphela, ayaphela phela*" ("My strength is fading, truly fading"). Using isiXhosa in these vulnerable moments shows that the language has a deep, personal connection to the singer's emotions. This makes it important for expressing deep thoughts and hardships. Research shows that people often go back to their native language when talking about deep personal or emotional experiences (Pavlenko, 2005). The song's structure positions isiXhosa for the most emotional parts, the chorus, while English and isiZulu are used in the verses for broader communicative and stylistic purposes. This shows that the choice of language is strategically planned to maximise the song's emotional and cultural meaning.

Furthermore, isiXhosa also plays a role in the song's performance, helping the artist connect deeply with her audience. Using isiXhosa consistently in the chorus creates a sense of communal understanding and shared experience among isiXhosa speakers. At the same time, using English and isiZulu in other parts of the song enables broader accessibility, making it easier for more people to understand without losing the song's emotional impact. Hence, by using isiXhosa in the most emotional and heartfelt parts, Amanda Black shows that isiXhosa is a profound vehicle for expressing deep feelings and maintaining the song's authenticity while using multiple languages.

b. Audience Accessibility

Kwesta's verse uses English and isiZulu, reflecting an intent to reach a broader audience beyond isiXhosa speakers. Since English and isiZulu are widely spoken in South Africa, the song's accessibility is enhanced, making it resonate with non-isiXhosa speakers while still maintaining cultural authenticity. Using multiple languages, *"Kutheni Na"* appeals to more people and connects with a diverse audience while keeping isiXhosa as the main language in the song. This

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strategic mix of languages aligns with current trends in South African music, where artists use multiple languages to reach local and international listeners (Aiseng, 2022). According to Banda (2019:2), through musical and lyrical performance, a musician can index urban-rural, traditional-modern, local-global and multiple affiliations in a single setting. This highlights how multilingual lyrics bridge local identity with international appeal.

Fishman's Domain Framework (1967) suggests that language is more likely to be maintained if used across different areas or social domains of life. In this case, using isiXhosa in a song with multiple languages helps keep it visible in mainstream media, strengthens its role in popular culture, and supports its preservation. However, while the use of isiXhosa in the song supports its presence, the growing use of English in South African popular music is worrying, which raises concerns about a gradual language shift. English is often seen as the language of modern life and better economic opportunities, so many artists prioritise its use for broader marketability and to reach a wider audience (Kamwangamalu, 2007; Coffi, 2017). This practice makes us wonder if code-switching in music helps strengthen indigenous languages or if it is gradually reducing them to less important or secondary roles in popular music.

c. Stylistic and Rhythmic Function

The integration of isiZulu in Kwesta's rap segment highlights the stylistic flexibility of code-switching in music. IsiZulu phrases are seamlessly woven into English lines, as seen in:

1) *"Kusayiloku phanda kau, same ndaba ndaba since ngisese yintwana kau"* (*"Still hustling, man, the same old story since I was young"*)

2) *"Sathola into yokuhlafuna instead of daydreaming"* (*"We found something to eat instead of just daydreaming"*)

These instances of code-switching in the song enhance the rhythmic and poetic flow of the lyrics. The switch between isiZulu, English, and isiXhosa aligns with studies on South African hip-hop and kwaito music, where using multilingualism shows authenticity in these musical styles (Mhlambi, 2004; Williams, 2016). This deliberate switching between languages on purpose reinforces the blends of traditional language identity with contemporary musical expression, allowing for cultural and artistic hybridity

4. Implications for Language Preservation

The findings show that "*Kutheni Na"* helps preserve the isiXhosa language in several ways. First, the song ensures isiXhosa remains in mainstream or popular music, reinforcing its continued relevance in today's culture. Unlike traditional isiXhosa music, which is often confined to communal ceremonies and community events, Amanda Black's mix of languages brings isiXhosa into the popular, widely listened-to music domain. This exposure is important for passing the language to younger generations as they engage with isiXhosa in modern music.

Second, the deliberate placement of isiXhosa alongside English and isiZulu demonstrates that multilingualism does not inherently endanger indigenous languages. Fishman (1991) emphasises that indigenous languages survive when they remain actively used in public and cultural domains. Since *Kutheni Na* does not relegate isiXhosa to a secondary role but instead highlights it in the chorus and

emotional parts of the song, it preserves the isiXhosa's important role in storytelling and artistic expression.

Additionally, the repetition of isiXhosa in vital lyrical parts of the song makes it easier to remember. Phrases like "*Iyo kutheni na?*" and "*Mandla ami ayaphela*" highlight isiXhosa as the emotional core of the song, making sure that listeners, no matter what their main language is, connect with isiXhosa on a cultural and emotional level.

5. Implications for Language Shift

Even though "*Kutheni Na*" helps preserve isiXhosa, it also shows that English is becoming more dominant in South African popular music, indicating a gradual shift towards English. One of the significant observations is that English is used the most in the rap parts of the song, which indicates that music genres like hip-hop and rap prefer English over Indigenous languages. Research on language shift in South African youth culture (Deumert, 2010) indicates that English is increasingly becoming the default language in urban music, often at the expense of indigenous languages.

Moreover, the distribution of languages within the song follows a hierarchical pattern, where isiXhosa is used in emotional and repetitive segments. At the same time, English and isiZulu dominate the rap and storytelling segments. This aligns with Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995), which examines how power dynamics manifest in language choices. The use of English for rapping, a genre that symbolises urban life, identity, and global influence or trends, shows that English is preferred for commercially oriented music.

Additionally, using English for narrative and deep reflection (*"I don't wanna write about pain anymore"*) is different from isiXhosa's role in evoking raw emotion (*"Iyho kutheni na?"*). This division shows broader linguistic shift trends where English is often seen as the language of intellectual expression and marketability. In contrast, indigenous languages are retained for cultural authenticity but may play a diminishing role in mainstream discourse. If such patterns continue, there is a risk that indigenous languages may become symbolically present but functionally marginalised in contemporary music. This raises concerns about the long-term impact of code-switching, whether it helps to promote multilingualism or reinforces the dominance of English in South African popular culture.

The findings indicate that while code-switching plays a crucial role in maintaining isiXhosa in contemporary music scenes, the increasing use and presence of English in some musical contexts might contribute to language shift from isiXhosa. This discussion section looks closely at these findings, connecting them to other research, language theories, and the implications for language sustainability in South Africa.

1. Code-Switching as a Mechanism for Language Preservation

The findings suggest that code-switching in *Kutheni Na* actively contributes to language preservation by ensuring the continued presence of isiXhosa in mainstream music. Fishman's domain theory (1967) emphasises that indigenous languages survive when they remain functionally relevant in key domains such as education, media, and music. In this context, Amanda Black's use of isiXhosa in the chorus reinforces its linguistic and cultural authenticity, maintaining its

presence in popular music discourse. Unlike traditional isiXhosa songs that primarily cater to specific cultural audiences, *Kutheni Na* integrates isiXhosa into modern, multilingual music, making it accessible to younger, urban audiences or listeners who may not have engaged with music purely performed in an indigenous language. This aligns with Picone (2024), who highlights how multilingual music bridges tradition and modernity by blending local language identities with global influences, ensuring the preservation of indigenous languages while adapting to contemporary linguistic realities.

Also, code-switching in "*Kutheni Na*" helps balance cultural identity and commercial appeal. IsiXhosa is used in the emotional chorus, while English and isiZulu add different stylistic variations to the song, showing how using multiple languages in music can be flexible. This aligns with studies on South African hip-hop and kwaito, which highlight the intentional mixing of languages to maintain strong cultural integrity and mass appeal, which makes the music popular (Mesthrie, 2002). Using code-switching instead of replacing the language, "*Kutheni Na*" keeps isiXhosa in popular culture, ensuring its continued importance in South Africa's changing language scene.

2. Code-Switching and the Risk of Language Shift

Even though code-switching helps in language preservation, the finding also shows that it might cause language shift if dominant languages like English start to replace indigenous languages in some musical contexts. This concern is particularly evident in Kwesta's verse, where English is more prominent than isiXhosa. Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995) highlights that linguistic choices in media and music often reflect underlying power dynamics, where dominant languages gradually displace minority languages in public discourse. The increasing use of English in contemporary South African music, especially in popular genres or styles like hip-hop and R&B, shows that English is becoming the main language for artistic expression in urban settings.

Research on youth language practices further supports this concern, as studies show that younger generations are more likely to use English-dominated media, which can lead to a shift or make them prefer English over time (Deumert, 2010). While *Kutheni Na* maintains a balance between isiXhosa and English, the hierarchical structure of language use, where isiXhosa is confined to the chorus while English dominates the verses, may suggest a gradual transition toward English dominance in contemporary isiXhosa music. The dichotomy exists whether code-switching is an effective long-term strategy for language preservation or shift.

3. Implications for Language Sustainability in South African Music

The findings of this study have significant implications for language sustainability and policy in South African music. First, they highlight the need for intentional efforts to promote indigenous languages in the entertainment industry. While multilingualism is a strength of South African music, there is a risk that market-driven linguistic choices may result in English replacing indigenous languages in commercially viable genres. Policymakers, artists, and cultural institutions or groups might need to develop plans and initiatives to promote using isiXhosa and other indigenous languages in popular media and music. This aligns with Kamwangamalu's (2011) research, which argues that language policies should go beyond formal institutions such as schools and actively engage with cultural

production spaces to ensure the continued presence of indigenous languages in everyday life.

Second, the study suggests that music can serve as a critical site for language activism, where artists can intentionally foreground indigenous languages in ways that appeal to younger audiences. Successful examples of language revival efforts through music include the resurgence of indigenous languages in global hip-hop, where artists use music to reclaim their languages and resist cultural loss (Alim, 2008; 2023). Similar methods could be used in South Africa to boost isiXhosa in popular music, ensuring code-switching enriches the language instead of causing its shifts or demise.

Finally, the findings of this study show how important it is for the public to be involved and aware of language use in music production and consumption. While artists can choose how they use language, how the audience reacts helps shape language trends in the music industry. If more people want music that mainly uses isiXhosa, artists might focus more on indigenous languages in their songs. This shows how important music listeners, streaming services, and radio stations are in supporting different languages in South African music.

F.   CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that code-switching in isiXhosa music is a double-edged sword. While it allows for cultural fluidity and audience engagement, it reflects more significant sociolinguistic trends that may contribute to language shift. The findings suggest that isiXhosa remains a key component of South African musical identity. However, its long-term sustainability depends on how artists, audiences, and policymakers engage with language in creative industries. While this study provides valuable insights into the role of code-switching in language preservation and shift, certain limitations should be acknowledged. First, the analysis is based on a single song, Kutheni Na, which may not represent broader linguistic trends in South African music. Future studies could examine a larger set of songs across various genres to determine whether similar patterns persist. Additionally, the study did not consider audience reception of code-switching and how business factors like record label choices and market demands affect language use in music. Studying these aspects could help in better understanding what shapes language trends in South African music. Future research should also look at the role of digital streaming platforms in shaping language preferences in contemporary African music. Looking at these aspects, researchers can further assess the impact of multilingualism on language sustainability in the modern music industry.

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