

LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF XITSONGA LANGUAGE

Presentation by: Dr M Khosa & Dr WS Chauke



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BENCHMARKING EARLY GRADE READING SKILLS

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A brief introduction of Xitsonga language and its history

- Xitsonga is one of the official languages of SA
- Also recognised as one of the official languages in Mozambique, Swaziland and Zimbabwe
- Approximately 4.5% of the SA population speak Xitsonga as the HL
- 17% of Xitsonga speakers in Limpopo, 10% in Mpumalanga, and 7% in Gauteng (Stats SA, 2011)

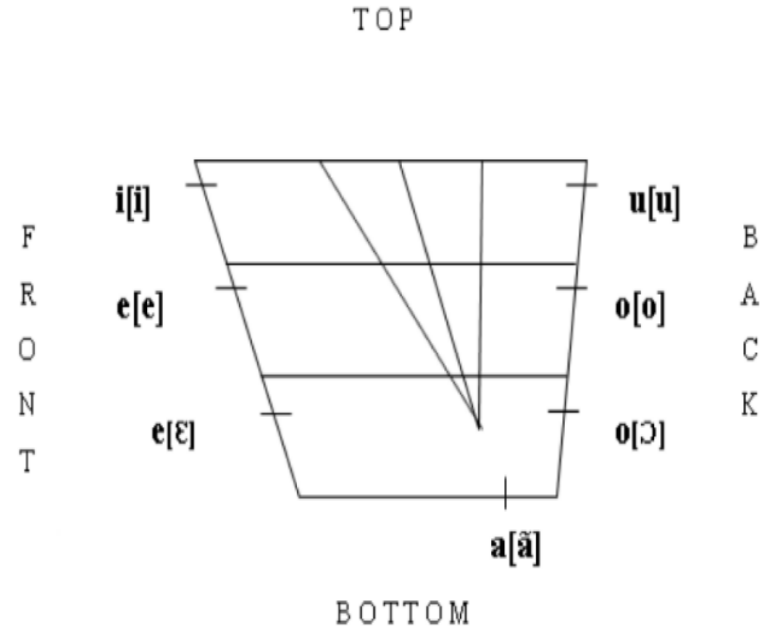
- Unlike the Nguni and Sesotho-Setswana language groups, Xitsonga is standalone
- It belongs to the Tswa-Ronga family, which encompasses 14 family
- 6 Dialects: **Ronga, Hlanganu, Djonga, Bila, N'walungu and Hlengwe**



Vowel features in the Xitsonga language

Three types of sounds

- Vowels
- Semi vowels
- Consonants



Xitsonga vowel sounds and allophones

Vowels in Xitsonga	Examples	Gloss
a [a]	<u>a</u> ka	build
e [e]	ve <u>e</u>	breast
e [ɛ]	<u>e</u> ka	to
i [i]	inkomu	thank you
o [o]	<u>o</u> ka	take an ember from one fireplace to another
o [ɔ]	<u>o</u> <u>mu</u>	fool
u [u]	h <u>u</u> <u>k</u>	fowl



Semi-vowels in Xitsonga with example words

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Semi-vowel	Xitsonga	English
w	<u>w</u> ela we <u>n</u> a	fall into you
y	<u>y</u> ona y <u>i</u> ma	this one stand up



Double vowels in Xitsonga with examples

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Vowels in Xitsonga	Examples	Gloss
aa	a:a	surprise
ee	e:e	agreement
ii	i:i	disapproval
oo	o:o	recollection/rememembering
uu	u:u	shock



Consonant features in Xitsonga language

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Single	• b c g p f k n'
Digraphs	• by pf hl rh tl dl
Two-letter blends	• dy lw gw mf mp nc
Trigraphs	• dlh mbh ngh tlh tsh
Three-letter blends	• hlw mbv ndy mpf
Four-letter blends	• mpfh ntsh ntlh ndzh
Five-letter blends	• ndzhw ntshw



Syllable features in Xitsonga

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Type of syllable	Word	analysis	Results
CV (Consonant + Vowel)	rima	ri > CV ma > CV	CV + CV
V (Vowel only)	riendli	ri > CV e > V ndli > CV	CV + V + CV
CyV (Consonant + semi-vowel 'y' + Vowel)	byako	bya > CyV ko > CV	CyV + CV



Tone features in Xitsonga

Low tone	High tone
vele (maize)	vèlè (breast)
nsele (cruel)	nsèlé (hole)



Sentence structures in Xitsonga vs Nguni & Sesotho-Setswana languages

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Xitsonga	Nguni	Sesotho-Setswana
Both disjunctively and conjunctively	Solely conjunctively	Written disjunctively
Ndza nwi rhandza (disjunctive)	ngiyamthanda	Ke a mo rata
Murhangeri-wa-xikolo (conjunctive)	uthishomkhulu	mosuoe-hlooho oa sekolo



Thank you



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Reading Benchmarks for African Languages

