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**THE TEACHING OF XITSONGA POETRY TO SECONDARY
SCHOOL LEARNERS IN MHALA, MPUMALANGA
PROVINCE WITH REFERENCE TO A SAMPLE
OF POEMS FROM THE ANTHOLOGIES OF
MASEBENZA, B J, CHAUKE, S P AND MAGAISA, J M**

BY

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(ii)

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Last, but not least, like Saint Paul I say: “We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ...”

M J MONA

SEPTEMBER, 1997

DECLARATION

I declare that the study: *THE TEACHING OF XITSONGA POETRY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN MHALA, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE WITH REFERENCE TO A SAMPLE OF POEMS FROM THE ANTHOLOGIES OF MASEBENZA, B J, CHAUKE, S P AND MAGAISA, JM*, is my own work in design and execution and that all the sources used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. The study has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university.



M J MONA

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated:

To the Monas and the Mabuzas

To my parents, Joseph Elmon Majarimani and
Lena Shipowani N'wa-Jeke (née Mabuza).

ABSTRACT

This research project dealt with specific points relating to the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry in semi-urban, rural and typically-rural areas in Mhala, a Region in Mpumalanga Province.

Foremost, it defined the problem, provided the rationale for undertaking it, justified the scope and value of the study, defined both conventional and private cardinal concepts in the context of the study and possible future research projects, explained the research instruments that were used to gather empirical data used as the kingpin of the research effort as well as an overview of chapters.

It went on to argue that Xitsonga poetry as a research aspect cannot be fully appreciated at secondary school level if not looked at against a sample background of the history of literature as a whole. The study then proceeded to illustrate some of the dominant themes underlying the genesis of Xitsonga poetry such as, for example, poetry on natural phenomenon, on creatures, on objects and on human qualities. The prime aim of this particular endeavour was to create a flexible framework in the teaching and learning of poetry not only in Xitsonga but in other languages as well.

The study also endeavoured to provide a sample format of literary criticism in Xitsonga poetry appropriate for classroom presentation at the levels of Standards 8, 9 and 10. The study argued that prior to actual textual analysis both teacher and pupil could be enriched by assessing the poet's selection of the title and the style adopted to address the content; the category under which a given anthology falls, the themes that the poet addresses, critique methodology to be engaged as a means to an end and biographical details of certain poems.

After this detailed theoretical exposition, followed a detailed description of the research instruments used and the research groups sampled; the environment inside and outside the target schools; the research methodology employed and some possible limitations to the sampling of data and measures adopted to control such possible limitations. This description provided a basis and background against which the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry was researched and commented upon.

Furthermore, the study provided a detailed analysis, interpretation as well as comment on the research data gathered by means of questionnaires and oral interviews. The analysis of this data revealed, *inter alia*, that problems of teaching different types of poetry in rural, typically-rural and semi-urban areas differed but by and large performance in the rural and typically-rural milieu was better than in the semi-urban milieu. It was apparent though that all the research participants contributed in their own unique ways towards the nature and extent of the problems revealed by the research.

The study ended with some concluding comments and specific recommendations bearing on pupils, teachers, Education Administrators, tertiary institutions especially those that had to do with language teaching; writers, book selectors, publishing houses, Departments of Education especially their Language Services Divisions. The purpose of the recommendation was to address the problems identified by the study with a view to corrective measures on various fronts in which the problems were contextualised. On the whole recommendations bear on language methodology in the teaching and learning of poetry, the need for an eclectic approach to lend flexibility in the language classrooms, learner-centered strategies as against teacher-centred transmission teaching, appropriacy in terms of teacher-placement i.e. teachers trained to teach in the primary schools should not be preferred for secondary school classes lest their strategies conflict with the needs of their learners, suitable academic qualification and professional training. Recommendation also touched on broader language-related issues such as the need to read Newspapers, listen to relevant radio programmes, watch language-related TV programmes and extensive as well as intensive reading.

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CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 DEFINING THE PROBLEM

The teaching of Xitsonga poetry especially at secondary school level is not as effective as it could be. The problem seems to be multifaceted ranging from the learners' inability to appreciate the language of literary criticism in poetry in Xitsonga, to a general lack of reading culture especially the reading of verse, to ineffective teaching strategies on the part of the teacher coupled with possible inadequate training especially in the techniques of teaching poetry in the first language (Xitsonga), to the lack of reading material in Xitsonga poetry.

According to Heese et al (1983: 12), it is imperative for both teacher and pupil to note that poetry is characterized by an expression of man's fundamental feelings and desires: his urge to communicate with his gods, his joy and gratitude at the bounty of nature and his desire to exercise some sort of power through ritual and magical chant, over natural processes. The most important tool the poet manipulates to realise his goal is language or more precisely poetic language. Poetic language can assume various manifestations ranging from the relatively simple to the very complex and difficult to understand. Examples of linguistic and contextual complexity is clearly evident in Xitsonga Traditional poetry and Modern poetry, while a relatively simpler language and context characterise the Xitsonga Transitional poetry.

The researcher concurs with Heese et al (1983: 16) when they say that a simple, straightforward poem is likely to have much less to say than one on which the reader has to expend some mental effort. It was the literary critic, Denys Thompson (1959: 11) who warned that: "Much of the reading matter in circulation is rather worse than useless". "A poem", asserts Moore (1948: 98) "must stand looking into".

Poets of standing employ characteristically poetic language of their genre. They seem consciously or unconsciously at least to challenge the competency of their critics on the one hand while satisfying the aesthetic demands of the lovers of poetry on the other. To achieve

this end, poets often find the use of figurative language useful. In this connection Marivate (1984: 21) says:

Poetry is bound up with figurative language.
It is thus very important for you to understand
what figurative language involves.

In his practical experience in the teaching of Xitsonga, the researcher has, over the years, come to realise that both the teacher of Xitsonga and his pupil simply lack the necessary reading culture that makes, inter alia, the reading of verse a pleasurable and edifying experience for both teacher and pupil. This dearth in the reading culture of verse in Xitsonga is probably one of the major contributory factors towards the gross under-achievement in poetry in Xitsonga in the Standard 10 Examination. In 1985, Mayevu, G S, a Chief Examiner for the Standard 10 JMB Xitsonga Examinations, Paper 3 after opining that candidates were unfamiliar with prescribed texts commented as follows:

The poem "swihloni" was given in full. Some words and phrases were underlined for candidates to analyse. Most candidates could not give both literal and figurative meaning. Instead of analysing the underlined words and phrases, some candidates chose their own words. The general tendency was to paraphrase the whole poem without reference to the underlined words. Most candidates wasted a lot of time in naming parts of speech and not bringing out the writer's intention (*ibid*: 3).

The teacher plays an important role in the transmission of knowledge. The teaching strategies he employs in transmitting knowledge and his level of academic and professional training by

and large contribute tremendously towards effective teaching including the teaching of poetry in Xitsonga. In some schools such as in the ones in the target research areas, the situation is often negative. For example, it is not uncommon for some of the teachers to come to class inadequately prepared or altogether unprepared. It is taken for granted that every African teacher irrespective of his/her academic or professional training can handle any aspect of the syllabus of African languages in some kind of routine manner without any formal language teaching strategy. Under the circumstances, the best such a teacher can do is to let the class read the poems mechanically until the end of the period with the teacher making very little effort if any to encourage or generate critical reflection or thinking about the message conveyed by the poet or the poetic language and style in which such message is conveyed. Whether this limitation on the part of the learner is a reflection of simple professional negligence on the part of the teacher or gross teacher incompetency resulting from inadequate training is irrelevant. What is relevant is the magnitude of the problem. No wonder Mayevu, (1983: 5) in his report, *inter alia*, writes:

Some teachers do not teach their pupils to evaluate the prescribed books critically as required by the syllabus. This deficiency became obvious in the answering of question 3 (a) and 4 (b).

In Chapters 3 and 5 the researcher will endeavour to suggest some strategies for teaching poetry as well as a model of analysing a poem in Xitsonga. This will go a long way towards improving literary criticism in poetry at secondary school level in Mhala, a region in Mpumalanga Province as a target research area in particular and in the rest of the country where Xitsonga is taught as L1.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no back-up material to Xitsonga poetry at secondary school level in Mhala is readily available. The pupil relies to a large extent on the teacher's knowledge of literary criticism which unfortunately is sometimes deficient. The onus rests on the Education Department to see to it that among other things upgraded study

guides and manuals on analysis of literature in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular are made available and accessible to both teacher and pupil. It is equally regrettable to mention that no meaningful attempt has been made at conducting an empirical research on the topic under research. The researcher, however, wishes to acknowledge the important contributions made towards this field by the following:

- a. Mbetse, S A : *Nxopanxopo wa Swithokovetselo Swa Mune Swa S P Chauke Eka Lakatsani Tintiho Vatsonga*, Unpublished BA Honours Research Paper, UNIN, 1990.
- b. Mkhabela, L : *Xitayili xa J M Magaisa Eka Tswalwa Ra Mihloti*, Unpublished BA Honours Research Paper, UNIN, 1991.
- c. Nkondo, C P N : *Matsalwa Ya Chochela-Mandleni, Mbita Ya Vulombe, Vumunhu Bya Phatiwa*, J L Van Schaik, Pretoria, 1985.

1.2 AIMS OF STUDY

1.2.1 General Aim

The general aim of this study is to isolate, define and describe the main obstacles encountered by both teacher and pupil in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry. To this end the study will focus on the teaching and learning of literary criticism in Xitsonga.

1.2.2 Specific Aims

The specific aims of the study are as follows:

- a. To suggest a possible model for the teaching of poetry in Xitsonga at Secondary school level in Mhala (ex Gazankulu Sub-Region) especially as regards literary criticism in verse form. Chapter 3 will go a long way in trying to provide an example of a format of literary criticism in Xitsonga in general i.e. how to critic verse in Xitsonga to advantage in the interest of learners in Standard 8, 9 and 10.
- b. To try and identify specific problems encountered by both teacher and pupil in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry. The poor performance of the senior secondary school pupils in literature especially in poetry reveals that the Department of Education, the teacher and the pupil are encountering some problems. In Chapter 5, the researcher will administer three types of questionnaires i.e. learner-questionnaire, teacher-questionnaire and education administrator-questionnaire in an attempt to identify specific problem areas. The researcher's preliminary discovery is that the problem areas are three-fold, viz., the Department's inability to provide supportive material for literary criticism in Xitsonga poetry, inadequate training on the part of some of the teachers in literary criticism (i.e. about 33,33% of these teachers across the target research areas were found to be limited. See Chapter 6 for details).
- c. To suggest possible solutions to the problem described under 1.1 above. In Chapter 5 the research will carry out analysis, interpretation and make some comments so as to give a scientific account of the nature and extent of the problems experienced by both teacher and pupil in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry.
- d. To make some practical recommendations that could be tried-out in order to address these problems. The researcher will in Chapter 6 recommend among other things, some ways and means of analysing a poem in Xitsonga, effective and manageable strategies for teaching poetry, how to learn and appreciate poetry in Xitsonga, in-service training for Xitsonga literature teachers in

general and Xitsonga poetry teachers in particular. The foregoing envisaged recommendations will go a long way towards improving the standard of literary criticism, specifically Xitsonga poetry. Mere parroting and regurgitating of poetry verse in formal tests and examinations could be eliminated to a large extent.

1.3 DELIMITATION OF FIELD OF STUDY

Literary criticism of Xitsonga literature as a whole is a challenging and worth while exercise. The official Matriculation Examiners' Reports on the performance of the candidates received by the researcher (i.e. 1994-06-02) so far indicate that each genre presents its peculiar problems to the candidates. Any attempt to cover all the facets of the problem of teaching literary criticism in the five Xitsonga genres (i.e. Drama, Novel, Folk-lore, Short-stories and poetry) will confront the researcher with a field of study so vast that it would hardly be possible for him to research it adequately enough to render it scientific and useful. Although all these genres are indispensable for both teacher and pupil, only one area will be researched in this study, namely, the teaching of literary criticism in Xitsonga poetry.

The study will further confine itself to senior secondary school learners and teachers (i.e. standards 8, 9 and 10) in Mhala. The purpose of this delimitation of the field of study is ably summarised by Mahlangu (1980: 16) as "rendering it manageable and researchable".

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 Research data will be collected in two ways, viz, by questionnaire and by oral elicitation of data. Three categories of research target groups will be identified for purposes of data collection, viz, learners', teachers' and education administrators'. A sample of 18 teachers of Xitsonga poetry will be selected at random from 6 different schools in Mhala, a region of Mpumalanga Province, and be requested to fill in the questionnaire as well as to provide orally supportive information relating to the teaching of Xitsonga poetry. In like manner data will be sought from 108 learners

sampled from 2 semi-urban, 2 rural and 2 typically-rural schools in the region. The target standards will be 8, 9 and 10. The third group to be sampled will be that of education administrators. They too will complete a questionnaire and provide oral information. The main purpose of this detail exercise is what Maibelo (1989: 12) explains as: “... done in order to fathom data from as representative a sample as possible so that the findings should be as complete as possible and recommendation as broadly representative as possible”.

- 1.4.2 The questionnaire items as well as interview questions will seek to elicit information on problems experienced by teacher and pupil in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry at Secondary schools in Mhala. Data will be processed in such a way that it will serve as a spring-board for further research in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga L1 in general and poetry in particular especially as regards literary criticism.
- 1.4.3 Education administrators will be consulted in order to have access to records on the performance of Mhala pupils in literature, specifically poetry. Through the aid of Matriculation annual reports and the researcher’s personal experience in teaching and lecturing, it has become evident that most pupils use poetic devices out of context and some dismally fail to differentiate between literal and figurative meanings.

1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

In order to facilitate the reading of subsequent chapters, the researcher deems it fit to define cardinal words and concepts in the context of the study. The terms will be defined in two categories, namely; (i) Some devices that characterize Xitsonga poetry, and (ii) General terms.

1.5.1 Some devices that characterize Xitsonga poetry

Marivate (1984: 8) in his definition of poetry indicates among other things that Modern African poetry does not follow the metrical line pattern as strictly as is the

case in European languages. He goes on to indicate that there are, however, definite devices which are used in African poetry that the researcher will attempt to define hereunder. It is of uttermost importance to stress the fact that the omission of definitions of poetic devices such as rhythm, rhyme, parallelism, idioms, proverbs, alliteration, refrain and so forth does not suggest in any way that they are less important in Xitsonga poetry, but are left out for two reasons viz, to render the study more controllable and on the understanding that their definition and description tend to be routine in the literature.

1.5.1.1 Personification (*Vumunhuhati*)

Heese and Lawton (1983: 63) define personification as an image where something concrete relates to human beings while that something else is not human. Abrams (1957: 62) defines it as, "Prosopopeia in which either an inanimate object or an abstract concept is spoken of as though it were endowed with life or with human attributes of feelings". The latter further cites a practical example of personification in *Milton's Paradise Lost* (ix, 1002 - 1005) as follows:

As Adam bit into the fatal apple,
 Sky lowed, and muttering thunder,
 Some sad drops
 Wept at completing of mortal sin.

1.5.1.2 Symbolism (*Vuyimeri*)

Symbolism comes from the word symbol. In literary terms Marivate (1984: 26) writes: "A symbol is an object, character, or incident which stands for something else or suggests something else". It is imperative to note that symbolism in poetry could be conventional, private or personal. Abrams (1957: 168) explains:

Some symbols are conventional or public, thus

the cross, the Red, White, and Blue, the Good Shepherd are terms that signify symbolic objects of which the further significance is fixed and traditional in a particular culture. Poets, like all of us, use conventional symbols, many poets, however, also use private and personal symbols, which they develop themselves. Often they do so by exploiting preexisting and widely shared associations with an object or action Some poets, however, often use symbols whose significance they mainly generate for themselves and these set the reader a more difficult problem in interpretation.

1.5.1.3 Simile (*Xihlambanyiso*)

Abrams (1957: 61) defines a simile as a “comparison” between two distinctly different things” indicated by the word “like” or “as”. Marivate (1984: 22) defines it as:

.... a figure of speech in which a definite likeness is expressed. The objects compared may be alike only in one or more aspects. In Xitsonga, the simile employs the word *ongwe/wongwe/swange*.

Following are two Xitsonga examples:

- a. *Rivengo u na matimba wongwe in nghala* (Rivengo is as strong as a lion).
- b. *Va ka Xikundu va famba vusiku swange i valoyi*. (The Xikundu people walk

in the dark like wizards).

1.5.1.4 Metaphor (*Xigego*)

Abrams (*ibid*: 61) defines a metaphor as:

.... a word which in standard (or literal) usage denotes one kind of thing, quality, or action is applied to another, in the form of a statement of identity instead of comparison. For example; if Burns had said: "O my love is a red, red rose" he would have used technically speaking a metaphor instead of a simile.

Let us look at these examples:

- a. *Masebenza i nghala - Masebenza u na matimba.*
(Masebenza is a lion - Masebenza is very strong).
- b. *Tsakani i xihva - Tsakani u sasekile.*
(Tsakani is a rose - Tsakani is beautiful).

If a speaker omits "onje/wonge/swange" (like/as) he/she uses a metaphor.

1.5.1.5 Hyperbole (*Xithathelo*)

Brett (1983: 73) defines a hyperbole as "a highly exaggerated statement not meant to be taken literally". The use of hyperbole in literature is for effect. Marivate (1984: 23) puts it as "an expression in which an exaggeration is made not with the intention of deceiving anyone, but for effect". (See also Abrams, 1957: 75). Marivate (*ibid*: 23) further cites these examples:

- a. *Vanhu a va ri tinjiya (A va tele ngopfu).*
People were locusts (They were too many).
- b. *A ra ha ri dyambu leri, i ndzilo (Ku hisa ngopfu)*
This is not just a sun, but fire (It is extremely hot).
- c. *Ndzi ta ku dlaya (Ndzi ta ku ba ngopfu).*
I'll kill you (I'll thrash you soundly).

(See also *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica Volume 6*, 1989: 200).

1.5.1.6 Euphemism (*Vusasekisi*)

Marivate (*ibid*: 23) defines euphemism as “a figure of speech in which something unpleasant is described in pleasant terms”. Abrams (*ibid*: 55) defines it further as:

.... the use in place of the blunt term for something disagreeable, terrifying, or offensive - of a term that is vaguer, less direct, or less colloquial. Euphemisms are frequently used in reference to death (to pass away) and in discreet allusions to parts of the body, the bodily functions, and sex “comfort station”, the Victorian use of “limb” for leg and “friend” for an habitual sexual partner.

The foregoing could be realized in the following Xitsonga examples:

- a. *Kokwana va hundzile emisaveni (Ku nga ri kokwana va file).*
My grandmother has passed away (Not my grandmother has died).

- b. *U nga tipfuni kwalaho! (Ku nga ri u nga rhundzi kwalaho!).*
Do not pass water over there! (Not do not urinate over there!).

(See also Marivate, *ibid.*: 24).

1.5.1.7 Irony (*Xikhovolelo*)

According to Brett (1983: 39): “Irony at a simple level can exploit antithesis by stating something literally, but with the implication that the opposite is really true”. Marivate (1984: 24) concurs with the foregoing definition and substantiates with valuable examples as follows:

This is a figure of speech in which words are intended to suggest the opposite of their literary meaning, e.g.

- *Heyi a hi tintswalo ta wena (Kasi ndzi vula leswaku wa tsonana)*
 - *A hi ku khumbula ka wena, hi mpfhuka xa kona a wu si n’wi nyika papila leri? (Kasi ndzi vula leswaku u rivala ngopfu)*
- (● Hey man, you are so generous - You are stingy)
- (● Hey man, you have such a good memory, ever since you’ve not given her this letter? - You are too forgetful).

1.5.1.8 Synecdoche (*Xiyimelo*)

The New Encyclopaedia Britannica Volume II (1989: 464-465) defines it as a “figure of speech in which a part represents the whole, as in the expression “hired hands” for “workmen”. Marivate (*ibid.*: 24) sheds more light in his definition as follows:

This is a figure of speech where a writer or speaker refers to an object, idea or person, by using certain objects or habits connected with the thing, object or person mentioned, e.g. *Ntirho wu pfumala mandla*, instead of, *Ntirho wu pfumala vatirhi* where *mandla* stands for *vatirhi*.

(See also Abrams, 1957: 62).

1.5.1.9 Sarcasm (*Ximonyo*)

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (1983: 754) defines sarcasm as “bitter remarks intended to wound the feelings”. The intention of employing sarcasm in literature as a figure of speech is primarily not to hurt one’s feelings as such but to scoff at or deride one. Marivate (1984: 24) says:

This figure of speech is used to scoff at or deride something or somebody, e.g. *I wamuna sweswi a ambalaka tiburuku, kambe u biwa hi nsati*. (He is a man just because he puts on trousers, but he is always spanked by his wife).
I mufundhisi wa jomela. (He is the pastor of the beer mug).

1.5.1.10 Metonymy (*Xihundzulo*)

The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Volume 8, (1989: 72) defines metonymy as a “figure of speech in which the name of an object or concept is replaced with a word closely related to or suggested by the original”. It further cites examples of a person saying: “I am studying Shakespeare” or “Lend me your ears”. Another definition

similar to the latter but more direct is Marivate's (1984: 24):

This is a figure of speech whereby certain possessions, places or objects are attributed certain qualities, e.g.: *Ndzi fambe hi Risava* (I travelled by Risaba, meaning I travelled by Mr Risaba's bus). *Mina ndzi ambala Dugson ntsena*. (I only put on Dugson, meaning that I only put on clothes made by Dugson tailor).

1.5.1.11 Satire (*Nhlekulo*)

Marivate (*ibid*: 29) defines as:

The criticism of human wrongs, mistakes and weaknesses. The criticism can be directed against a person, human nature, institutions, policies, ideologies etc.

The intention of the use of this device is sometime to bring about improvement. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica Volume 10* (1989: 467) says: "... human or individual vices, follies, abuses or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, or other methods, sometimes with an intent to bring about improvement" (See also Brett, 1983: 11, 40 and 75; Heese & Lawton, 1983: 130 and Abrams, 1957: 154-156).

1.5.2 General Terms and Concepts

1.5.2.1 Types of Xitsonga Poetry

It is generally agreed that Xitsonga poetry could be categorised into three divisions

based mainly on **time** and **manner** of composition. The divisions are: Traditional praise poetry, Transitional poetry and Modern poetry.

a. Traditional Praise Poetry

Marivate (*ibid*: 30) defines Traditional Xitsonga Praise Poetry as:

That type of poetry where Chiefs, national heroes and other tribal leaders are praised. In Xitsonga, there are also praise poems for clans. True traditional praise poetry belongs to oral literature in the sense that it has no clear authorship In a traditional praise poem, achievements, personal character traits and other qualities such as bravery, etc form part of the subject matter. Characteristic features of a traditional praise poem, are the use of highly figurative language, copious form of repetition and dramatic rhythm.

He goes on to cite an example of a traditional poem entitled “*Hosi Mhuhlava*” by Rikhotso in *Mpambulwa Wa Swilthokovetselo* (1983: 1).

b. Transitional Poetry

Marivate (*ibid*: 30-31) defines transitional poetry as:

That poetry which has evidence of influence from both traditional and Western forms of poetry. Transitional poetry came about when early Xitsonga poets started to write poetry.

They tried to imitate Western techniques like rhyme and stanza forms. A close look at their poetry shows that these poets could not move away from the format and technique of the traditional praise poem style.

At this stage in the development of Xitsonga poetry, the poets remarkably moved away from praising chiefs and human heroes and started praising what Marivate terms “inanimate (lifeless) subjects such as mountains, rivers, institutions and anything striking in their environment”. An example of this shift is evident in Ndhambi’s poem “Ndlela” from *Mpambulwa Wa Swithokovetselo* by Marivate (1983: 2).

c. Modern Poetry

Marivate (*ibid.*: 31) defines modern poetry as:

Subjective kind of poetry in that it is more personal than the other two types of poetry. The thoughts and feeling of the poets on certain issues is what is important. The modern poet divides his/her poem stanzas alright, but the stanzas are like paragraphs carrying a certain thought. The number of lines in a stanza need not necessary be equal. What determines the number of lines in a stanza is the thought involved. Further, rhyme is no longer strictly adhered to He does not praise, he expresses his opinion.

Two examples of this type of poetry are: “*Mbilu ya Misava yi borile*” from

Mihloti by Magaisa (1981: 1) and “*Fambelo ra Ntumbuluko*” from *Mpambulwa wa Switlhokovetselo* by Marivate (1983: 3).

1.5.2.2 Literary Criticism

It is important to differentiate between **literary theory** and **literary criticism**. According to Wellek and Warren (1985: 39) literary theory could be described as: “... the study of the principles of literature, its categories, criteria, and the like”, while literary criticism is concerned with textual analysis etc. It is not within the scope of this study, however, to delve too deeply into the former, but an appreciation of the difference is nonetheless important. In fact, a background knowledge of literary theory could be supportive to the task of literary criticism. In this regard, the researcher concurs with Heese and Lawton (1988: 6) when they say that “it is not necessary for the student to have an extensive knowledge of the theory of criticism before undertaking the practice”.

Heese and Lawton (*loc. cit*) define literary criticism as:

The study devoted to comparison and analysis
to the interpretation and evaluation of works of
literature.

(See also Marivate, 1984: 2; Grace, 1984: 57 and Abrams, 1957: 36).

1.5.2.3 A literary critic

The word critic is derived from the Greek word **critês**, a **judge**. Marivate (*ibid*: 5) defines a literary critic as:

One who judges a literary work of art, i.e. who
evaluates, for example, a book with a view to

finding out its merit and demerits.

Although literary appreciation (including the appreciation of poetry as a work of art), resorts more comfortably in the realm of aesthetics rather than to that of “cold logic” (like John Keat’s “bald-headed philosopher” who caused Lycius’s Lamia to “scream as she vanished”), it is nonetheless important for a literary critic to be guided by “objective” criteria in his evaluation. Ability to discriminate between good and mediocre literature calls for a mind trained in the ability to judge if such discrimination “must have general validity” (See, Levich Marvin, 1963: 35-45). Elton (1937: 7) emphasizes this **ability** as follows: “Poetry is an art; and art, science religion and philosophy are the four Great Powers to which the mental destiny of mankind is committed”. In practice, therefore, a literary critic may find the following guide lines useful:

- a. to distinguish between a good and a mediocre piece of literary work;
- b. to understand the artist’s deeper intention with his literary creation;
- c. to produce well-thought out analysis of how the artist achieves his intention;
- d. to interpret the writer’s philosophy or general attitude towards life and his temperament both ethical and aesthetic.

(See also Schreiber, 1965: 2; Grace, 1965: 191 and Johnson, 1968: 105).

1.5.2.4 A Poet

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English (1983: 642) defines a poet simply as a “writer of poems”. The experience that the researcher has gathered throughout his years of teaching and lecturing at high school and university has taught him that writing poems requires both a natural gift or talent and expertise or training especially in transitional and modern poetry.

A poet is not just a writer of poems but is an artist. Just like a sculptor who needs

stone, bronze or wood, a painter his brush, oil and canvas; a musician his notes before bringing forth his creation, in like manner, the literary artist (i.e. the writer) needs his materials. Marivate (*ibid*: 4) mentions two such important materials: (1) the experience of life and (2) the language. In transitional and modern poetry, the poet for example, expresses his experience of life through poetic language.

1.5.2.5 Secondary School Learner

In the context of this research work, a secondary school learner is a pupil between the age of 12-18 who has successfully completed his/her primary school formal education and currently actively engaged with secondary school formal education (standards 5/6 - 10) at a state or private school. In the context of our study, the term learner refers to pupils in standards 8, 9 and 10. (See also Piek, 1990: 19-20).

1.5.2.6 The Teacher

Piek (1990: 17) defines the teacher as:

A competent person who performs the educative act of teaching. In other words, teachers are responsible for selecting content, organizing it, presenting it, monitoring pupil progress, evaluating the results and keeping records. They are also responsible for maintaining discipline in the classroom and on the school ground.

In the context of this research work, the term teacher refers to a person who performs an educative act of teaching at standards 8, 9 and 10. He is a facilitator of the learning process at these levels of schooling. He promotes critical thinking, assessment and evaluation of literary materials rather than slavish acceptance of all

that is written. (See also Curriculum 2005: Lifelong Learning for 21st century).

1.5.2.7 **Gazankulu/Mhala**

The New Encyclopaedia Britannica Volume 5, (1989: 157) defines Gazankulu as follows:

Formerly Machanganaland or Matshangana-Tsonga, non-independent black state, Northeastern Transvaal, South Africa, designated for the Shangaan and Tsonga people. It is made up of three detached portions of low veld, two of which adjoin Kruger National Park. The total area in the early 1980s was 2,606 square miles (6,750 square km). Gazankulu had a territorial assembly from 1962 until 1972, when a legislative assembly was created. The state became officially self-governing in 1973 and held an election the same year. The capital is Giyani in the Northern detached portion of the State.

Shilubane (1990: 19) says that according to the 1980 census reports, the Vatsonga residing within the borders of the RSA total around 1 095 000. Of this number, 439 740 are residing in former Gazankulu “national state”. The latter are distributed over the four districts of Gazankulu: **Mhala**, Ritavi, Giyani and Malamulele. Our research work confines itself to the **Mhala** district, now a Region of the Mpumalanga Province.

1.5.2.8 Semi-urban areas

In the context of this study, the semi-urban areas are target research areas that have the following features: (a) $\pm 50\%$ of their population consist of the middle class citizens and the other $\pm 50\%$ of their population consist of the lower class worker - citizenry. (b) The schools that are situated in these areas also serve the pupils from these two socio-economics communities, (c) They form a third ($\frac{1}{3}$) of the total target research areas. Terms like, for example; semi-urban learners, semi-urban teachers, semi-urban respondent(s) and semi-urban interviewee(s) are associated with these areas (i.e. semi-urban areas). Since the population of these areas is not uniform in terms of socio-economics class and status, the researcher found it proper and suitable to term these areas SEMI-URBAN.

1.5.2.9 Rural areas

In the context of this study, the rural areas are target research areas that are populated by largely lower class worker-citizenry. The schools that are situated in these areas serve the pupils from these areas (i.e. Rural areas). Terms like, for example; rural teacher(s), rural pupil(s), rural respondent(s) and rural interviewee(s) are associated with these areas. These areas form a third ($\frac{1}{3}$) of the total target research areas.

1.5.2.10 Typically-rural areas

In the context of this study, the typically rural areas are target research areas that are highly populated by the very low class citizens the majority of whom are unemployed, often single parents and peasantry in character. The schools that are situated in these areas serve the pupils from these areas (i.e. typically-rural areas). Terms like, for example; typically-rural teachers, typically-rural pupils, typically-rural respondents and typically-rural interviewee(s) are associated with these areas. Just like the semi-urban and the rural areas, these areas form a third ($\frac{1}{3}$) of the total target research areas.

1.5.2.11 Vertical option

In the context of this study, a vertical option is a literary teaching - and learning-strategy whereby poetry aspects or poetic devices are taught and learnt in a vertical descending order of importance. In most cases, as indicated in Chapter 5 and 6 of this study, the majority of the role-players tended to fall into a trap of selectively teaching and learning certain poetic devices or poetry aspects at the expense of the others. The disadvantage of opting for this technique is that a wrong impression can be given to the effect that only a fixed, dogmatic and rigid pattern of teaching and learning poetry is followed. There is a relationship between a **vertical option** and **selective approach**.

1.5.2.12 Ball or Apple option

In the context of this study, a ball or apple option is a literary teaching - and learning-strategy whereby poetry aspects or poetic devices are taught and learnt in such a way that they all become interrelated and interdependent - The idea is that the teacher introduces them (i.e. poetry aspects) to the pupils so that they can show their interrelatedness and interdependentness in a given text or verse. The importance of each **aspect** or **device** is demonstrated in the actual analysis of such a text or verse. Just like the horizontal option, the latter is also one of the most unpopular among all role players or stake holders in this study (See chapter 5 below).

1.5.2.13 Horizontal option

As far as this research project is concerned, a horizontal option is a literary teaching- and learning-strategy whereby poetry aspects or poetic devices are taught and learnt in an equal manner or horizontally. The idea is to be as all-inclusive in approach as possible as against selectivity in approach. Chapters 5 and 6 have demonstrated that this option (i.e. horizontal option) is one of the most unpopular options among all role

players or stake holders in this study. (See also Chapter 5 and 6 below).

1.5.2.14 T Option

As far as this research project is concerned, a **T Option** is a literary teaching- and learning-strategy whereby poetry aspects or poetic devices are taught and learnt in a T manner - The teacher fully explains certain aspects or devices and leaves certain aspects or devices for the pupils to learn on their own. The teacher makes sure that his obligation and the pupils' are carried out on a 50/50 basis. Very few respondents opted for this option.

1.5.2.15 Selective Approach

In the context of this study, a selective approach is a literary teaching- and learning-strategy whereby specific poetry aspects or poetic devices are taught and learnt as if they are an end in themselves. In the process an impression is given that the rest are not worth knowing or caring about. There is an intimate relationship between this approach (i.e. selective approach) and the vertical option. Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrated that this option is one of the most popular among the respondents.

1.5.2.16 Holistic Approach

As far as this study is concerned, a holistic approach is a literary teaching- and learning-strategy whereby poetry aspects or poetic devices are taught and learnt in an all-inclusive manner as much as it is humanly possible. Both parties (i.e. teacher and pupil) endeavour to cover almost all aspects of poetry in a given academic year. There is an intimate relationship between this approach and the horizontal option. This study has revealed that this option is one of the most unpopular options among the majority of the respondents.

1.6 LITERATURE SURVEY

A detailed study of literature has been undertaken as part and parcel of this research project. A wide range of English and Xitsonga sources have been studied since the two complement each other especially as regards the theory of literary criticism in verse.

The pioneers of Xitsonga literature tend to explore mainly the areas of linguistics, semantic and to a less extent traditional literature, and shy away from researching the field of literature (Drama, novel, short stories, and poetry), let alone the pedagogical part of it especially the teaching of poetry in a classroom situation. This is evident in theses, dissertations, journals and mini-dissertations and reports the researcher has carefully gone through in preparation for the study at hand.

Marivate C T D (1973: 1-147) in his dissertation on **Tsonga Folktales**, confines his research work to form, content and delivery. Though it is a valuable academic research, it does not address itself to teaching in a classroom situation. Mayevu G S (1978: 1-148) in his dissertation on **The Predicative relation construction in Tsonga**, devotes his scientific linguistics study on predicative relation construction in the language in question but not the language methodological part of it. Ntsan'wisi H W E, (1965: 1-120) in his dissertation on *The Idiom in Tsonga*, confines his research work on descriptive study of idioms. This is a scientific semantic study that does not directly deal with language methodology. Nkondo C P N (1973: 1-120) in her dissertation on *The Compound Noun in Tsonga*, devotes her research project on a synchronic study of its derivation, usage and structure. Though her work is a valuable linguistic study, nonetheless, it does not address the aspect of teaching in a classroom situation.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, even in other African languages in South Africa, only a handful of research work has been undertaken so far on language methodology. Masters graduates like for example; Maibelo J R (1989: 1-3) has successfully researched *The Role of Traditional Religion In the Teaching of Northern Sotho Poetry in The Secondary School*. Although Maibelo's study falls under Language Methodology, it differs with the

researcher's work in two fundamental ways, namely:

- a. Whereas Maibelo's study addresses the teaching of Northern Sotho poetry with special **reference to the role of traditional religion** in the syllabi, the researcher's study addresses **the effectiveness of the teaching of Xitsonga poetry** with reference to a sample of poems from the anthologies of Masebanza, Chauke and Magaisa.
- b. Maibelo's study is confined **to standards 5 - 10** rural, urban and semi-urban **teacher-respondents and the community elders**, while the researcher's study is spread over **standards 8 - 10** semi-urban, rural and typically-rural **pupils - and teacher-respondents** as well as **two Education Administrators** who were directly involved in Xitsonga literature teaching in general and Xitsonga poetry teaching in particular. It is against this background that the researcher regards this study as the first of its kind.

1.7 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the aim of the study, defines the problem and research methodology. In order to facilitate the reading of subsequent chapters, cardinal words and concepts commonly associated with literary criticism and the classroom, such as symbolism, hyperbole, simile, traditional poetry, literary criticism and secondary school learners are carefully defined in some detail in the context of the study. These concepts are also defined in a wider literature based context for purposes of both clarification and edification.

CHAPTER 2: POETRY - AN OVERVIEW

This chapter focuses on poetry from four perspective, viz: poetry in a universal context, poetry in Africa, poetry in South Africa and Xitsonga poetry in South Africa. In order to achieve the necessary detail, the latter is broken down further into sub-components such as

Xitsonga poetry on:

- a. Creatures such as animals, birds and reptile;
- b. Natural phenomena such as rain, thunder and wind,
- c. Inanimate objects such as mountains, rivers, trees and valleys,
- d. Human qualities such as love, hatred, virtue, bravery and cowardice.

CHAPTER 3: A CLASSROOM ORIENTED APPRAISAL OF MASEBANZA, CHAUKE AND MAGAISA

This chapter provides an appraisal of the three poets, viz: Masebanza, Chauke and Magaisa. Brief biographical sketches are given along with critiques of sample poems that best typify each of the poets. Biographical information often proves essential in facilitating understanding and appreciation of poetry.

An overview literary criticism of a sample of poems selected from anthologies by Masebenza, Chauke and Magaisa in a manner appropriate for classroom presentation at the level of standard 8, 9 and 10 is covered. This overview provides an example of a format of literary criticism in Xitsonga in general i.e. how to critic verse in Xitsonga to advantage in the interest of learners in Standard 8, 9 and 10. Such an overview is critical in designing and implementing whatever teaching-learning strategy may be necessary in a Xitsonga poetry class at secondary school level.

CHAPTER 4: SAMPLE OF AND COMMENT ON RESEARCH DATA

This chapter focuses on field work. Two research instruments are used, viz.; the questionnaire and the structured oral interview. Three types of questionnaire are designed and administered, i.e. learner-questionnaire, teacher-questionnaire and questionnaire for Education Administrators. A sample of 18 teachers and 108 learners from semi-urban, rural and typically-rural high schools in the Mhala Region of Mpumalanga Province is identified for data collection. To supplement questionnaire data, oral interviews are also conducted

with the target research groups.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH DATA

In this chapter, analysis and interpretation of both questionnaire and oral interview are carried out so as to give a scientific account of the problems experienced by both teacher and pupil in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter outlines the researcher's concluding thoughts on the topic under research. Recommendations are spelt out in some detail in an attempt to address specific problems the study has identified so far.

CHAPTER 2 : POETRY - AN OVERVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Poetry in a universal perspective cannot be fully appreciated if not looked at against a sample background of the history of literature as a whole. It should be borne in mind that poetry is probably the most ancient form of literature known to man. Just like the African literature, the ancient European literature was originally in oral form. By European literature, the researcher refers specifically to the Indo-European family. However, *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Volume 23, 1989: 225) avers that Finnish, Hungarian and Semitic languages of the Eastern Mediterranean, such as Hebrew, though not Indo-European languages, their literatures are closely associated with the major Western literatures.

2.2 POETRY IN A UNIVERSAL PERSPECTIVE

In order to provide a concise but adequate overview of the history of literature, this section will be divided into the following seven sub-heading: (i) Ancient literature, (ii) Medieval literature, (iii) The Renaissance literature, (iv) The 17th Century literature, (v) The 18th Century literature, (vi) The 19th Century literature and (vii) The 20th Century literature.

2.2.1 Ancient literature

According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Vol. 23, 1989: 224) the bulk of ancient literature, including poetry, is lost to us in two ways viz (a) since oral literature antedated written literature, much of the former died with those who possessed it even before it could be committed to writing, and (b) some recorded literature got lost through fire, wars and other ravages such as poor ancient writing materials used at the time.

Ancient Western literature, including poetry, was greatly influenced by the Hebrew culture. This culture exerted such great influence on Western literature mainly

because the Old Testament of the Bible was the most important literary work of the time. This is hardly surprising since even a cursory study of the 150 psalms comprising the Book of the Psalms revealed excellent praise poetry. No wonder the book is also referred to as the “book of praises”. The 31 chapters of The Proverbs are aptly described as the “words of the wise” and are ascribed to King Solomon whose wisdom is legendary. The Old Testament influenced Western literature and literary thinking largely through translations into different vernaculars.

Available literature seem to suggest that the bulk of the main genres of recorded literature in the West (and Africa too) emanated from the Greeks and the Romans. But with reference to poetry in particular it is important to note that the poetry of the ancient time is different form Modern poetry. In this connection Heese and Lawton (1983: 12) write:

From early times it was a universal phenomenon, although its beginnings were rather different from poetry as we know it today. The earliest poetry was closely related to religious rituals and feasts. It was often a fusion of songs and dance and was based on powerful incantatory sound pattern. It was an expression of man’s most fundamental feelings and desires All over the World, a strong tradition of oral poetry arose.

2.2.2 Medieval literature

Medieval literature belongs to the Middle Ages and it refers specifically to the literature of Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean from as early as the establishment of the Eastern Roman Empire about 300 AD. During this era, christianity played a vital role in shaping and developing literature. Methods first applied to recording

scriptures were extended as a general principle to classical and secular writings. About the role of the church in preserving literature, *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Volume 23, 1989: 225) says:

The church not only established the purpose of literature but preserved it. St Benedict's monastery at Monte Cassino in Italy was established in 529 AD, and other monastic centres of scholarship followed, particularly after the 6th and the 7th century, Irish missions to the Rhine and Great Britain and the Gothic missions up the Danube. These monasteries were able to preserve the only classical literature available in the West through times when Europe was being raided by Goths, Vandals, Franks, and later, Norsemen in succession.

It further avers that pre-Christian literature of Europe belonged to an oral tradition that was reflected in the Poetic Edda and the Sagas, or heroic epics, of Iceland, the Anglosaxon **Beowulf**, and the German **Song of Hildebrandt**. A large majority of medieval literature was anonymous and not always dated. Some of the greatest figures like Dante, Chaucer, Petrarch, and Boccaccio came later in the period, and their work convincingly demonstrates the transitional nature of the best of medieval literature.

2.2.3 Renaissance literature

The renaissance literature could be best understood against the background of the meaning of the concept **renaissance**. According to *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Volume 23, 1989: 226), the concept **renaissance** means **rebirth** - which

is given to the historical period in Europe that succeeded the Middle Ages. This era was characterized by the awakening of a new spirit of intellectual and artistic inquiry into political, religious and philosophical matters. In literature this meant a new interest in, and analysis of, the great classical writers. This era also saw the emergence of inter alia, the **French poetry of the poets**, consisting of a group known as the Pleiade, the Portuguese epic poet Luís Camões, England's dramatist and poet, the Charismatic William Shakespeare, and others.

2.2.4 The 17th Century literature

The 17th century was characterized by unceasing disturbances and violent storms throughout Europe. The positive side of the century was, however, the dissemination of the ideas of the new science and philosophy. According to *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Volume 23, 1989: 226):

The greatest question of the century, which confronted serious writers from Donne to Dryden, was Michel de Montaigne's, 'What do I know?'

The effect of war on 17th century literature was among other things, the closure of England's theatres in 1642 and the displacement of the monarchy in 1660. Despite all these shortcomings, this era saw the emergence of metaphysical poetry as an outstanding features of English verse.

2.2.5 The 18th Century literature

The 18th century literature was marked by two main impulses: reason and passion. The rational impulse fostered satire, argument, wit, plain prose, and the other inspired the psychological novel and the poetry of the sublime. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (Volume 23, 1989: 227) further informs that:

The cult of wit, satire, and argument is evident in England in the writings of Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, and Samuel Johnson.

2.2.6 The 19th Century literature

In the context of the present study, the 19th century is particularly important in that it contributed greatly towards shaping modern literature as we know it today. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (Volume 23, 1989: 227) elaborates:

The 19th century in Western literature has special interest as formative era from which many modern literary conditions and tendencies derived. Influences that had their origins or were in development in this period; Romanticism, Symbolism, Realism - are reflected in the current modern literature, and many social and economic characteristics of the 20th century were determined in the 19th century.

Also of vital importance during this era is that the early and middle parts of it were a time of poetry and prose rather than drama. The Romantic style in poetry predominated verse throughout Europe.

2.2.7 The 20th century literature

The 20th century literature could perhaps be divided into two phases. The first phase is that of the influence of Nietzsche and Freud in literature during World War 1 and after. On this phase *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (Volume 23, 1989: 228) explains:

The awakening of a new consciousness in literature was also to be traced in such works of fictions as the first volume of Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (Swann's way, 1913) various influences that characterized much of the writing from the 1920s were at work in these writers.

An interest in the unconscious and irrational was reflected in their work and that of others of about the time. Two important sources of this influence were Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher to whom both Gide and Mann, for example, were much indebted, and Sigmund Freud, whose psychoanalytical works, by the 1920s, had had a telling influence on Western intellectuals.

The second phase is that of the scarcity of great writers after World War II. This could be attributed to a number of factors, ranging from economic, social and academic instability as a result of the war to the advent of aural and electronic culture in technologically developed countries such as the United States.

2.2.8 Conclusion

Literature adumbrated so far reveals that poetry, like other genres of literature, had a humble beginning the World over. When one looks at English poetry as a microcosm of poetry in a universal perspective, one finds that it was composed by humble people of humble calling. In this connection Moloto E S (1970: 1-2) quotes Hopkins:

Caedmon ... a rude herdman to whom in vision
was given the power of song.

Poetry underwent quite a metamorphosis throughout the ages to be what it is today. Poets like Gavin Bone, John Gower, Geoffrey Chaucer, William Wordsworth, Gerard Manley Hopkins and Norman Cameron to mention but a few made incredible contributions to English poetry which in due course spread throughout the World where the reading culture was emerging or established.

2.3 POETRY IN AFRICA

2.3.1 Introduction

Since poetry is an integral part of literature, it is important to study it against a sample background of literature and in the context of this study, African literature. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Volume 13, 1989: 140) summarises the history of African literature as follows:

Evidence of the indigenous written literature of Africa is in some regions ancient and in others comparatively recent. The earliest written African language known is now-dead language Geez, from Ethiopia. The Latin and Arabic alphabets have had marked influence on developments in the 7th century, when the Arabs conquered North Africa, while the Latin Alphabets were introduced by Christian missionaries largely in the 19th century. In West Africa the beginnings of indigenous written literature are linked to the campaigns in the early 1800s of the Fulani reformer Shaykh

Usman dan Fodio, in East Africa the earliest extant Swahili text dates from 1652. In South Africa the earliest written literature, Xhosa, is linked to printing press of the Lovedale Missionary Institution set up by the Glasgow mission in the 1820s.

The source further opines that though there was a great development in both quantity and quality of African literature after World War II, the African elite tended to be indifferent to indigenous literature and paid more attention to English and French literatures. The reason for this linguistic bias may be varied but two reasons are most likely viz socio-economic reasons i.e. that adequate knowledge of a colonial language such as English or French including knowledgibility in the literature of those languages would facilitate their career advancement. Secondly, language attitude and language myth i.e. that colonial languages were more advanced, more civilised than the indigenous African languages. It was only in the 1970s that such misconceptions were challenged and resulted in the emergence of African writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o who, although gifted in writing in English, nonetheless surrendered the value of writing in the African languages in order to reach deeper into an African readership.

2.3.2 Brief overview of poetry in Africa

Poetry in Africa, like the Indo-European's, was originally in oral form. The advent of Western education in Africa by missionaries and the invasion of Africa by the Arabs contributed to a large extent to the emergence of written poetry. It is no exaggeration to say the bulk of African poetry (especially traditional praise poetry) is still in oral form and cry-out to be recorded and preserved for posterity to appreciate and to be edified by it. Perhaps this is one of the greatest challenges facing researchers in African languages in our time. In the meantime we could ascribe the apparent laxity in recording the bulk of African verse to what Finnegan

(1984: 1) describes as:

Not fitting neatly into familiar categories of literatures, they are harder to record and present

Perhaps it will not be amiss to state at this stage that whatever reasons may be reflected in the current literature about African poetry, the present researcher has pledged to make the recording of Xitsonga oral poetry a life-long project.

a. West Africa (Nigeria, Benin and others)

According to *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (Volume 13, 1989: 140) the first written poetry **Iwe Ekini Sobo** (In translation: Sobo's first book) came in 1905 from the pen of the prolific and popular J Sobowale Sowande. Besides comment on religious, political, and social life, it has always been central to Hausa poetry. Secular poetry like literature in general flourished after World War II in West Africa. Although on the whole it tended to be deeply influenced by Islām, poets were nonetheless drawn from a wider range of occupations, and for that reason poetry became far less the preserve of Muslim functionaries.

b. East Africa (Ethiopian languages)

In countries such as Somalia, written literature does not seem to have begun until World War II. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Volume 13, 1989: 141) makes it explicit that notwithstanding the initial attempts, literature it says:

did not flourish until after 1973 when the government introduced a standard orthography based on the Roman alphabet.

Cali Xuseen Xirsi was the first poet to commit his poems to writing. The source (*ibid*) further informs that two of his poems appeared in *Sahan and Horsead*, although most reached the public in oral form. Cali's poems centred around public themes; this is evident in one of his poems on the political plight of Somalis in the late 1950s and another, composed in 1962, protested against the importation of foreign automobiles by the elite at the expense of the mass of the people living in poverty.

Written poetry in Swahili on the other hand goes back to the mid- 17th century. The source (*ibid*) reveals further that the oldest extant epic is the "Hamziya" (1947), a court poem written by Sayyid Aidarusi, who was assigned the task by Bwana Mkuw II, ruler of the island of Pate (off the coast in what is known now as Kenya). Swahili poetry has a strong tradition of public and religious commentary. Mwana Kupona binti Msham was the first known poet to write in didactic vein. He was from Lamu Island, Kenya. Another prominent poet of the 19th century is Muyaka bin Haji al-Ghassany, from Mombasa, Kenya - his poetry presented a social and political commentary on urban life.

c. Southern Africa

The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (Volume 13, 1989: 142) informs that:

Writing in Shona, the major African language group in Zimbabwe, is fairly recent, little of note appeared before the 1950s.

For reasons best known to the Shona writers, no efforts at writing poetry seem to have been made. Instead the writers seemed to concentrate all their attention on the writing of novels. Examples include *Feso* by Solomon Mutshwairo, *Pfumo reropa* by Patric Chikaipa, *Kumazi Vandadzoke* by John Marangwanda and others. To the best of the researchers knowledge, the only comprehensive **Shona Praise poetry** book to see the light is the one by Hodza A C and Fortune G published in 1979. This anthology

categorises the praise poems into three sections; clan praises, praises of persons and praises of boasts (See Hodza and Fortune, 1979: 1-394).

Moving further South, we find poets like B W Vilakazi who wrote passionately about nature, the Zulu past, and the injustice and degradation caused by apartheid in South Africa; J C Dlamini who used traditional praise poetry to express contemporary experience as contained in *Inzulwane* and N J Makhaye who used both traditional and modern styles covering public and private themes in his collection *Isoka lakwaZulu*. *The New Encycloaedia Britannica* (Volume 13, 1989: 142) indicates that:

the earliest exponents of written Xhosa poetry
were Samuel E K Mqhayi and J J R Jolobe.

The contrast between the two Xhosa poetry pioneers is that Mqhayi modeled his verse on traditional praise poetry, whereas Jolobe experimented with such European inspired forms as rhyme and descriptions of nature, thereby laying the foundations of modern Xhosa poetry. (See also Jones, 1979).

2.4 POETRY IN SOUTH AFRICA

African and Coloured worlds of literature would to a large extent be poorer without the contributions made by authors of note such as Bloke Modise, Todd Matshikiza, Ezekiel (Es'kia) Mphahlele, Richard Rive, Alex La Guma, Can Themba, Arthur Maimane and Lewis Nkosi. Their overriding themes centred around protest against apartheid, humiliation of blacks living in White-dominated South Africa and race relations. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Volume 13 (*ibid*: 142) note that the 1960s through to the 1980s saw the emergence of prominent black writing in English. The source comments:

The leading South African poets of the 1960s
were Mazisi Kunene, K A Noortjies, and
Dennis Brutus. Many writers went into exile,

but the country continued to produce, as a main focus of opposition to apartheid, some of the outstanding black writers of the continent. Prominent prose writers in the 1980s included Njabulo Ndebele and Mbulelo Mzamane, poets included Sipho Sepamla, Oswald Mtshali, and Mongane Serote.

The New Encyclopaedi Britannica (Volume 11, 1989: 34) reveals that:

Although Afrikaans had diverged sufficiently from its parent Dutch by about 1750 AD to be considered a language on its own,

it's only more than a century ago that its first texts were published. The pioneers of Afrikaans poetry include poets of the likes of Eugene Marais, with his intense and compassionate verse on human suffering, Jan Francois , Elias Celliers, Jakob D Du Toit, C Louis Leipoldt and others.

South African English speaking poets like Guy Buttler, F C Slater, Roy Campell and William Plomer also made their presence felt in the World of poetry. Guy Butler in his poem "Home thoughts" expressed a sense of being an alien as a person and as a poet. F C Slater is evoked by image and rhythm in the poem "Lament for a dead cow". Ray Campell and William Plomer rebuked much of the shallowness and sentimentality that characterized South African verse of the period satirically.

Among the VaVhenda poets Milubi N A seems to stand a shoulder higher than most of his comrades-in-verse. As an author in his own right, he has published two poetry books which are deservedly prescribed for tertiary students. The two anthologies are: **Muhumbuli - Mutambuli** (A suffering Thinker) and **Vhutungu Ha Vhupfa** (The Agony of feeling). These anthologies address a variety of themes ranging from traditional, transitional to modern

themes such as love, virtue, social responsibilities, protest against unfairness, on oppression, on apartheid etc. Apart from being a poet of note, Milubi is also a Tshivenda critic of high standing. His research project on “A critical evaluation of the poetry of protest” (Poems written by R F Ratshitanga) and his scientific account of “A reflection on the development of poetry from oral Tradition to the Modern form” (MA and D.Litt research reports) bear testimony to this. In the former research project Milubi the critic evaluates imagery, symbolism, artistry, technique, protest and social responsibilities whereas in the latter, among other things, he discerns, assesses and reflects on the development of Venda poetry from the traditional to modern forms. What strikes the researcher is that in all of Milubi’s work of critique, a focus on protest seems to be an essential element.

Serudu M S in *Sešegotheto* (A granary of poetry), an anthology of the best Northern Sotho (Sepedi) poetry, records the best collection of poems dating from 1932 to 1988. The poems range from traditional, transitional to modern ones with not less than 259 poems written by various authors. The reasons for the authorship of this valuable anthology is comprehensively given by the author (1989: under Matseno (introduction) as:

- a. *E laetša mmadi tlholego le tlhabologo ya theto ya segagešo.*
(To provide the reader with the history and development of our native poetry).
- b. *Dipukutheto tše re nago le tšona ke tše nnyane, ka fao ga di kgotsofatše dinyakego tša mananethuto a diyunibesithi le dikholetšhethuto tša rena.*
(The poetry books that we have are few as a result they do not satisfy the requirements for poetry programmes of our universities and colleges of education)
- c. *Go phagamiša maemo a thutotheto diyunibesithing le dikholetsheng tša rena ka go hlohleletša baithuti go*

ithuta direto tša segagešo ka tlhonamo.

(To uplift the standard of education at our universities and colleges by means of encouraging students to study our native poetry with seriousness).

- d. *Go efoga go ba dikolobe tša morago dipolelong tše dingwe ka ge tšona di šetše di na le dipukutheto tša mohuta wo.*

(To avoid lacking behind in the world of poetry since other languages have long been having poetry anthologies of this kind).

Although Serudu's anthology targets the university and college students, who are apparently first language speakers, on the other hand it could also serve as one of the best reference books for a researcher who is keen on the development of the North Sotho poetry including those who are second language speakers. Serudu's contribution is very similar to the ones made by other African language pioneers such as C T D Marivate in *Mpambulwa Wa Switlhokovetselo*, G S Mayevu *et al* in *Swihleng Swa Vatsonga* and C P N Nkondo (Golele) *et al* in *Madaladala*.

2.5 XITSONGA POETRY IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.5.1 Introduction

Xitsonga poetry could be divided into three categories characterised in terms of time and manner of composition. As is the case in other African languages, poetry in Xitsonga is the most popular genre with a total of 31 publications from 1938-1984. Drama as a genre has 27 publications and the novel has 24 publications. At the time of writing, Xitsonga writers had produced a total of not less than 111 publications comprising all the recognized genres.

2.5.2 Early beginnings

According to Marivate (1984: 59) it took 55 years before the Vatsonga could write literature in their own language since their language was reduced to writing in 1883. The first ever Xitsonga novel to be written by the speaker of the language was published by Rev D C Marivate in 1938. It was over 12 years later that the first poetry book written by a Mutsonga, Etienne Ndhambi entitled *Swiphato Swa Vatsonga* was published. Hardly surprising therefore that so much has been said about this poetry book. The most striking feature about it is what Bill and Masunga (1985: 21) term the poet's "attempt to write in a syllabic verse form" as a natural response to the teaching of the works of Wordsworth, Shelly and other masters of English verse in the mission-run schools. Literary analysts such as Marivate (1984: 31) for example contend that Ndhambi is one of the protagonists of transitional praise poetry in Xitsonga. Marivate (*ibid*) observes:

Ndhambi introduces Western forms in his poetry. He divides his poems into stanzas of equal number of lines. He even attempts some rhyme in every stanza.

Bill and Masunga (1985: 22) observe further that though Western poetry continued to influence Xitsonga poets during the 1960s and the 1970s, there was a search for new techniques. These techniques are:

A deeper exploration of the traditional eulogistic praise-poetry style, but at the same time they (the poets) moved towards the expression of their **own individuality** both in style and content.

These new techniques are clearly evident in the anthologies of B J Masebenza,

Chochela-mandleni (1965); E Nkondo, *Emahosi* (1969), *Nthavela ya miehleketo* (1972) W Nkondo, *Mbita ya Vulombe* (1969) and G Maphalakasa, *Xihungasi* (1973).

By virtue of these new techniques, these anthologies qualify to be described as modern poetry - they are philosophical. Through them the poet expresses his opinion and philosophises on what goes on around him. The primary aim is not to praise inanimate subjects such as mountains, rivers, institutions and anything striking in their environment, but to express one's opinion on life and reality.

Masebenza's poetry, for example, explores life experiences of the urban Mutsonga in all its complexities and diversities. Precisely because Masebenza delves into such intricacies of life experiences, his poetry is open to various interpretations depending on the level of aesthetic and cognitive sophistication of the reader. The poem "**Rimenyo**" (Biting and wild red ants) for example could be interpreted at one level to mean the wildness and merciless infliction of pain by these ants to its defenseless victims while at a much deeper level of meaning it could also mean 'the infliction of pain by those who are at the helm of power to those who are powerless. Poems by Nkondo W Z on the other hand address the beautiful from the perspective of emotional and aesthetic topics like love and beauty to human relationships. Perhaps the best illustrations of these are "*Rirhandzu*" (Love), "*Ku saseka ka mfenhe*" (The beauty of the monkey) and "*N'wina L'avatsongo*" (You young ones).

The 1980s saw the emergence of writers who consciously or unconsciously responded to Solzhenitsyn's (1980: 460) challenge to writers:

A literature that is not the breath of life for the society of its time, that dares not communicate its own pains and its own fears to the society, that does not warn in time against threatening moral social dangers, does not deserve the name of literature, it is only a facade.

High on the list are poets like Magaisa, *Mihloti* (1981); Mayevu, *Macakala ya Miehleketo* (1982); Chauke, *Lakatsani tintiho Vatsonga* (1982); Makari, *Muambi wa Vubumabumeri*, (1980) Nkondo and Marivate, (1982) *Madaladala* and others. Their themes mirror and protest against political, social and economic injustice. In addition, poets such as Magaisa, Mayevu and Chauke tend to divide their poems into stanzas of equal number of lines.

In the subsequent sub-headings we will delve a little deeper into, inter alia the form and structure of Xitsonga poetry. We will attempt to show for example, where the Xitsonga poetry derives its themes from. Since poetry is the language of the heart, its themes could be dictated by what the poet would like to poetisize about, or what one would like to express one's opinion and philosophize on. Poetry is simply a deep kind of pleasure and it could be on natural phenomenon such as rain, thunder, whirlwind, on creatures such as animals, birds, reptiles, etc, or on ananimate objects such as mountains, rivers, institutions and other objects, and on human qualities such as love, hatred, virtue or cowardice, etc.

A sample of four poems under i. Poetry on natural phenomenon, ii. Poetry on creatures, iii. Poetry on inanimate subjects and iv. Poetry on human qualities, will be outlined before critique. The approach will be that of giving the subject matter of each poem and followed by a brief analysis of each poem.

2.5.3 Themes of poetry in Xitsonga

2.5.3.1 Poetry on natural phenomenon

Natural phenomena provide substance for all manner of poetic inspiration leading to excellent poetry by Vatsonga poets. Some of the best known examples of this include poems such as “**Mpfula**” (Rain) from *Mati* by R S Mtsetweni, “**Dyandza**” (Drought) from *Bombeleni* by I P E Ndhambi, “**Xihuhuri**” (Whirl-wind) from *Mihloti* by J M Magaisa, and “**Hunga moya wa dzonga**” (Blow north wind) from *Chochela-*

mandleni by B J Masebenza. In order to illustrate more fully the extent to which poets in Xitsonga draw inspiration from natural phenomena, the poem “**Mpfula**” from *Mati* by R S Mtsetweni is quoted hereunder in full and briefly analysed.

“Mpfula”

1. *Gibii! Gibii! Gibii! Vhayi! Vhayi! Vhayi!*
2. *Ndza huma ndzi ta mina ngwenya ya nswirhi!*
3. *Layita ra mina N'wa-Moya, ndzi famba na yena!*
4. *Golonyi ndzi khandziyile, i manana N'wa-Papa!*

5. *Tsutsuma we toya, ndzi fika hi ntamu!*
6. *Loko ndzi khohlola, hinkwaswo swa chava!*
7. *Xikhohlola xa mina i rihati ra ntumbulukuku!*
8. *Mihloti ya mina, i mathonsi yo tsakamisa.*

9. *N'wina varisi pfalelani mintlhambi!*
10. *Erivaleni, mi nga siyi xilo ni xin'we!*
11. *Ndza fika mina xilombe machachulani!*
12. *Ku ta chachula vusiku ni nhlekanhi wun'we.*

13. *Ahee! Se ndza fayeka mina machachulani!*
14. *Madamu ndzi ta tata ya phamuka hinkwawo!*
15. *Milambu yi ta nhlata ni tingwenya hinkwayo,*
16. *Misava yi ta tsaka, hikuva ndzi muendzi.*

17. *Ri xile, swilo hinkwaswo swi tsakile ngopfu!*
18. *Makhuvele! Khoma makhutla, i xixevo xaku!*
19. *Na wena Cawuke! Tihumba ta wena hi leti!*
20. *Makondlo ya tele! I xixevo xa wena Maximbyi!*

21. *Swimila swi huma, swi bombile ku tlurisa!*
22. *Ndlopfu ya matimba, yi vomba hinkwako!*
23. *Nghala ya vukari, yi tshova yi tshika,*
24. *Ngwenya ya matimba, yi huma yi famba-famba.*

25. *Swimila swi huma, swi bombile ku tlurisa!*
26. *Swi ambale tinguvu ta ku fanela nguva*
27. *Swi khavisa misava, hi matluka ya swona,*
28. *Swi andlala sangu ra rihlaza, ku sasekisa.*

29. *N'wina va misava, a mi twisisi ma karhata!*
30. *Mi madingidingi yo kala ni vunene!*
31. *Yingisani ndzi mi byela ndlela ya kona!*
32. *Loko ndzi nga si chachula, tlarihani swinene.*

33. *Mihloti ya mina, i mati matimula-misava!*
34. *Kangatelani emadan'wini ni le swihlobyeni,*
35. *Loko ndzi heta ku chulula, ndzo tiririsa,*
36. *Yingisani mina, mi ta kuma vutlhari ni vutivi!*

In translation:

“Rain”

1. “Gibii!” “Gibii!” “Gibii!” “Vhayi!” “Vhayi!” “Vhayi!”
2. Here I emerge here I come me the most cruel!
3. My urge the wind, I travel with!
4. A car I’ve ridden, is mother cloud!

5. Run away you coward, I am coming in might!
6. When I cough, everything gets scared!

7. My cough-spit is the lightning of nature!
8. My tears, are drops of wetting.

9. You herd-men drive the herds into the kraal!
10. Outside, do not leave a single thing!
11. Here I come me the expert of dancing!
12. To come and dance one day and one night.

13. Ahee! I am breaking me the expert of dancing!
14. Dams I'll fill till they break apart all!
15. All rivers will vomit crocodiles,
16. The earth will be happy, for I am a visitor.

17. It's a clear morning, everybody is very happy!
18. Makhuvele! fetch the bull frogs, its your meat!
19. And you Cawuke! here are your snails!
20. The mice are many! It's your meat Maximbyi!

21. An antelope gallops in appreciation for damp soil!
22. A strong elephant, trumpets everywhere!
23. An outrageous lion, breaks and leaves,
24. A strong crocodile, comes out and creeps.

25. Plants germinate, dressed to kill!
26. Clothed in clothes of the season.
27. Decorating the earth, with their leaves,
28. They spread a green mat, to decorate.

29. You of the earth, do not understand at all!
30. You are short sighted and without kindness!
31. Listen to me tell you how to do it!

32. Before I dance, be very wise.
33. My tears, is water cooling the earth!
34. Store in the dams and in wells,
35. After I've danced, I cry,
36. Listen to me, you'll gain wisdom and knowledge!

a. The subject matter of the poem

This poem is about the falling of rain on earth, the good it brings to the inhabitants, and the advice given to mankind about storing water.

b. Analysis

The artist employs the sound, feeling and sight (SFS) formula to introduce us to the coming of rain. The sound formula in line 1. "**Gibii! Gibii! Gibii!**" is represented by the three Xitsonga ideophones. It is the thunder warning that the rain is coming. Accompanying it is the lightning represented by the three Xitsonga ideophones "**.... Vhayi! Vhayi! Vhayi!**" in line 1. The feeling formula is represented by the Xitsonga noun "**Nwa-Moya**" (wind) in line 3 that blows prior to the rain fall. The sight formula is represented by the Xitsonga noun "**N'wa-Papa**" (Cloud) in line 4 that can be seen from a distance that the rain is coming.

The poet artistically personifies the coming of rain in line 2. "**Ndzi huma ndzi ta mina ngwenya ya nswiri!**" (Here I emerge here I come me the most cruel!) The rain here is as if is a person who "emerges", who "comes" and who has human attributes like cruelty; in line 6 "**Loko ndzi khohlola, hinkwaswo swa chava**" (When I cough, everything gets scared!) is a personification of thunder that brings fear to everything, in line 7 "**xikhohlola xa mina**" (My cough spit) is given a meaning as a natural lightning. The same applies to line 8 "**Mihloti ya mina, i mathonsi yo tsakamisa**" (My tears, are drops of wetting), the poet uses a simile to say that rain drops are

meant to water the ground.

The poem uses humour in explaining the manner and the duration of the falling of rain. In line 11 “**Ndza fika mina xilombe machachulani!**” (Here I arrive me the expert of dancing!) and in line 12 “**Ku ta chachula vusiku ni nhlekanhi wun’we**” (To come and dance one night and one day). The humour here is that the rain is personified as an expert of dancing, and one who dances for 24 hours. This is poetry at its best in the sense that by employing a hyperbole as an instrument of humour, - one who dances for 24 hours! it makes the reader to burst into laughter but not at the expense of the underlying message, i.e. that the rain can fall for twenty four hours without let-up.

In line 13 “**Ahee! se ndza fayeka mina machachulani!**” (Ahee! I am breaking me the expert of dancing), the poet employs a further hyperbole to explain that it will rain cats and dogs. In line 14 “**Madamu ndzi ta tata ya phamuka hinkwawo!**” (Dams I’ll fill till they break apart all!) he follows through with the same poetic device to explain that dams will be full to capacity. In line 15 the poet creates a grotesque and haunting imagery combining personification and hyperbole “**Milambu yi ta hlanta tingwenya hinkwayo**” (All rivers will vomit crocodiles) in order to explain forcefully the idea of rivers over-flowing their banks; and ravishing with greed of a school of crocodiles everything on its way. This imagery can best be explained by the Northern Sotho expression: “**Mathhopa a senya**” (that which builds and destroys).

The abundance of food and a pleasant mood brought to mankind and wild animals after the rain has cleared is explained in lines 18-24. The poet has also used symbolism in 18-20 to explain that the rain had brought food for everybody. The Makhuveles, the Cawukes and the Maximbyis symbolise everybody (every human being) and the bull frogs, snails and mice in lines 18-20 symbolise abundant food for all. In lines 21-24 the antelope, the elephant, the lion and the crocodile represent all the animals that find something to eat after the rain has cleared.

In lines 25-28, the poet successfully uses the art of imagery to explain the plants' beauty after the rain has fallen. The plants are said to germinate and dressed in the clothes of the season, decorating the earth with their green leaves and in the process spreading a green mat to decorate the earth.

The poet challenges the reader to pay attention to his advice. Line 31 says: "Listen to me tell you how to do it!", and in line 32 he reinforces his challenge: "Before I dance, be very wise". In line 34 he spells out unequivocally what he would like the reader to do before the rain falls: "Store in the dams and in the wells". This implies that he should build dams of all sizes to store water.

2.5.3.2 Poetry on creatures

There are many poems on creatures in all languages. In Xitsonga poetry we find poems like "**Khongoloti**" (Milliped), "**Donki**" (Donkey), "**Xifufunhunu**" (Scarab beetle) from *Swiphato Swa Xitsonga* by E P Ndhambi, "**Ku saseka ka mfenhe**" (The beauty of the monkey) from *Mbita Ya Vulombe* by W Z Nkondo. (See also English poems on creatures by Peter Southey 1991: 44-49). Our sample poem on creatures is "**Donki**" (Donkey) from *Swiphato Swa Xitsonga* by E P Ndhambi.

"Donki"

1. *Yingisan', yingisan', vamakhwerhu!*
2. *Me ndzi rhwele ngula ya maxangu,*
3. *Misava yi ndzi komba tinxangu,*
4. *Nhlomulo wanga a wu na mpimu,*
5. *Miri wanga wu fehla vuxungu.*

6. *Vavasati, vana, vavamuna*
7. *Va hangama nhlaneni wa mina.*

8. *Maganga ni magova ndza famba,*
9. *Vusiku nhlekanhi i swa mina,*
10. *Nkhavi ni nhongu swi tiva mina.*

11. *Loko mpunga wu wa ndza singila,*
12. *Nhlaneni ndzi tshala ra mikwama,*
13. *Goloyi yi ndzi tshemba xifuva,*
14. *Tikweni ra vavasati ndza rima.*
15. *Ku rhula ku ndzi hundzula nhlonga.*

16. *Oho! ndzi ta ya kwihi misaven'?*
17. *Mahlomulo yanga ndzi ta ma byela man'?*
18. *Xana ndzi onhe yini misaven'?*
19. *Vutomi bya mina byi le ndlelen',*
20. *Rifu ndzi tamele etintihweni.*

21. *Yoho! mina malahla-na-nhlonge!*
22. *A ndzi hanyi xivaleni xin'we,*
23. *Ndzi tshikiwa ntamu ndzi helelwe,*
24. *N'we vamakwerhu mi katekile*
25. *Ndzi fike makumu swi ringene.*

In translation:

“Donkey”

1. Listen, listen, you brethren!
2. I carry a bowl of troubles,
3. This world shows me problems,
4. My troubles are without measure,
5. My body burns with pains.

6. Women, children, men
7. Ride on my back.
8. Hills and valleys I travel,
9. Night-day is mine,
10. Small stick and big rod know me.

11. When drought comes I provide food,
12. My back is a ground-nut of bags,
13. The cart pulls back my chest,
14. In land of women I plough,
15. My submissiveness/tameness has made me a slave.

16. Oh! where shall I go to in this world?
17. Whom shall I tell my troubles?
18. What wrong have I done to this world?
19. My life is on the road;
20. Death is on my finger-tips.

21. Yoho! me the-thrown-away-with-skin and all!
22. I do not live in one kraal,
23. I am only done away with when I am powerless,
24. You brethren are blessed.
25. I've come to the end it's enough.

a. The subject matter of the poem

The poet describes the infliction of suffering to a donkey by man who makes it work day and night without giving it a break. The only time this donkey gets a break is when it is dead.

b. Analysis

Just like Mtsetweni in the poem “**Mpfula**” (rain), Ndhambi (the poet) personifies the donkey:

1. *Yingisan', yingisan', vamakwerhu!*
Listen, listen, you brethren!
2. *Me ndzi rhwele ngula ya maxangu!*
I carry a bowl of troubles,
3. *Misava yi ndzi komba tinxangu,*
This world shows me problems,
4. *Nhlomulo wanga a wu na mpimo,*
My troubles are without measure,
5. *Miri wa mina wu fehla vuxungu.*
My body burns with pains.

In line 1 it appeals to everybody to pay attention to its pleas. The repetition of the verb stem “**yingisan', yingisan'**” (listen, listen) reinforces this donkey’s desire to be listened to. The plural noun “**vamakwerhu**” (brothers) in line 2 reveals the love this gentle creature has to all creatures. In line 2 “**Me ndzi rhwele ngula ya maxangu**” (I carry a bowl of troubles) the poet uses hyperbole to show the extent in which this donkey suffers. In line 3 “**Misava yi ndzi komba tinxangu**” (This world shows me troubles), the poet uses metonymy to show that the people represented by a “**misava**” (world) inflict suffering to it.

The sequence of “**vavasati, vana, vavanuna**” (women, children, men) in line 6 shows that each an every Tom, Dick and Harry rides on its back as he/she pleases. The countless time these people ride on its back is represented by the verb stem “**hangama**” (ride) in line 7.

In line 8, 9 and 10 the poet shows that this donkey is forced to travel anywhere,

anytime against its will and that everybody big or small hits it. The “**nkhavi**” (stick) and “**nhonga**” (big rod) in line 10 symbolise being beaten by both children and adults.

In lines:

11. *Loko mpunga wu wa ndza singila,*
When the drought comes I provide food,
12. *Nhlaneni ndzi tshala ra mikwama,*
My back is a ground-nut of bags,
13. *Golonyi yi ndzi tshemba xifuva,*
The cart pulls back my chest,
14. *Tikweni ra vavasati ndza rima.*
In the land of women I plough.
15. *Ku rhula ku ndzi hundula hlonga.*
My tameness makes me a slave.

The poet shows that when drought strikes a country, the donkey travels a long distance to carry food for its masters - this is represented by the noun “**mpunga**” (drought) and verb stem “**singila**” (search for food) in line 11. In its carrying of food, its master overloads it with all kinds of bags. The poet reiterates the donkey’s abnormal load in line 14. “**Golonyi yi ndzi tshemba xifuva**”. (The cart pulls back my chest). The donkey’s tameness is shown by it being used to plough by women alone without the aid of men; 14 “**Tikweni ra vavasati ndza rima**”. Even the weak (women) abuse the donkey. The diligent are often abused by those who misinterpret consciousness to given tasks as dull-wittedness (Refer to Boxer in *Animal Farm*)

The donkey’s state of apparent helplessness is accentuated poetically by a series of interrogative statements which start off with a feeling of being trapped in helplessness, to that of being all alone in misery and helplessness to that of utter despair:

16. *“Oho!” ndzi ta ya kwihi misaveni?*
 “Oho!” where shall I go to in this world?
17. *Mahlomula yanga ndzi ta ma byela mani?*
 Whom shall I tell my troubles?
18. *Xana ndzi onhe yini misaveni?*
 What wrong have I done in this world?

The poet has prepared us for the ultimate manifestation of helplessness and despair; he ends up his poem by showing that death is the only solution to the donkey’s plight:

20. *Rifu ndzi tamele etintinhweni.*
 Death is on my finger-tips.
23. *Ndzi tshikiwa ntamu ndzi helelwe,*
 I ‘m only done away with when powerless,
25. *Ndzi fikile makumu swi ringene.*
 I’ve come to the end it’s enough.

The poet’s description of this donkey by means of personification carries a moral lesson to mankind. He is protesting against animal abuse so prevalent in our time. The use of the humble donkey as an example of an abused animal, accentuates the poet’s protest. The poet is also protesting against the exploitation of the simple worker by the ruthless employer in the name of survival.

2.5.3.3 Poetry on objects

Poetry themes in Xitsonga are also derived from inanimate objects like rivers “**Xinambyana xa Lephephana**” (The rivulet of Lephephana), institutions like “**Xikolo xe henhla ka Shiluvani**” (Shiluvani High School) and mountains like “**Tintshava ta Khwatlamba**” (Drukensberg mountains) from *Vuluva Bya Swithokovetselo Swa Xitsonga* by P E Ntsan’wisi. Our sample poem on inanimate objects is “**Poto**” (Pot) from *Swiphato Swa Xitsonga* by P E Ndhambi.

“Poto”

1. *Hi mina poto mbhuri-xa-ntima nkence!*
2. *Nsimbhi ya mulungu minharhu tsetsere!*
3. *Magingirikela vayeni ndlala nkwe!*
4. *Ndza humelela timbita ti hlangene.*
5. *Wansati wanuna u ndzi khoma nkence,*
6. *Vuswa ni nyama swi ndzi rhandza swinene.*

7. *Ndzi rhandzekile mina makala mona!*
8. *Xisweka-swoso nyama ya vavamuna.*
9. *Murhenci wa golonyi u rhandza mina,*
10. *Lavo sweka va rhandza ku hala mina,*
11. *Kwale Khimbini ndzi yile ndzi ya hoka,*
12. *Kunene ndzi xiswekelo xo tshembeka.*

13. *Ndzi ni vamakwerhu lava ndzi pfunaka,*
14. *Galaza, Alivasi na Xinhinana,*
15. *Hi khimiwile kanharhu hi swifungha,*
16. *Hi ni vundzeni ni tinhamu to saseka-*
17. *Hi mapemba kambe hi ntsofu wo tiya,*
18. *Me poto mbhuri-bomban' ndzi ni maxaka-*

19. *Hangalaka vito ra mina evanhwin',*
20. *Hangalasa mitirho yaku matikweni,*
21. *Gingirika emakaya ni le nhoven',*
22. *Hatlisela vatirhi le masin'wini,*
23. *Hatlisela vasiki ndzen' makhwirini',*
24. *Hinkwavo va nyike ku hanya enyamen'.*

In translation:

“Pot”

1. I am a pot black-beautiful **“nkence!”**
2. Iron of white-man three-legged **“tserere!”**
3. The server of visitors hunger gone!
4. I appear, pots are gathered.
5. Woman, man handle me **“nkence,”**
6. Porridge and meat love me very much.

7. I am being loved me without surliness!
8. The cooker of meat (swoso) of men,
9. A car driver loves me,
10. Those who cook love to scratch me,
11. Even at Khimbini I served,
12. Really I am a reliable cooking utensil.

13. I’ve got brothers who help me,
14. Galaza, Alivasi and Xinhinana
15. We’ve been marked thrice,
16. We have inner-opening and beautiful necks,
17. We are beggars but strong lead,
18. Me pot beautiful-braggart have relatives.

19. Spread oh, my name among the people,
20. Spread your work among countries
21. Serve at home and in the veld,
22. Make it snappy for the workers in the field,
23. Make it snappy for the hungry,
24. Provide them all with body life.

a. The subject matter of the poem

The poet describes the appearance (what it looks like) and the work (what it is used for) of a pot. He goes on to show us other kinds of pots which he affectionately personifies as brothers.

b. Analysis

In lines:

1. *Hi mina mbhuri-xa-ntima nkence!*
I am a pot black-beautiful “**nkence!**”
2. *Nsimbhi ya mulungu minharhu tserere!*
Iron of white man three-legged “**tserere!**”
3. *Magingirikela vayeni ndlala nkwe!*
The server of visitors hunger gone!
6. *Vuswa ni nyama swa ndzi rhandza swinene.*
Porridge and meat love me very much.

The poet personifies this pot by using the subject concord **Hi** and the first person singular pronoun **mina**. The word “**mburi**” in Xitsonga refers to the most beautiful lady. The poet uses the compound noun “**mburi-xa-ntima**” (the black-beautiful) to describe the black-beauty of the pot. It is not just a pot, but a beautiful black pot. An extension of this metaphor could be in the realm of the Black-is-Beautiful philosophy but with the added dimensions of not only being loved and cherished but also of being useful in a utilitarian sense. Perhaps even taking a swipe at the “**Ngwana-o-swana-le-lekhalate**” (the babe is as fair or cute as a coloured) philosophy which dominated post 1968 black consciousness South Africa.

A pot is made of iron and it has three legs to stand on, no wonder the poet says: “Nsimbhi ya mulungu minharhu tserere! (Iron of whiteman three legged tserere!). The poet artistically uses the Xitsonga idiophones “**nkence**” to demonstrate the sound made by the pot when it falls or when its handle bangs against its body; “**tserere**” to demonstrate the manner in which the pot stands; and “**nkwe**” to show that hunger has come to an end in lines 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

In line 6 “**Vuswa ni nyama swa ndzi rhandza swinene**” (Porridge and meat love me very much) and in line 7 “**Ndzi rhandzekile mina makala mona!**” (I am loved me without surliness!), the poet uses the verb stems “**rhandza**” and “**rhandzekile**” to show that the use of the three-legged pot is common among the Vatsonga people especially in rural areas.

The poet personifies the other pots as brothers to the subject pot: 13 “**Ndzi ni vamakwerhu lava ndzi pfunaka**”, (I’ve got brothers who assist me,) He goes on to describe their sizes by names in 14 “**Galaza, Alivasi and Xinjhinana**”. These are conventional Xitsonga names given to these pots in order to distinguish them according to their sizes. A “**Galaza**” is a very big pot, an “**Alivasi**” is a middle-size one, and a “**Xinjhinana**” is a smallest of the three. These pots are “**brothers**” to the main pot who assist it to cook when a need arises.

The flexibility of the usage of this pot to meet the needs of a person is explained in line 21 “**Gingirika emakaya ni le nhoven**”, (Serve at home and in the veld,). This pot can be used for cooking in the veld where there is no electricity. Yours is simply to gather fire wood and get the cooking going. In houses that are built in rural areas too, where there is no electricity, this pot serves as a convenient utensil.

2.5.3.4 Poetry on human qualities

Poetry in Xitsonga also entertains themes on human qualities like love, hatred, virtue, bravery and cowardice. G S Mayevu’s poem “**Mbyana**” (dog) from *Macakala Ya*

Miehleketo is about hatred while W Z Nkondo's poem "**Rirhandzu**" (love) from *Mbita ya vulombe* is about the difficulty of defining love. Furthermore, G S Mayevu's poem "**Toya**" (coward) from *Macakala ya miehleketo* is about a young man (who the poet calls a coward) who finds it difficult to express his feeling of love to young women. Our sample poem on human qualities is S P Chauke's poem "**Nkanyi wa le ndzilakanini**" (The boarder Marula tree) from *Lakatsani tintiho Vatsonga*.

"Nkanyi wa le ndzilakanini"

1. *Wa le mahandzeni ya tindlela a wu rhendzeriwanga hi rihlampfu.*
2. *Xi hundza hi patu xin'wana ni xin'wana xi nga kandza mapfalo xi tihundzela.*
3. *Wu hava mucheleti wa xiviri,*
4. *Hinkwavo i vahundzi va ndlela lava hundzaka va khomisa nyoka.*
5. *Hambi vamambuxu va hundza va cikinya ehenhla ka rhavi,*
6. *Va rivala leswaku va nga phatluka naro.*
7. *Va tikhorwisa hi makanyi lama nga lo lalandla, erivaleni!*

8. *Nghwendza yi ku Xikwembu a xi nyiki hi mavoko.*
9. *Kasi mi ri marhavi ya kona ma ha languteka ke?*
10. *Matluka mo salela xo xifafa ntsena.*
11. *Timitsu to khongotela hi xo xilogo ni swimatana swa ka tiki!*
12. *Handle ka swona a swi hambane ni ntanga wa tingana,*
13. *Khale wa khaleni tindlopfu ta ha vulavula Xitsonga!*
14. *Kutani ti ya ringeta byin'wana ematikweni ya vamatiko.*

15. *Wa tswala makanyi loko xi rimuka,*
16. *Man'wana ma wona ma ala hi ntumbuluko*
17. *Na thavathava xi nga se ba ku ya kwihhi.*
18. *Man'wana ma kuma nhlanhla yo hisa hi mumu wa vuoswi bya vuhedeni,*
19. *Walawo ma tihanyela byo bya njiya.*

20. *Kasi man'wana ma hundzuka majenje lama dzudzekaka tinsiva*
 21. *Loko ma swi lavile wo vinyi.*
22. *Vutomi bya kona hi byo byo sukumeta.*
 23. *Man'wana ma tsandzeka ku vupfa.*
 24. *Hi ku kayivela masana, ncheleto lowunene ni xivandla lexinene.*
 25. *Ma ta ma kumisa ku yini kasi nsinya wa kona*
 26. *Wu dzaumba wu rhendzele hi tinyoxi ta milenge mimbirhi ke?*
 27. *Ti tswontswa leswi ti swi tswontswaka ti siya ndzhombho.*
28. *Xana a swi antswi Gavhumende a wu tsema xikan'we ke?*
 29. *Wu hundzuka tihunyi to tshivela ndzilo,*
 30. *Kumbe wu nonisa misava ya Jehova xikan'we ke?*
 31. *Handle ka swona wu hanyela mbhongholo yo fa.*
 32. *Ndzi vula hi ku wu tundela vanhu-nje!*
33. *Namuntlha wu vona hi mani?*
 34. *Vahundzi va tolo ni tolweni va chuveke rihlampfu,*
 35. *Van'wana va tiboxele rin'wana gondzo.*
 36. *Va nga ri boxi kasi mi ri va nga tshamela swona?*
 37. *Loko a swi tiyela mbuya!*
38. *Ramayisele, Nyanisi, Muhlava, hlayisani tempele ya vanhu.*
 39. *Mi lo khomisiwa a yo va ya n'winoo!*
 40. *Handle ka loko u ri ni vutihlamuleri eka n'winyi wa yona!*

In translation:

“The border Marula tree”

1. The one at the cross-roads is not fenced.

2. Each an every passer-by may feed on its fruit
3. It has no own waterer,
4. All are passers-by who eat and go.
5. Even the little ones dangle at the branches and go,
6. They forget that the branch can fall with them.
7. They enjoy themselves with the “**marula**” fruit which are openly spread all over.

8. A bachelor says: “**God does not give with a physical hand!**”
9. Do you think its branches are still attractive?
10. Leaves are there for the sake of being there.
11. The roots are on the surface and get little water!
12. Besides, it is not different from a garden of disgrace,
13. Long ago when elephants were speaking Xitsonga!
14. They went far away to taste fruit of foreign countries.

15. It bears fruit in its season,
16. Some of the fruit are exterminated by nature
17. In their early childhood.
18. Some are burnt out by the coal of adultery, of paganism.
19. Those live for the sake of living.
20. Some become termites without wings
21. If they so wish.

22. Life is not worth living
23. Some fruit do not become ripe
24. For lack of warmth, water and good space.
25. How can they get them because the tree
26. Is always surrounded by two legged bees?
27. They suck what they suck and leave a sting.

28. Is it not better that the Government cuts it once and for all?
 29. To become wood for fire,
 30. Or to fertilize Jehovah's land once and for all?
 31. If not so it lives for a dead donkey.
 32. I say so because it provides for commoners!
33. Today who looks at it?
 34. The passers-by of yesterday and the previous day have barricaded the way to the entrance.
 35. Some have made themselves a new path
 36. Why shouldn't they because it's not worth it?
 37. Oh! Only if they could become strong!
38. Ramayisele, Nyanisi, Muhlava, keep that someone's temple well:
 39. You've been lent it is not yours!
 40. Unless if you are responsible to the owner!

a. The subject matter of the poem

The poem is about an immoral lady who gets involved with men of all ages. She gives birth to illegitimate children as a result of these relationships and some of the children suffer from malnutrition and some unfortunate ones pass away. Her lovers abuse her body to satisfy their lust but none sees her as a permanent partner - a wife well-loved and cared for. In the end she is all alone with none to share her ageing love and worn life. Perhaps she would be better off dead for in death her corpse may be appreciated by the soil which will be manured by it (i.e. her corpse). As it is she is a love-lorn indeed.

b. Analysis

The title of the poem "Nkanyi wa le ndzilakanini" (The border 'Marula' tree) is a

Xitsonga proverb explained by Junod (1973: 169) as meaning that:

A son belongs to all who are his relatives.
They will all send him on errands and use his
services, although they may not be on good
terms among themselves.

In the context of the poem it means a “**free-for-all lady**”.

In line 1 “**Wa le mahandzeni ya tindlela a wu rhendzeriwanga hi rihlampfu**” (The one at the cross-roads is not fenced) the poet uses the negative present tense depended mood “.... **a wu rhendzeriwanga hi rihlampfu**” to show that the lady has no legal marital protection of a husband. Each an every Tom, Dick and Harry enjoys himself and leaves: 1 “**Xihundza hi patu xin’wana ni xin’wana xi nga ta kandza mapfalo xi hundza**” (Each an every passer-by may feed on it and leave). In line 5 “**Hambi vamambuxu va hundza va cikinya ehenhla ka rhavi**” (Even the little ones dangle at the branch and go) shows that the lady does not care about the ages of her lovers - young men who so wish enjoy her “**hospitality**” and bachelors also use her as nothing more than a sex object: to use and dump: “**Nghwendza yi ku Xikwembu a xi nyiki hi mavoko**” (A bachelor says: “**God does not give with a physical hand**”).

In line 15 “**Wa tswala makanyi loko xi rimuka**” (It bears fruit in its season) the poet sarcastically highlights the fertility of the lady. She conceives and some of the infants’ die at birth: 16 “**Mun’wana ma wona ma ala hi ntumbuluko**” (Some of the fruit are exterminated by nature). Some of the infants she gives birth to become victims of venereal disease: 18 “**Man’wana ma kuma nhlanhla yo hisa hi mumu wa vuoswi bya vuhedeni**”, (Some are burnt out by the coal of adultery, of paganism). Some of the illegitimate children go naked and suffer from malnutrition and never grow to normal age let alone to lead normal life: 20 “**Kasi man’wana ma hundzuka majenje lama dzudzekaka tinsiva**” (Some become termites without wings) and in line 24 “**Hi ku kayivela masana, ncheleto lowunene ni xivandla**

lexinene” (For lack of warmth, water and good space).

The deteriorating physical condition of this lady is described by the poet’s artistic use of an interrogative statement in line 9 “**Kasi mi ri marhavi ya kona ma ha languteka ke?**” (Do you think its branches are still attractive?). in line 28 “**Xana a swi antswi ku *Gavhumende* a wu tsema xikan’we ke?**” (Is it n’t better that the *Government cuts* it once and for all) the poet uses the noun government with a capital G as a symbol of God and the verb stem “**tsema**” (cuts) as an appeal to the Almighty to end this lady’s life once and for all.

The contrast between line 26 “**Wu dzumba wu rhendzele hi tinyoxi ta milenge mimbirhi ke?**” (When always surrounded by two legged bees?) And “**Tinyoxi letiya bamfee!**” (All those bees are gone!) Accentuates the lady’s busy life during her prime time and her lonely life during her old age or when her body loses its physical attractiveness to her many men. The Xitsonga ideophone “**bamfee**” describes an action of people running away simultaneously in all directions at terrific speed without looking back. This suggests that all her lovers deserted her unceremoniously.

The poet concludes by making a passionate statement on morality - on righteousness and virtue; on the godliness of the human body: 38 “**Ramayisele, Nyanisi, hlayisani tempele ya vanhu**”. (Ramayisele, Nyanisi, Muhlava keep that someone’s temple well). The names Ramayisele, Nyanisi and Muhlava are symbolic names and represent everybody. The poet appeals to all to live moral lives because life does not belong to the created only but to the Creator as well: 39 “**Mi lo khomisiwa a yo va ya n’winoo!**” (You have been lent it; it’s not yours).

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter endeavoured to give a broad overview of poetry in a universal perspective. Great emphasis was put on Xitsonga poetry it being the focus of this study. The chapter sampled from European, East Mediterranean and African poetry. What emerged from these

samples is that poetry, though a sophisticated and complex form of addressing or responding to life and reality, had like all else, a humble beginning.

In the context of Xitsonga poetry, the chapter has attempted to illustrate some of the dominant themes underlying the genesis of Xitsonga poetry. The chapter sampled four poems representing poetry on natural phenomenon, on creatures, on inanimate objects, and on human qualities.

The sample critique of the four poems revealed that although Xitsonga poetry, like poetry in other languages, leans heavily on symbolism and figurative language as media of expression, yet free verse also occurs. What is important for this study however, is not so much the poet's poetic style but rather what he/she says - his/her underlying message to us as readers and lovers of poetry.

The sample critiques provided are sufficiently broad, deep and varied to allow flexibility in the teaching and learning of poetry not only in Xitsonga but in general. This flexibility could be used to great advantage when teachers switch-over to curriculum 2005 which emphasises, inter alia, flexibility and relevance (*ibid*).

CHAPTER 3: CLASSROOM ORIENTED APPRAISAL OF MASEBENZA, CHAUKE AND MAGAISA AS POETS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to endeavour to provide an appraisal of the three poets viz Masebenza, Chauke and Magaisa. Biographical sketches will be given along with sample critiques of certain poems that best typify each of the poets. Biographical information often proves essential in facilitating understanding and appreciation of poetry. As Milubi (1983: 1) puts it:

It is at times necessary that biographical details of poems be given. There are poems in which the poet's experiential background plays a role.

An overview literary criticism of a sample of poems selected from the anthologies by Masebenza, Chauke and Magaisa in a manner appropriate for classroom presentation at the level of standards 8, 9 and 10 will be covered. This overview will provide an example of a format of literary criticism in Xitsonga in general i.e. how to critic verse in Xitsonga to best possible advantage in the interest of learners in Standards 8, 9 and 10. Such an overview is critical in designing and implementing whatever teaching-learning strategy may be necessary in a Xitsonga poetry class at secondary school level. The overviews are not rigid strait-jackets into which all learners must per force be confined in or restrained by; rather they are guidelines to facilitate learner-competency in the learning area of literary criticism. Such guidelines are necessary to facilitate each learner's learning area outcomes especially specific outcomes (See Curriculum 2005).

3.1.1 Some background comments on the titles of the three anthologies targeted for research

The titles of the three anthologies, viz, *Chochela-mandleni* by Masebenza, *Lakatsani Tintihlo Vatsonga* by Chauke and *Mihloti* by Magaisa strike the reader's curiosity and in the process suggest what could be expected inside. A careful analysis reveals that there is a relationship between the titles of the three anthologies and their contents (the poems). It is not a rigid rule that there should be a relationship between title and contents. It all depends on the poet's style. Contrary to the target poets, some writers prefer to use titles that are some-what misleading. For instance, G S Mayevu's anthology title *Macakala Ya Miehleketo* (Rags of the mind) could lead one to believe that the poet has only **odds and ends** to say in his collection when in fact the opposite is true.

a. *Chochela-mandleni* (Fuchsia tree or the huilboer-boon) by Masebenza, BJ

"*Chochela-mandleni*" is a Xitsonga compound noun meaning wild fruit borne by a tree which first blossoms lovely red flowers. When the fruit are ripe, the people pluck them and squeeze the sweet drops into their hands and lick them. The 30 poems that are in this book are like the lovely red flowers alluded to above which attract both birds and human beings by their visual beauty and by their aesthetic sweetness, just like the "*chochela-mandleni*" sweet drops.

b. *Lakatsani Tintihlo Vatsonga* (Vatsongas, lick your fingers) by Chuake, S P

The poet in his fore-word among other things says: "... *lakatsani tintihlo leti lakatsekaka, kutani mi tshika leti nyanyaka marha yemu*" (... lick the fingers that are lickable and leave the ones that are not). By the foregoing, the poet invites the reader to experience poems that she/he feels are aesthetically enjoyable and leave the ones that are not to his or her taste.

The title “*Lakatsani Tintihō Vatsongā*” simply means Vatsongas lick your fingers. One usually licks one’s fingers when one is enjoying something. Licking is a sign of saying “I enjoy it; I want some more”. There is a relationship between the title of the book and the 43 collection of poems. This will be realised in 3.3 with the appraisal of a sample of poems from the three anthologies.

c. *Mihloti* (The title means tears) by Magaisa, J M

The title of this book *Mihloti* has not less than two meanings - the first meaning is that of the name of the child who is born say to a bereaved family and consequently named Mihloti. The second meaning is that of the Xitsonga plural common noun mihloti (tears) which refers to drops of salty water coming out from a person’s eyes. There are two aspects of tears, viz, the negative and the positive. In the case of the negative aspect, tears could be shed because of sorrow, problems, death, calamity or illness. In the case of the positive aspect, one could shed tears as a sign of being over the moon due to exceptional experience or achievement. A close evaluation of Magaisa’s collection of 57 poems endorses the fact that there is a relationship between the title of the book and its contents especially with regard to the negative aspect of shedding tears.

3.1.2 The category under which the three anthologies fall

The three anthologies cited above fall under the category of modern poetry in the sense that they are highly individual, characterised by dramatic and lyric qualities and the use of complex often private or individualised symbolism.

The three poets do not entirely centre their themes on praising chiefs, heroes or praising themselves as is common practice in the case of traditional praise poetry; nor praising mountains, rivers, institutions, pots, rain, donkeys, millipeds, scarab beetles etc as is the case in transitional poetry, but their poetry is characterised by a high degree of subjectivity or individualisation. They express their personal thoughts and

feelings on certain issues. About modern poetry Marivate (1983: 12) writes:

*.... lawa I mathokovetselele ya manguva lawa.
I mathokovetselele laha miehleketo ya
mutlhokovetseri yi paluxiwaka hi xitalo.
Mutlhokovetseri u humelerisa leswi a swi
twaka embilwini ya yena ni leswi a swi
vonisaka swona emiehleketweni ya yena.*

.... this is modern poetry. The kind of poetry that expresses the opinion of the poet fully A poet expresses his heart (his feeling) and mind (opinion) out through this kind of poetry.

Though some of these modern poets according to Bill and Masunga (1983: 22), made deeper exploration of the traditional eulogistic praise-poetry style, a careful assessment reveals that they moved towards the expression of their own individuality both in style and content.

Their division of stanzas is not strictly characterised by the equal number of lines as is the case in transitional poetry, but what matters is the thought involved. About this Marivate (1984: 31) writes:

The modern poet divides his/her poem in stanzas alright, but the stanzas are like paragraphs carrying a certain thought. The number of lines in a stanza need not necessarily be equal what determines the number of lines in a stanza is the thought involved.

The following examples of transitional and modern poetry in Xitsonga, from Ndhambi and Chauke will be in order if only to exemplify the characteristics alluded to above and also to preface the detailed exposition of the 3 modern poets targeted for research.

a. Transitional Poetry : *Swiphato Swa Xitsonga*, “Afrika”, by Ndhambi, E P.

1. *Afrika! Afrika! Afrika! Afrika!*
2. *U nguvu mavala tindzimi ku tala*
3. *Khoma, tamela tinxaka ta misava.*
4. *Londzovota, mamisa vana va wena.*
5. *O! Nkhenseka wena tiko ra Vantima.*

6. *Hinkwenu swihefemuli nyarhulani!*
7. *Nyarhulani Afrika xirhandza-mani,*
8. *Tanani n’we vantlhohe Afrika i mhani,*
9. *Tanani kaya Afrika n’wina swihari.*
10. *Tanani ka mhani n’wina tinyanyani.*

11. *Afrika tiko ra mina n’watintswalu!*
12. *Wena nguvu ya ntima makala-nandzu,*
13. *Wena makuve wa tinxaka ta vanhu,*
14. *Phamela vamatiko we basa-mbilu!*
15. *Rhwala, fukamela vana va Xikwembu.*

In translation

“Afrika”

1. Africa! Africa! Africa! Africa!
2. You are a colourful garment with many languages

3. Hold, handle the nations of the world.
4. Keep, breast feed your children.
5. Oh! be thanked you land of the blacks.

6. All you living creatures hurry!
7. Hurry to Africa lover-of-all,
8. Come you whites Africa is a mother,
9. Come home to Africa you animals,
10. Come to a mother you birds.

11. Africa my land of grace!
12. You black garment without blame,
13. You meat of different people,
14. Feed the foreigners you pure in heart!
15. Carry, warm the children of God.

b. Modern Poetry : “**Nwankingiri**” from *Lakatsani Tintiho Vatsonga* by S P Chauke.

1. *Loko ro xa ivi ri pelela makumu,*
2. *Hi nga hlaya swinyingi manana loyi a ndzi tswaleke*
3. *Loko ro khindlata makatla ku pela*
4. *A nga khoma xivixivi hla Fanisa.*
5. *U mita xinyami a hlanta nhlikanhi,*
6. *U yile nhlikanhi ku sukela loko a ha ri enyimbani ya nyini.*

7. *Mahlo ya yena ma vona swi nyawula exinyamini.*
8. *Lexi tsuvulaka hambu misisi ya munhu,*
9. *Xinyami lexi tiyelaka hi noyi ntsena.*
10. *Hi kona laha ti hleriwaka kona,*
11. *Hinkwaswo swi hleriwa swi gayeriwa kona.*

12. *A xalamuka a titwa a ri munhu-vu.*
13. *Na nhlikanhi a hi mbulwa i ximphuta xinene,*
14. *Lava nga n'wi tiviki va ri:*
15. *“Hi losile n'wana wa mufundhisi!”*

In translation.

1. If the sun could rise and set forever,
2. We could say many things I swear by my biological mother
3. If it could refuse to set,
4. One could have problems I swear by Fanisa
5. He swallows darkness and vomits day,
6. Day has been a taboo to him ever since he was in his mother's womb.

7. His eyes are very sharp in the dark
8. Darkness that causes one's hair to rise,
9. Darkness that is dared by a witch only.
10. That is where scheming takes place.
11. All is schemed and digested there.
12. When he wakes up he feels like a real person.
13. During the day he is not just a meek quiet person but a fool,
14. Those who do not know him say:
15. “Hi, you son of a priest!”

In the transitional poem “**Africa**” the poet divides his stanzas in equal lines of five each (i.e. he uses a 1x5x3 formula) whereas in the modern poem “**Nwankingiri**” the poet divides his stanzas unequally - the first stanza has 6 lines and the second one has 15 lines. What determines the number of lines involved in a transitional poetry stanza is an attempt to squeeze the poet's message into rhyme and alliterative patterns.

Though we do find spontaneous rhyme and alliterative patterns in the modern poem “**Nwankingiri**” it would appear that what matters most to the poet is the freedom to express his thoughts and feeling in a natural flow of verse rather than to be enslaved by dictates of *rules of versification and sound*.

Though figures of sounds are useful tools in poetry, they should not be used for the sake of being used. Neither should they be presented as principles, prerequisites or indispensable tools of poetry. Heese and Lawton (1983: 30-31) write:

Like rhythm, rhyme is most satisfying when it is not only decorative but meaningful. The mere presence of rhyme does not mean that we are in the presence of poetry.

Children’s verse like “**Humpty Dumpty**” though rich in figures of sound is not poetry but a children verse nursery rhyme which is designed to appeal mainly to the child’s ear. Let us compare the following: (a) From “**Humpty Dumpty**”

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.

(b) From *Macbeth* (Words of Lady Macbeth)

“Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be
What thou art promised : Yet do I fear thy
nature : it is too full o’ the milk of human
kindness, To catch the nearest way. Thou
would’st be great; art not without ambition, but
without The illness should attend it”

A glance at the two poetry quotations would tempt one who is obsessed with figures

of sound to give a nod to the former and relegate the latter into the nearest rubbish bin. The researcher concurs with Heese and Lawton's (1983: 31) comment on Lady Macbeth's challenging words:

Dispite the absence of rhyme, nobody can
dispute the force of Shakespeares poetry in
Macbeth when Lady Macbeth examines her
husband's chances of a speedy succession to
the throne.

Now a question arises, what is it then that makes good poetry? An easy answer to the question according to Heese and Lawton (1983: 11) is that "good poetry satisfies the mind and the heart as well as the ear". I would further say that poetic devices should only be used if they best express the poet's feelings and thoughts.

Another striking aspect of modern poetry is the manner in which the poet communicates his message to the reader. A careful assessment of the two sample poems reveals that probably pupils of all levels will understand the transitional poem "**Africa**" with ease, whereas the modern poem "**Nwankingiri**" will probably be understood by pupils of certain level of poetic perception. The title "**Afrika**" for instance easily suggests that the poet wants to tell us something about this remarkable continent. The same cannot be said about the poem "**Nwankingiri**". The poet's moving towards the expression of his own individuality rears its head. The poem "**Nwankingiri**" should not be understood in literal terms but symbolically. It is a symbol of a night thief. The extent of the damage which the thief could cause if the sun were to set forever, the tremendous difficulty he could have if planet earth were to stop its rotation and the time during which he performs his underground acts is presented in a humourous way. One cannot help but fall into fits of laughter (without missing the essence of the message) in:

Loko ro xa ri pelela makumu,

If the sun could rise and set forever,
Hi nga hlaya swinyingi manana loyi a ndzi tswaleke
 We could say many things I swear by my biological mother,
Loko ro khindlata makatla ku pela
 If the sun could refuse to set,
A nga khoma xivixivi hla' Fanisa.
 One could have problems I swear by Fanisa.
U mita xinyami a hlanta nhlikanhi
 He swallows darkness and vomits day,
U yile nhlikanhi ku sukela loko a ha ri enyimbeni ya nyini.
 Day has been a taboo to him ever since he was in his mother's womb.

The poet artistically employs hyperbole/personification in line 5. "*U mita xinyami a hlanta nhlikanhi*" (He swallows darkness and vomits day,) and line 6. "*U yile nhlikanhi ku sukela loko a ha ri enyimbeni ya nyini*" (Day has been a taboo to him ever since he was in his mother's womb) to accentuate the fact that the thief commits all his mischief in the dark during the night when no one can see him.

On the other hand, the transitional poem "**Afrika**" is characterized by a great deal of personification in describing the continent's beauty, hospitality, considerateness, and it being a haven for both animals and human races. In line 2. "*U nguvu mavala tindzimi ku tala*" (You are a colourful garment with many languages) the poet uses metaphor to portray the continent's beauty and its diverse nations.

3.2 BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT OF THE THREE POETS

3.2.1 Mesebenza

Rikhotso, F (1989: 58) briefly outlines Mesebenza's biography as follows:

Benson James Mesebenza u velekiwile

exifundzheni xa Zoutpansburg kutani a kulela ni ku nghena xikolo ePfukani. U dyondzerile vuthicara eLemani. Masebenza u dyondzisile nkarhi wo leha eJoni. Loko a vuyile haleno kaya u dyondzisile exikolweni xa le henhla xa Orhovelani ni le Tivumbeni. Hi 1970 u tshikile vuthicara a sungula xiyenge xa ririmi ehansi ka Ndzawulo ya Dyondzo ya Gazankulu eGiyani. Endzhaku ka nkarhi u tlakusiwile ku va nhloko ya xiyenge lexi (Chief language officer). U vile matsalani wa komiti ya Ririmi ra Xitsonga.

Masebenza u pasile BA eYunivhesiti ya Afrika-Dzonga. U tlhele a pasa "Diploma in Translation" a va wantima wo sungula eAfrika-Dzonga ku kuma diploma leyi eYunivhesiti ya Afrika-Dzonga.

*U tsarile buku ya swithkovetselo, **Chochelamandleni** (1965). Hi ku pfunana na Prof C T D Marivate na D I Mathumba va tsarile **Mayana Xitsonga**, ntangha 6 na 8. Nhlengelo wa swirungulwana swa yena leswi swo ka swi nga kandziyisiwangi, swi kumile xiyimo emphikizanini lowu a wu hulamisiwile hi 1971 ku tlangela Riphabliki ya Afrika-Dzonga. U tsarile mahungu yo tala eka magazini ya "Nhluvuko" na "Educumus" hi tlhelo ra nkoka wa ririmi.*

Hi hala tlhelo Masebenza i nqambhi ya tinsimu leti exikarhi ka tona to tiveka ku nga “Nyeleti ya Dzonga” ni tin’wana. A a hamba a yimbelerisa tikhwayere ni ku fambisa “brass band” eGiyani. U sungurile ni ntlawa wa vuyimbeleri lowu a wu vuriwa “Nhlalala”. U vile xirho xa xikomitana xa vuyimbeleri xa Byuro ya Xitsonga. Xiyenge xa Ririmi lexi a a ri nhloko ya xona, hi xona xi nga lulamisa nkhuvo wo tlangela dzana ra malembe ra ririmi ra Xitsonga hi 1983.

Hi 1985 Masebenza u tshikile ntirho eGazankulu kutani a ya va mudyondzisi wa Xinghezi eYunivhesiti ya Venda.

In translation.

Benson James Masebenza was born in the Southpansburg district, grew up there and attended school at Pfukani. He underwent his professional teacher training at Lemana. Masebenza taught for a long time in the Johannesburg district. When he decided to come back home (apparently the then Gazankulu region) he served as a teacher at Orhovelani and at Tivumbeni. In 1979 he left teaching to establish the language service section under then Gazankulu Department of Education in Giyani. After a short while he was promoted to Chief Language Officer. He was once the secretary of the Xitsonga Language committee.

Masebenza obtained his BA degree with the University of South Africa (UNISA). He further obtained a Diploma in Translation consequently becoming the first black South African to obtain such a diploma with the University of South Africa.

In 1965 Masebenza wrote a poetry anthology entitled **Chochela-mandleni**. Together with Prof C T D Marivate and D I Mathumba, he became co-writer of two Xitsonga text-books entitled **Mayana Xitsonga** for Standard 6 and 9. The collection of his unpublished short stories won him a prize in the 1971 literary competition organized specifically to celebrate the Republic of South Africa. He made some outstanding contributions to **Nhluvuko** (A Xitsonga magazine) and **Educumus** about the importance of language.

In addition to being a poet and an active person in language matters, Masebenza is a composer of choral music and one of his famous pieces is “**Nyeleti ya Dzonga**” (The North Star). He used to conduct choral choirs and played a leading role in shaping the Giyani Brass Band. He also established a group of singers known by the name of “**Nhlalala**” (Honeyguide bird). He was also a member of the choral sub-committee of the Xitsonga Bureau.

The Xitsonga language service of which he was Chief Language Officer successfully organized the historic 100th year anniversary of the Vatsonga Language (i.e. 1883-1983).

In 1985, Masebenza resigned his Gazankulu post and joined the English Department at the University of Venda as a lecturer.

3.2.2 Chauke

Rikhotso, F (1989: 28-29) outlines Chauke’s biography as follows:

*Silas Phineas Chauke u velekiwile eLady
Selborne ePitori hi siku ra 11 Hukuri 1957. U
nghenile ntangha A exikolweni lexintsongo xa
Khensani le Wallmansthal hi lembe ra 1967,
kutani a pasa ntangha tsevu hi lembe ra 1974*

exikolweni xa Khutso.

U tsarisile ku va xichudeni xa Form I exikolweni xa le henhla xa Shingwedzi exifundzeni xa ka Malamulele hi lembe ra 1975, ku kondza a pasa ntangha khume hi lembe ra 1979. Loko a ri eXingwedzi u vile xitlangi xa bolo a va ndlhondlho ya swichudeni. Hi lembe ra 1980 u thoriwile ku va matsalana exibedlhele xa Ga-Rankuwa ePitori, endzhakunyana a tsarisa ni Yunivhesiti ya N'walungu eka rhavi ra "Economics and Administration". Hi lembe ra 1983, a nyikiwa basari hi nhlngano wa magqweta ya Adams and Adams ePitori ku hetisa tidyondzo ta yena ni yunivhesiti ya Afrika Dzonga.

Silas i xirho-xidzi, mutumbuluxi, presidente wa nhlngano wa ririmi wa vumbanani eSoshanguve. U vile matsalana wa nhlngano wo khandlisana nhlonge wa "A Hi Lahlaneni Gaza," matsalana wa komiti ya "South African Transport Services", mudyondzisi wa xikolo xa Sonto xa Evangelical Presbyterian eSoshanguve ni swin'wana ni swin'wana.

Buku ya yena yo sungula i Lakatsani Tintiho Vatsonga, yi humile hi 1982. U tlhele a va un'wana wa vatsari va switlhokovetselo leswi humesiweke eka Mpambulwa wa Switlhokovetselo hi profesa C T D Marivate.

Tibuku tin'wana leti a nga ti tsala i Nyandza ya timbalelo (switlhokovetselo), Tihlolo ti hlolela vinyi (swirungulwana).

In translation.

Silas Chauke was born on 11 November 1957 at Lady Selborne in Pretoria. In 1967, he started attending his primary education at Khensani Primary school situated at Wallmansthal and completed his standard six at Khutso Higher Primary school in 1974.

In 1975 he enrolled as a full-time form I pupil at Shingwedzi High school, situated at Malamulele until he completed his standard 10 in 1979. While at Shingwedzi High school Chauke proved to be a soccer star in his own right and he was regarded as a hero by many of his school mates. In 1980 he was employed as a clerk at Garankuwa hospital situated in Pretoria. After a while he registered with the University of the North under the faculty of Economics and Administration. In 1983, Phineas Chauke was offered a bursary by the Pretoria Association of Lawyers, Adams and Adams to complete his degree with the university of South Africa.

Silas is a bona-fide member, a founder and President of a language association by the

name of “**Vumbanani**” at Soshanguve. He was once a Secretary of a burial association by the name of “**A Hi Lahlaneni Gaza,**” a Secretary of the Executive committee of South African Transport Services, a Sunday School teacher of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church at Soshanguve etc.

His first book to be written is **Lakatsani tintiho Vatsonga** published in 1982. He is one of the authors whose poems were included in the anthology entitled **Mpambulwa wa Swithokovetselo** compiled by Prof C T D Marivate. Some other books written by him are: **Nyandza ya timbalelo** (poems), **Tinhlolo ti hlolela vinyi** (short stories).

3.2.3 Magaisa

Rikhotso, F (1989: 39-40) briefly outlines Magaisa’s biography as follows:

Makhosana James Magaisa u velekiwile hi 1953 eGrootfontein, namuntlha ndhawu leyi yi tivekaka hi Tiyani exifundzeni xa Hlanganani. In’wana wa vunharhu wa Gija na Tsatsawani. U pasile ntangha 6 exikolweni xa Kulani hi 1970. U tirhile eJoni exikarhi ka 1971 na 1972 exirhapeni. Hi nkarhi wa kona u hlanganile ni gqweta Nkul. Z Zulberg loyi a nga n’wi nyika matimba yo tlhelela exikolweni. Loko a tlhelerile exikolweni u pasile “Junior

Certificate” eAkani hi 1975. Hi ku pfuniwa hi nkulukumba Zulberg ni ndyangu wa ka Oster u yile eBankuna laha a nga pasa ntangha 10.

*Loko a ri eBankuna u hlanganile ni mutsari Nkulukumba M M Marhanele loyi a a ri thicara, kutani u cherile moya wa vutsari eka yena. Hi 1976 u winile mphikizano wo vulavula hi Xitsonga mayelana na swivangelo swa makhombo emapatweni. Mphikizano lowu a wu hlamiswile hi va “**National Road Safety Council**”. Un’wana wa vahlahluvi va mphikizano Nkulunkumba G S Mayevu u hlamarisiwile hi mavulavulele ya Magaisa lero u n’wi hlohloterile ku tsala buku hi Xitsonga. Loko a pasile ntangha 10 u dyondzerile vuthicara bya “**Senior Secondary Teacher’s Course**” laha a nga va un’wana wa swichudeni swa nkombo swo sungula khoso leyi. U sungurile ku tsala swithokovetselo. Mphilumpfilu wa 1976 wu endlile masungulo eka yena ku va mutsari. Loko a ri eTivumbeni u tikombile a ri murhangeri wo swi kota lero a kala a hlawuriwa ku va ndhuna ya swichudeni (prefect).*

*Buku ya yena yo sungula i **Mihloti** (1980) leyi ku nga swithokovetselo. Buku ya yena ya vumbirhi i **Xikolokolo nguvu ya Pitori** (1987), na yona i swithokovetselo.*

Hi 1985 u kotile ku pasa BA eYunivhesiti ya Africa Dzonga naswona a a ri thicara exikolweni xa le henhla xa Akani.

In Translation.

Makhosana James Magaisa was born in 1953 at Grootfontein, a place currently known as Tiyani in the district of Hlanganani. He is the third child of Gija (the father) and Tsatsawani (the mother). In 1970, he completed his Standard Six at Kulani school. From 1971 to 1972 he worked as a gardener in Johannesburg. While working there he met with a Mr Z Zulberg, a lawyer by profession who encouraged him to go back to school to further his studies. In response to Mr Zulberg's kind suggestion he enrolled as a full-time pupil at Akani until he completed his Junior Certificate in 1975. Through the financial assistance of Mr Zulberg and the Oster family, Magaisa enrolled for his Senior Certificate and passed it at Bankuna High school.

While he was studying at Bankuna, he met with Mr M M Marhanele, a seasoned writer as well as a teacher who influenced him to become a writer. In 1976 he won himself a prize for best Mutsonga speech presenter on the causes of road accidents. The competition was organized by the "National Road Safety

Council". One of the judges of that competition, Mr G S Mayevu was highly impressed by the quality of Magaisa's speech to such an extent that he encouraged him there and then to write a Xitsonga book. After completing his Senior Certificate he enrolled for a Senior Secondary Teacher's Course (apparently at Tivumbeni Training College) and subsequently became one of the first seven students to enrol for such a course at that institution. His first attempt as a writer was poetry. The 1976 riots to a large extent injected his desire to become a writer. While he was a student at Tivumbeni, he displayed some leadership skills to such a degree that he was elected Head Prefect.

His first book to be written and published in 1980 is a Xitsonga anthology entitled *Mihloti*. His second book is also a Xitsonga anthology entitled *Xikolokolo nguvu ya Pitori* and it was published in 1987.

In 1985 he graduated a BA degree with the University of South Africa and he was once a teacher at Akani High School.

3.3 APPRAISAL OF A SAMPLE OF POEMS FROM THE THREE ANTHOLOGIES

3.3.1 Some background comments on suggested critique methodology

The problem of the poor performance of the final matric pupils on poetry could be attributed, among other things to lack of an enabling critique methodology for assisting both teacher and pupil. It is against this background that the researcher feels that before critique is undertaken on a sample of poems, some suggested critique methodology be briefly sketched and followed by the essential elements for teaching poetry as contained in the Xitsonga 1989 *Syllabus* provided by the outgoing Department of Education and Training. **(At the time of writing the new Curriculum 2005 syllabuses were not yet available).**

Heese and Lawton (1983: 73-74) suggest the following as basis for their critique methodology:

In attempting to understand and interpret a poem, there are two important questions which should be considered.

1. What does the poem communicate? In other words, what experience, emotion or idea does the poem convey to the reader?
2. How does the poem communicate? In other words, what elements are employed by the poet to convey his experience, emotions or ideas?

The first question relates to the meaning of the poem or the poem's intention, the second to the form or element in writing. The two aspects are inseparable. The meaning can only be conveyed to the reader through the form, and the form has no significance except as it conveys meaning. One cannot, in other words understand the writer's intention except by examining the elements in the writing.

Bearing in mind that these two questions are fundamental, we suggest the following approach in the writing of critical analysis:

- a. As a teaching-learning facilitator, the teacher may read straight through the poem from beginning to end before the class begins to puzzle over details, so that members of the class can form an impression of the impact of the poem as a whole. The poem is read loud so that the sound pattern can be properly appreciated.
- b. The teacher facilitator may either read the poem again or ask a member of the class to do so, now with careful attention to detail before working towards some initial conclusions about it or representing such conclusions in writing. Very often students fail to understand a poem not because it is difficult to fathom, but because they do not read it with sufficient attention. Small details may provide important clues, for example: inverted commas may indicate that one part of a poem should be considered separately; a change of tense may indicate the sequence of events; the poet may be addressing a particular person, besides his general audience (the reader); the poet may be speaking in the character of some person other than himself (as in the case of a dramatic monologue).
- c. If meaning cannot be inferred from context, consult a dictionary. The word may of course mean a great deal more in the context of the poem as a whole (connotative meaning) but you should make sure of the simple dictionary meaning (denotative meaning) first. Sometimes a word has more than one

dictionary meaning and you may not have thought of the relevant one immediately. If the poem is not a contemporary one, the meaning of the word may have changed since the poem was written.

- d. As the poem is being read aloud, members of the class are actively underlining, or making notes in rough on all points which strike them personally as worthy of comment. For example, expressive words and phrases, imagery, rhythm, rhyme, other elements such as refrain, inversion, contrast, typography and so forth.
- e. Now the teacher-facilitator and the learner are through with the oral-aural roles and are now ready for writing as part of feed back on what they have learnt or generated. Before the learners begin to write, they discuss in small groups and then plot very briefly in rough the form the write-up will take. Process writing should be encouraged. In their opening sentence, they may state clearly and concisely what they think the poem is about, for example: **“This poem is a lament on the death of a child, in which the poet questions the wisdom of God”**. Note that the foregoing sentence is a very concise statement. It is better to prefer a précis of a poem than a paraphrase. The order in which you may consider the various elements in the writing, and the amount of space which you wish to devote to each aspect, will depend largely on the individual poem and your individual learning style. Concentrate on the most striking elements and omit any point which do not seem relevant.
- f. Now as an individual member of the group proceed to write your essay, taking pains to show at all times how each element in the writing relates to the meaning of the poem. If, for example, you describe the rhythm and explain how a particular rhythmic pattern is created, try to show what that particular pattern intended to do: for example, creat a mood or suggest a physical movement. Remember also that the various elements in a good poem are co-

ordinated. You should show how they relate to one another. In this way you will be able to represent in writing your assessment and critique of the poem and will feel aesthetically enriched by the exercise.

In the light of the foregoing suggested critique methodology guideline, a one by two formula could be employed. Foremost a critic or a reader should determine what the poem communicates or more precisely the poem's intention. The poem's intention could be realised if carefully read through not less than twice. Contrary to what other writers suggest, Heese and Lawton suggest that the poem's intention should be stated clearly and precisely in a sentence form. They go on to cite this example:

“This poem is a lament on the death of a child,
in which the poet questions the wisdom of
God”.

The second step in critique is that of scientifically determining how the poem communicates viz all the detectable elements employed by the poet to convey, say, his ideas, ideology, philosophy, experience, emotions etc. This section may consist of quite a number of paragraphs determined by what a critic or reader finds striking in a given poem. The essential elements detectable in all poems are: Figures of sound (rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, assonance, consonance and so forth), figures of speech (metaphor, hyperbole, euphemism, irony, synecdoche, sarcasm, metonymy, symbolism, imagery, etc.), phonology and morphology. These elements should not be detected for fulfilment but for effect. For example: if you describe the rhythm and explain how a particular rhythmic pattern is created, try also to show what that particular pattern is intended to do. It could, for example, be to create a mood or to suggest a physical movement.

Marivate (1994: 47) in his suggested critique methodology goes a step further and adds a third aspect to Heese and Lawton 1x2 formula. Hereunder are some of the steps he suggests:

- Step 1:** Determine the subject matter of the poem, i.e. what the poem is talking about. This of course can best be done by reading the poem a number of times over. If it is an allegorical poem, i.e. a poem with a double meaning, the poem will have two subject matters, in which case you will need to explain each subject matter - the surface subject matter as well as the underlying or second subject matter.
- Step 2:** Determine the message the poet is trying to put across by means of his poem. That is the theme of the poem. Regard the whole poem as a picture hung on the wall. The whole poem presents a picture. Your challenge is to get this overall picture. That overall picture is the theme of the poem. Write down this theme in a statement i.e. in a sentence in capital letters.
- Step 3:** Here you are expected to analyse how effective the poet communicates his/her message or theme to you the reader. Your challenge as a critic is to identify all the word pictures (metaphors, similes, etc) in the poem to see how each word picture helps to build this overall picture, i.e. the theme or the message of the poem. The interesting point about word pictures is that they trigger the mind of the reader to search for interpretations in order to establish that overall picture which the poet is attempting to make us see. To evaluate how effective the poet succeeds in painting this overall picture (theme) is the task of the critic. That is your task as a learner. The crux of the matter in evaluating a poem lies here. The ability to appreciate the poet's skill in painting the overall picture depends on how the learner is prepared to exert himself or herself. This appreciation is not impossible, but it is not easy. It is attained by practice and hard work.

Marivate, Heese and Lawton agree in toto about the scientific determination of how the poet communicates his message to the reader. All the elements that should be

looked at in the process of critique are spelt out in some details. However, one realises a difference in the length of the poem's intention (what the poem communicates). Heese and Lawton suggest that the poem's intention should be a very concise statement, for example: "**In this poem the poet praises the beauty of his beloved and promises her immortality in verse**" whereas Marivate (1984: 48-49) gives the poem's intention in a paragraph form:

This poem describes the beauty of youth and early adulthood when one's life is at its prime. But since life is not static, in the process of this business of living, one starts to realise that old age is catching up with one. Although one detests this state of affairs, there is no way one can reverse the situation or avoid it. Growing old is a fact of life which every human being has to go through.

In the light of the two views on the poem's intention, I would suggest that it should be as brief, concise and as factual as possible. My teaching experience has taught me that a too long a subject matter turns into a paraphrase which in general terms is not recommended. Marivate goes on to introduce the aspect of the theme of the poem or the message of the poem which the researcher feels should be an essential element in analysing a poem.

3.3.2 Some essential elements for teaching poetry at Standard 10 level as contained in the 1989 Syllabus (1989: 43-44)

The syllabus includes, *inter alia*, the following types of poetry:

- Modern Xitsonga poetry
- Epic

- Elegiac verse
- Sonnet
- Satire
- Traditional praise poem
- Songs
- Lyric

a. The syllabus stipulates that attention must be given to metaphor and the application of figures of speech. With regard to the latter, the emphasis must fall on its function. The following figures of speech are relevant:

- Simile
- Metaphor
- Personification
- Euphemism
- Ellipsis
- Repetition
- Metonymy
- Antithesis
- Oxymoron
- Hyperbole
- Litotes
- Synecdoche
- Ideophone
- Epigram
- Irony
- Paradox
- Sarcasm

b. Attention must be given to:

Word order, pattern and pattern breaking, contrast, satire, irony, ambiguity.

- c. As far as the metrics is concerned the following must be dealt with:
- The limiting factors which co-determine the peculiar nature and structure of metrical form of language.
 - Scansions
 - Caesura and enjambment
 - Alliteration and assonance
 - Correspondence in the form of repetition, linkage (parallelism) and rhyme (different kinds).

3.3.3 The themes that the three poets address

Adequate overall theoretical background has been provided. The study now reverts to the three poets target specifically for this study.

The poems that are contained in the three anthologies by Masebenza, Chauke and Magaisa can be divided into not less than seven themes. Though some poems are difficult to be categorized under one specific theme, however, the following are predominant in all the three anthologies: a. Love and marriage, b. Women, c. Life in general (Philosophy of life), d. Youth and old age, e. Death, f. Complaints and protest, and g. Religious issues. The following are the seven categories of poems and some brief comments under each category.

a. Poems on love and marriage

The poets artistically articulate their view, feelings and their objection about love and marriage. The poems that best address this theme are: “**Mutwa wa munga**” (An Acacia thorn) and “**Ri vunile tluka**” (The leaf has withered) from *Lakatsani Tintiho Vatsonga*, “**Vusikwini**” (In the night), “**Mboo**” (finished) and “**Papila ra Bombela**”

(Bombela's letter) from *Chochela-mandleni*; "**Vukati i mbilu**" (Marriage is perseverance) and "**Swi le ka wena**" (It's up to you) from *Mihloti*.

b. Poems on women

Very few poets bother to write poems about men. It is striking to note that the majority of the Vatsonga poets write extensively about women. About this bias Marivate (1983: xiv) writes:

*Lexi xi hlamarisaka hileswaku eka
swithokovetselo swa vona ku hava leswi
khumbaka vavamuna. Kumbe i mhaka ya leswi
vatlhokovetseri va kona hinkwavo va nga
vavamuna, a hi swi tivi. Mi kwihi n'wina
vavasati? Mi ri yini hi leswi vavamuna va
vulaka swona hi n'wina? I ntiyiso xana?*

(What surprises is that none of their poems say a thing about men. Maybe this could be attributed to the fact that all the poets are men. Maybe female poets would write poems on men, who knows. Where are you ladies? What do you say about what the men say about you? Are they telling the truth?)

The poems that best address this theme are: "**Tinkanyamba ta munyiwa**" (The mighty are sucked), "**Mavala ya phaphatani**" (The butterfly's colours), "**Nkanyi wa le ndzilakanini**", (The boarder Marula tree), "**Mhangele**" (Crowned guinea fowl) from *Lakatsani Tintiho Vatsonga*; "**Ho mi chumbutela**" (We are informing you) from *Chochela-mandleni*; "**Mana wa Sirha**" (mother of grave), "**U nga tshembi wansati**" (Do not trust a woman) and "**Nghwavava**" (The prostitute) from *Mihloti*.

c. **Poems on life in general (Philosophical themes)**

The three poets, (i.e. Masebenza, Chauke and Magaisa) devote a great deal of their effort to poems on life in general. Almost three quarters of their poems are on philosophical themes. The following are the poems that best address this theme: “**Sindza ra nsingilo**” (The bracelet of begging for food), “**Mhuti etinyaweni**” (The duiker in the bean field), “**Xivala xa misiha yo kurha**” (The kraal of rusty veins), “**Swigalana**” (The ticks) “**Ngula yi boxekile**” (The grain basket is holed), “**N’wankingiri**” (The hyena) “**Xithombhe xa nkoka**” (The important photo) from *Lakatsani Tintihlo Vatsonga*; “**Xivatlankombe**” (The cobra), “**Xambulele xa Gayisa**” (An umbrella of a town or mine worker) “**Hunga moya wa Dzonga**” (Blow north wind), “**Swihloni**” (The hedgehogs) “**N5**”, “**Vukanyi-xibaha**” (The marula juice for stomach-ache) from *Chochela-mandleni*; “**U ri yini wena?**” (What do you say?) “**Wena Nyiko**” (You Nyiko), “**A wu tivi siku ni nkarhi**” (You do not know the day and the time), “**Nyangwa ya tihele**” (The gates of hell), “**Risokoti**” (Ant), “**Nkarhi wu tlanga hi vana va vanhu**” (Time makes a fool of people), “**Ntumbuluko i nhlamulo**” (Nature is the answer), “**Bofu**” (The deaf), “**Vana va xikhwezana**” (The eagle’s nestlings), “**Va ta dlaya**” (They will kill him), “**Vafi lava hanyaka**” (The dead who are living), “**Yudas**” (Judas), “**U nga tihundzuri**” (Do not change yourself), “**Tinyenyana**” (Birds), “**Nhloti**” (A tear), “**Nkarhi**” (Time), “**Xiringa**” (Blind burrowing snake), “**Tino a ri na vuxaka**” (A tooth has no relationship), “**Eden wa thyaka**” (Eden of dirt), “**Yo dya tin’wana a yi noni**” (The one that eats the others does not grow fat), “**Ndzi endla yini xo ku tsakisa?**” (What should I do to please you?), “**Dyondza ku tikhensa**” (Learn to appreciate yourself) from *Mihloti*.

d. **Poems on youth and old age**

Under this theme, the poets air their views about the bliss of youth and the complications that go along with old age. This theme is fully addressed in: “**Swi tenyekile**” (It has begun) from *Lakatsani Tintihlo Vatsonga*; “**Bvuri**” (The falling

together of divining bones) from *Chochela-mandleni*, “**Xivoni**” (Mirror), “**Ri rhengile**” (During the afternoon) from *Mihloti*.

e. Poems on death

Contrary to what the Christian religion suggests about death, viz death as conquered by those who believe in God’s Son, death as a blessing in that through it one enters the-life-here-after, the poets except Magaisa paint a picture of death as a merciless monster, an inevitable fact of life and a process that leads to a very strange land. Some of the poems that address this theme are: “**Swi tenyekile**” (It has begun), “**Xivandla xa vamasithulele**” (An area of the dumb) from *Lakatsani tintiho Vatsonga*; “**Exivandleni xa marhambu**” (At the area of the bones) from *Chochela-mandleni*; “**Xinjovo**” (The fish hook), “**Ti dya ti langute vupeladyambu**” (They graze North-ward) from *Mihloti*.

f. Poems on complaints and protests

Very few Vatsonga poets bother to write poems on complaints and protests. The suppression laws of the 60s, 70s and the 80s could be the main cause of the majority of the Vatsonga poets’ docility in this area of poetry. Marivate (1983: 70) further observes:

The Education Departments screen books, and those books with offensive themes are kept away from the classroom. The publisher cannot afford to publish books which will not be bought and read. Authors write with the publisher in mind, who in turn has the school market in mind.

Despite this negative state of affairs or apathy, the three poets dare to write on this

theme and the irony of it is that two of the three anthologies were prescribed for the final matric pupils in 1986 (Chechela-mandleni), 1988 (Mihloti) and the third one (Lakatsani tintiho Vatsonga) is prescribed for the academic students of the University of the North. The poems that best address the theme are: “**Tinhenha ti lan’wela makumu**” (The warriors loose patience for-ever), “**Xihambano xanga**” (My cross), “**Mbyana ya rithantswi**” (A lean dog) from *Lakatsani tintinho Vatsonga*; “**Rimenyo**” (A swarm of biting red ants) from *Chochela-mandleni*; “**Mbilu ya misava yi borile**” (The earth’s heart has rotten), “**rhumbu ra Vakosi ri borile**” (The womb of kingship has rotten), “**Ndzi ta yimbelela Afrika**” (I will sing Africa) “**Xirilo xa n’wana wa Africa**” (The lament of the child of Africa), “**Murisi ni ntlhambi**” (The shepherd and the flock), “**Xihuhuri**” (The whirlwind), “**Vuxika bya 1976**” (The winter of 1976), “**Emahosi ka yindlu ya n’wankumi**” (The back yard of the wealthy person) from *Mihloti*.

g. Poems on religious issues

It would appear that christian religion enjoys special treatment by the three poets at the expense of other religions, like ancestor worship, Muhammadinism, Buddhism, etc. The poets could have had the Christian readers in mind or they themselves subscribe to the Christian religion when writing poems on this theme.

Following are poems that best address this theme: “**Xikunguva**” (The black crow) from *Lakatsani tintiho Vatsonga*; “**Exivaleni xa marhambu**” (At the area of bones), “**Xikhongelo**” (Prayer) from *Chochela-mandleni*; “**Loko ndzi nga si n’wi kuma**” (Before I found one) and “**Mafela-sopo**” (The dead-innocent one) from *Mihloti*.

3.3.4 A sample of poems that best typify the three poets

3.3.4.1 B J Masebenza : *Chochela-mandleni*

a. “Rimenyo”

1. *A hi ku se hi tshamisekile,*
2. *A hi sungula ku hlambanyisa*
3. *Maxangu ya tolo, hi tsakile:*
4. *“Swona ma ka mi swi vula?”*

5. *Kwala vurhongo byi nandzihaka*
6. *Kwala milorho yi taka,*
7. *Ha ha famba hi pfluxela maxaka,*
8. *Ho pfluxiwa hi xibububu.*

9. *I rimenyo*
10. *Hambi ri huma kwihi*
11. *Hambi ri rhume hi mani*
12. *Hambi hi to swi yini*

13. *Leswi eswakudyeni ri ngehenile,*
14. *Vurhongo a ha ha byi muhi,*
15. *Hinkwako-kwako ri netile,*
16. *Hi ta tsutsumela kwihi?*

17. *Va hi byela va ku: “Bya hlola”*
18. *Hi dyile naxo.*
19. *Kumbe swa’ntswa hi byi nyizela:*
20. *Xin’wana-kaji lexi.*

In translation.

“A swarm of merciless red ants”

1. Just when we thought we were settled
2. We started swearing by

3. The troubles of yesterday, with joy.
4. **“Oh! Do you have to mention it?”**

5. Just when the sleep is so pleasant
6. Just when dreams came,
7. In our dreams going around visiting relatives,
8. We were all of a sudden unceremoniously awakened.

9. It is the merciless red ants.
10. No one knows where they came from
11. No one knows their sender
12. We do not know what to do about this state of affairs.

13. They are all over the food,
14. We can't even sleep,
15. They are every where,
16. **Where shall we run to for refuge?**

17. They said to us: “They are an omen of misfortune”
18. We are in for it.
19. May be we better give way!
20. **Oh! This notorious human-blood-sucker.**

i) The subject matter of the poem

This poem protests the infliction of suffering by those who are at the helm of power to those who are defenseless, vulnerable and powerless. Although the victims detest the situation in which they find themselves, they have no alternative but to reluctantly succumb to it.

ii) **The theme of the poem**

THE DEFENSELESS, VULNERABLE AND POWERLESS PEOPLE SUFFER IN THE HANDS OF THOSE WHO ARE AT THE HELM OF POWER.

iii) **Analysis**

The title of the poem “**Rimenyo**” (merciless red ants) is a symbol of those who mercilessly invade the territory of the powerless with the aim of plundering, exploiting and oppressing them. The unexpected invasion is expressed in a tone of utter disgust and despair in:

1. *A hi ku se hi tshamisekile,*
Just when we thought we were settled,
2. *A hi sungula ku hlambanyisa*
We started swearing by
3. *Maxangu ya tolo, hi tsakile.*
The troubles of yesterday with joy.
4. *“Swona mi ka mi swi vula?”*
“Oh! Do you have to mention it?”

The poet artistically contrasts the peaceful and joyful state of affairs in: 5. “**Kwala vurhongo byi nandzihaka** (Just when the sleep is so pleasant), 6. “**Kwala milorho yi taka**” (Just when dreams come) and 7. “**Ha ha famba hi pfluxela Maxaka**” (In our dreams going around visiting relatives) with the unceremonious invasion in: 8. “**Ho pfuxiwa hi xibububu**” (We were all of a sudden unceremoniously awakened) to accentuate the advent of human suffering. The xitsonga noun “**Xibububu**” (something done abruptly) carries more weight than its synonym “**xitshuketana**” (something done swiftly) to reveal more explicitly the manner in which the invaders crushed into serenity of unsuspecting victims.

Masebenza's unique style is displayed in the third stanza. This stanza is characterized by an attempt at alliterative pattern and end rhyme. It would appear that the poet wants to satisfy both the ear and the mind. The repetition of the Xitsonga conjunction "hambi" in lines 10-12 and the end rhyme in lines 11 and 12 suggest the state of utter dismay and helplessness of the victims.

In:

13. *Leswi eswakudyeni ri nghenile,*
They are all over the food,
14. *Vurhongo a ha ha byi nuhi,*
We can't even sleep,
15. *Hinkwako-kwako ri enetile,*
They are every where,
16. *Hi ta tsutsumela kwihi?*
Where shall we run to for refuge?

The poet uses hyperbole to hammer the fact that the invaders are now controlling the victims' economic, financial, political, social and spiritual lives. The Xitsonga compound word "**hinkwako-kwako**" further suggests that the invaders are indeed in total control of everything.

The poet concludes the plight of the victims by using the art of ambiguity in 19. "**Kumbe swa antswa hi byi nyizela**" (May be we better give way). "Giving way" could mean that the victims surrendered to the invaders or the victims acknowledged that their resistance could not help as such they were compelled to leave their land. In line 20. "**Xin'wana-kaji lexi**" (Oh! This human-blood-sucker) the poet uses a ghoulish, dracular-like imagery to accentuate the fact that the problems the victims were facing were beyond their means and power. A "**Xin'wanakaji**" is a notorious human-blood-sucker which possesses mysterious deadly power. If not well kept by the owner, it can kill the family members to the last person. Hence the writer writes:

“**Kumbe swa antswa hi byi nyizela**” (May be we better give way).

It would appear that in this poem, the poet’s unpleasant personal background experience played a role to a large extent. Although it was written before the poet’s ultimate resignation of his post as Language Officer in 1985, it is a true reflection of discontentment. His moving from one post to the next (See Biography; Rikhotso, 1989: 58) was not just an experimental exercise, nor an up-ward mobility as such, but a human endeavour to avoid the apparent omnipresent “**Swarm of biting ants**”. When one scrutinizes the poet’s posts from Johannesburg to Venda, one realises that they range from assistant teacher, tutorship, language officer and lectureship. Obviously these are no senior posts for a person of the poet’s calibre. Apparently, it is against this background that the poet writes: 16. “**Hi ta tsutsumela kwihhi?**” (Where shall we run to for refuge?)

b. “Swihloni”

1. *“Bay’rhay’t” xihloni xa hlamarisa:*
2. *Xi vumbiwile xi saseka ngopfu -*
3. *Xikandzanyana xa kona, xinon’wana,*
4. *Swimahlwana na yo nhompfu -*

5. *Ngi u ngo fambisa voko ra wena*
6. *Xikandzeni xa xona,*
7. *Futhi, ngi xi ngo ku angula -*
8. *Mbhuri ya xihari.*

9. *Xa hlamarisa*
10. *Xihloni,*
11. *Xa hlamarisa*
12. *A mi voni?*

13. *Loko xi twa swigingi*
14. *Ntsena ku twa swigingi,*
15. *Xi nga ku vonangi:*
16. *Hambi u toya kumbe nhenha -*
17. *Kovee -!*

18. *Loko MUNHU a hundzile*
19. *(Mi nga rivali phela*
20. *Ku xona i ciluvu-njhe-)*
21. *Hi kona xi kotaka ku humelela -*
22. *Mbuya - !*

23. *Hi le Joni la':*
24. *Ka jika-va-jikile,*
25. *Gila-va-girile,*
26. *Hi le Joni la'.*

27. *U kuma tinxaka hinkwato.*
28. *Leswi hinkwerhu suti hi mbalaka?*
29. *Thayi hi tlimbaka?*
30. *Na xo xilungu xi huma hi tinhompfu.*

31. *U nga ha n'wi tiva Mchangana?*
32. *Ho, wa tlanga wena.*
33. *A wu n'wi lemuki wa-ka-Gaza*
34. *U jika kusuhi ku fana na xikuta -*

35. *A Vasuthwini wa "buwa",*
36. *A Mazuleni wa "khuluma",*
37. *Hambi, Valungu-ntimeni wa "prata" -*
38. *U to n'wi yini?*

39. *Ndzi vona vafambisi va mimovha*
 40. *Va kiringa.*
 41. *Kambe a va fiki ka va ka hina*
 42. *Loko va cinca swivongo,*
 43. *Va kiringa-kiringa,*
 44. *Va hundzuluxela-hundzuluxela -*
 45. *E-tintlhari ta kona -!*
46. *Futhi n'wina mi n'wi tivaka*
 47. *A nga lavi no mi vona:*
 48. *Loko wo phikelela, u to hloleriwa:*
 49. *“Saw’ bona m’fowethu!”*
50. *“Bay’rhay’t” xihloni xa hlamarisa:*
 51. *Xi vumbiwile xi saseke ngopfu -*
 52. *Xikandzanyana xa kona, xinon’wana,*
 53. *Swimahlwana na yo nhompfu -*

In translation.

“The hedgehogs”

1. **“Bay’rhay’t”** (By right) a hedgehog is amazing:
2. It is the most beautiful created creature -
3. Its little face, little mouth,
4. Little eyes and nose -
5. As if one can gentle move one’s hand
6. Over its face,
7. As if it could respond verbally -
8. A beautiful creature.

9. Amazing
10. Hedgehog,
11. It is amazing
12. Don't you see?

13. When it hears some foot-steps
14. Just to her some foot-steps,
15. Before it could even see you:
16. Whether you are a coward or a hero -
17. It withdraws into concealment -!

18. After a PERSON has passed-by
19. (Do not forget
20. It is just a useless thing -)
21. Is then that it surfaces -
22. Poor creature -

23. This is Johannesburg:
24. Where people change themselves,
25. Where people do amazing things,
26. This is Johannesburg.

27. In it you get all nations,
28. Are we not all wearing suits?
29. Are we not putting on ties?
30. Even our English expression is perfect.

31. Do you think its easy to identify a Shangaan?
32. Do not take him for granted.
33. You really do not know the one from Gaza,
34. He quickly takes a turn like a motor-bike.

35. Amongst the Basotho he speaks Sotho,
 36. Amongst the Zulus he speaks Zulu,
 37. Even amongst those who speak Afrikaans he communicate in it -
 38. So what?

39. I see the motorists
 40. Manoeuvring their way during peak hours
 41. But they do not match my people
 42. When they change surnames,
 43. Turning this way and that way
 44. Changing now and then -
 45. Oh, what intelligent people!

46. If he knows you
 47. He does not want to see you:
 48. If you insist that you recognize him you'll be sorry;
 49. He will reply: "**saw' bona m'fowethu!**"
 (A Zulu way of greeting: Hallo brother)

50. "**Bay'rhay't**" (By the way) a hedgehog is amazing:
 51. It is the most beautiful created creature -
 52. Its little face, little mouth,
 53. Little eyes and nose.

i) The subject matter of the poem

In this poem the poet uses hedgehogs as a symbol of the Vatsonga who deny their ethnicity when they are among other nations on account of inferiority complex.

ii) The theme of the poem

INFERIORITY COMPLEX CAUSES PEOPLE TO DENY THEIR ETHNICITY WHEN AMONG OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS.

iii) Analysis

It would appear that the poet appeals to the cultural preservation of the Vatsonga people. He singles out language which is one of the four building blocks of culture, viz value, beliefs and norms as the most critical cultural identification. This is in line with Goode's (1984: 64) observation that "**language is a fourth crucial aspect or building block of culture**".

The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Volume 23, (1989: 69), goes on to describe language as an important tool of socialization:

Language is probably the most important instrument of socialization that exists in all human societies and cultures. It is largely by means of language that one generation passes on to the next its myths, laws, customs, and beliefs, and it is largely by means of language that the child comes to appreciate the structure of the society into which he is born and his own place in the society.

It should be made clear from the onset that the poet is by no means discouraging multilingualism, but rather the denial of one's culture, especially the aspect of language in favour of other languages.

The poet starts off by describing what the hedgehog looks like in:

2. *Xi vumbiwile xi saseke ngopfu -*
It is the most beautiful created creature-
3. *Xikandzanyana xa xona, xinon'wana*
Its little face, little mouth,
4. *Swimahlwana na yo nhompfu -*
Little eyes and nose -

Instead of appreciating and feeling proud of its beauty ably described by the poet's use of the diminutives of classes 7 and 8: "**Xikandzanyana, xinon'wana and swimahlwana**", the hedgehog does the opposite, hence the poet writes: "1. **Bay'rhay't' xihloni xa hamarisa:**" ("**Bay'rhay't'**" a hedgehog is amazing). The word "**Bay'rhay't'**" is coined from the English phrase "**By right**". It exposes the unwillingness of these strange people to express themselves in their native language. This state of affairs puzzles the poet to such a degree that he finds it expedient to suddenly change the tone in:

9. *Xa hlamarisa*
Amazing
10. *Xihloni,*
Hedgehog,
11. *Xa hlamarisa.*
It is amazing
12. *A mi voni?*
Don't you see?

Look at how the poet writes the 10th and the 11th lines - they are written in a slant form to accentuate the fact that these people hide their ethnicity when they are among other nations.

The poet goes on to portray the hedgehog as an extremely sensitive creature. Its sensitivity renders it a pathetic timid and easily intimidated creature. The poet says:

13. *Loko xi twa swigingi*
When it hears some foot-steps
14. *Ntsena ku twa swigingi*
Just to hear some foot-steps,
15. *Xi nga ku vonangi:*
Before it could see you:
16. *Hambi u toya kumbe nhenha-*
Whether you are a coward or a hero-
17. *Kovee -!*
It withdraws into concealment (kovee-!)

The timidity of the hedgehog is revealed by the poet as caused by mere hearing some foot-steps: 13. “**Loko xi twa swigingi**” (When it hears some foot-steps). The poet exhibits his poetic skills by carefully using dynamic words in an unorthodox syntactic fashion: 14. “**Ntsena ku twa swigingi**” instead of saying: “**Ku twa swigingi ntsena**” to drive home the fact that this poor creature does not wait to see but hears and hides: “**Xi nga ku vonanga**” (Before it could even see you). Its withdrawal into concealment is ably described by the poet’s use of the one word Xitsonga ideophone: 17. “**Kovee-!**” This is an act done rapidly and haphazardly.

In 16. “**Hambi u toya kumbe nhenha-**” (Whether you are a coward or a hero-) the poet uses the art of antonym; “**toya**” (coward) and “**nhenha**” (hero) to mirror to us the two classes of contrast characteristics - the heroes are those who are proud of their ethnicity and culture, whereas the cowards are those who despise their ethnicity and culture. These two opposite classes are further revealed in:

18. *Loko MUNHU a hundzile*
After a PERSON has passed-by
19. *(Mi nga rivali phela*
(Do not forget
20. *Ku' xona i ciluvu-njhe-)*

It is just a useless thing-)

21. *Hi kona xi kotaka ku humelela-*

Is then that it surfaces -

22. *Mbuya-!*

Poor creature-!

The poet artistically points out that these “cowards” do not despise their ethnicity and culture only, but regard themselves as useless things: “**Mi nga rivali phela ku xona i ciluvu-njhe**” (Do not forget, it is just a useless thing-). The poet further reveals these distinct classes of people by using the Xitsonga noun of class 1 “**MUNHU**” (PERSON) in capital letters and the absolute pronoun of class 7 “**xona**”(it) in small letters to accentuate the former’s self confidence, pride and complex - freeness and the latter’s sensitivity, self denial and inferiority complex. No wonder the poet says about the latter: “**Mbuya-!**” (Poor creature-!).

In the 6th stanza, the poet does not use figurative language intensively as compared to the preceding stanzas. He takes us to the scene where strange things happen. There is no doubt that in this poem the poet’s experiential background plays a tremendous role. Rikhotso (1989: 58) informs that Masebenza taught for a long time in the Johannesburg district. Apparently, Masebenza silently observed with interest the various nations’ behaviour like a sociologist on a research mission on variables influencing behaviour especially in multicultural and monocultural groups. About the scene and the behaviour of the strange group he says:

23. *Hi le Joni la:*

This is Johannesburg

24. *Ka jika-va-jikile,*

Where people change themselves,

25. *Gila-va-girile,*

Where people do amazing things,

26. *Hi le Joni la*

This is Johannesburg.

The poet's Johannesburg is characterised by the people who all of a sudden change themselves and also do amazing things. By "**changing themselves.**" the poet seems to refer primarily to a situation where the victims change their names, surnames and ethnicity. In some extreme cases some even change their identity books. Probably during the poet's long experience as a teacher in Johannesburg, he might have heard or seen the Khosas changing into Khozas, the Ngobenis changing into Ngubanes, the Ntimanes changing into Nzimandes, the Mabutanas changing into Mabuzas and the M'n'wanatis changing into Mkhwanazis. Obviously this change goes hand in hand with the change of one's beliefs, values, norms and language. This unfortunate state of affairs prompted the poet to sarcastically challenge the Johannesburg people: "**Hi le Joni la**" (This is Johannesburg).

In the 7th and the 8th verses, the poet employs the art of interrogation for two specific reasons; firstly to break the monotony of the preceding verses which are predominantly in descriptive form, secondly to appeal to the reader to provide answers.

28. *Leswi hinkwerhu suti hi ambalaka?*

Are we not all wearing suits?

29. *Thayi hi tlimbaka?*

Are we not putting on ties?

30. *U nga ha n'wi tiva Muchangana?*

Do you think it's easy to identify a Shangaan?

Really, in big cities like Johannesburg, it's not easy to identify a person's ethnic group in Western attire. The poet quickly introduces an aspect of attire as another tool these people use to disguise themselves. Since all the nations put on suits and ties, the poet wants to know how on earth one can identify the target group. Hence

he writes: 31. “*U nga ha n’wi tiva Muchangana?*” (Do you think it’s easy to identify a Shangaan?). The adoption of the Western attire influences one also to express oneself in “**perfect English**”: 30. “**Na xo Xilungu xi huma hi tinhompfu**” (Even our English is perfect).

In the 9th stanza, the poet re-introduces the aspect of language not as code-switching as such but as a psychological problem of a person who wants to be accepted by specific ethnic groups at the expense of his own language.

No wonder the poet writes:

35. *A Vasuthwini wa “buwa”*
Amongst the Basotho he speaks Sotho,
36. *A Mazuleni wa “khuluma”*
Amongst the Zulus he speaks Zulu,
37. *Hambi, Valungu-ntimeni wa “prata”-*
Even among Afrikaans speakers he converses in Afrikaans
38. *U to n’wi yini?*
So what?

The poet concludes his poem by repeating the first stanza word for word to exclaim that though these people like all other people have a wonderful culture to be proud of, they forsake theirs and adopt other cultures to the amazement of the poet: 50. “**Bay’rhy’t’ xihloni xa hlamarisa:**” (“**By right**” a hedgehog is amazing:). (See also Masunga, 1985: 25-32 and Nkondo, 1985: 6-11).

3.3.4.2 S P Chauke

a. “Xivandla xa vamasithithulele”

1. *I xitikwana xa mabofu, timbheveve na va madzingandleve.*

2. *Kona ko dzumba ku wisiwe hi minhlana,*
3. *Mibedwa ya kona yi dzumba yi kombe tinhloko tlhelo ri ri rin 'we.*
4. *Kona ko twala risimu ra xinyenyana ntsena.*
5. *Ku vhaka kona hi loko na wena u ya tlhoma wa wena ntsonga kona.*

6. *I xivandla xa nkateko lowu khapaka khapi!*
7. *Laha vamakelwana va nga kokelaniki milomo ni tinhompfu,*
8. *Nhlevo ni rivengo kun 'we ni mavondzo a swi ngheni kona.*
9. *Un 'wana ni un 'wana u langutele ku avanyisiwa ka yena.*
10. *Hi lexi na mina ndzi rilelaka xona hi masiku.*

11. *I muti, wu andlalanile, futhi wu anamile.*
12. *Byi akile byiyisa kona u nga xisiwi,*
13. *Wena wa ha rivata hi leswi na leswiya.*
14. *Muti wa xivundza xo tlula na xivundza,*
15. *Vanghana, maxaka ni varhandzani vo ka va nga hlamulani,*

16. *Kasi loko va nga se rhurhela kona a va dzahisana fole badi!*
17. *Hi ri maxaka ma kumanile,*
18. *Kambe vuxaka byi xaxile.*
19. *Varhandzani va divene,*
20. *Kambe a ra ha pfurhi tani hi tolo ni tolweni.*
21. *Valala va hlangene,*
22. *Kambe byasi bya ha mila.*

23. *Nhlayo ya vaaki va kona ya kukumuka katsongo-katsongo,*
24. *Siku hi siku, vhiki hi vhiki.*
25. *Leswo na wena u nga ya aka kona mindzuku wa swi khumbhula ke?*
26. *Vuchavelo hi byo byebyo,*
27. *Kumbe u tiva byin 'wana hi ta tsutsumela kona ke?*
28. *We murhandziwa hi ta ya hlangana kona-vu.*

29. *I muti muni wo pfumala hambu mpfikulo wa ricece ke?*
 30. *I vanhu muni vo tsandzeka hambu ku tiputa ke?*
 31. *Ka titimela hambu ka hisa va lo rhwee!*
 32. *Kasi hina loko ku titimela i nandzu,*
 33. *Ku hisa ka ha ri wun'wana!*
34. *Ku rhurhela kona ekaya a wa ha vhaki manana.*
 35. *Hambu wo va u rivele swin'wana swa nkoka.*
 36. *U ta lerisa mani ku ya swi teka hikuva u na manyunyu,*
 37. *A wu ndzawuti munhu futhi a wu pfluxelani na munhu.*
 38. *Mpfhuka xa kona u nga fundza marhama,*
 39. *Hambu lava khunguvanyaka va pfa va vuyisa moya.*
 40. *Wena ke?*
41. *Hambu mo ka mi nga hi kumbuki,*
 42. *Mi nga tikarhati hi ku hi tsundzuka.*
 43. *Hi le xiporweni xin'we na hina,*
 44. *Ma hamba hi ta ya manyukutana kweleyo hinkwerhu ka hina.*
 45. *Rini hambu rini hi nga mi kandziya,*
 46. *Hi ta kombana swin'wana na swin'wana swa misava.*

In translation:

“An area of the dumb”

1. It's a small land of the blind, the dumb and the deaf.
2. Right there where people rest on their backs,
3. The beds of that place always face one direction only.
4. Right there where you hear the singing of a bird.
5. Once you visit the place you are obliged to pitch or erect your own tent there.

6. It's a place of overwhelming blessings!
7. Where neighbours do not express their anger through their mouths and noses,
8. Gossip, hatred and envy do not enter there
9. Every one is awaiting one's judgement.
10. That is what I'm craving for every day.

11. It's a settlement, long and wide.
12. Guys have built incredible houses, never be fooled,
13. You who are kept busy by this and that.
14. A settlement of extreme loneliness.
15. Friends, relatives and those who love each other do not converse,
16. Before they migrated to the settlement they were intimates!
17. Relatives are brought together,
18. But the relationship is ice cold.
19. Dates or lovers are brought together,
20. But they do not burn with the passion of love of yesterday and the previous day.
21. Enemies are brought together,
22. No fighting takes place.

23. The number of the settlers increases bit by bit
24. Day by day, week by week.
25. Does it ever cross your mind that you may settle there one day?
26. There is no other haven save there,
27. Do you know another one so that we may go there?
28. You darling, we shall meet there.

29. What kind of a settlement that has no infant cry?
30. What kind of people who do not complain?
31. Whether ice cold or extremely hot they are like statues!
32. We complain when it becomes cold!

33. When it becomes hot we complain again!
34. If one visits there never sets foot home again.
35. Even when one has forgotten important items.
36. Who will you send to fetch it for you cause everybody is proud,
37. You do not greet anyone nor converse with anyone.
38. Yours is to ballon your cheeks,
39. Even those who have been wronged do reconcile.
40. What about you?

41. Even if you forget all about us,
42. Do not bother thinking about us.
43. We are on the same track,
44. No ways, we shall all squeeze in together over there.
45. Any day we may arrive there,
46. So that we can advise each other about this and that.

i. The subject matter of the poem

This poem describes death as an unavoidable dreadful end - process of life. This monster awaits everybody irrespective of colour, religion, age, race or creed. The graves are presented as the place where different people temporarily meet before the Great Judgement Day. The arrival of these people at the graves is described as something that takes place untimely, mysteriously and incomprehensibly.

ii. The theme of the poem

EVERY HUMAN BEING WITH NO EXCEPTION HAS TO PASS THROUGH THE GRAVE BEFORE THE FINAL JUDGEMENT.

Anthropologically speaking, Africans try by all means to avoid among other things

speaking about the graves and the dead. Only an insane person dare point his finger at the grave yard. Contrary to this mythology, the poet artistically feels at home to describe his theme successfully without offending the feelings of his audience - instead they fall into fits of laughter without missing the essence of the message. This can only be attributed to the poet's unique art of humour. Very few poets possess this art or charisma. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Volume 20) (1989: 739) describes humour this way:

In all its many-splendoured varieties, humour
can be simply defined as a type of stimulation
that tends to elicit laughter reflex.

In the context of literature, humour serves as an important spice in that it relieves tension. It is against this background that writers like Chaucer, Voltaire, Moliere, Shakespeare, Mabuza, Thuketana, Marhanele, Magaisa, Masebenza and Chauke find it not difficult to handle any sensitive topic without hurting the feelings of their audience.

The poet wastes no time in describing the grave yard. He carefully uses a noun diminutive of class 7. "**Xitikwana**" in line 1 for two specific reasons: firstly, to indicate that the grave yard at its initial stage has not grown big; secondly, to express his detestation of the grave yard. The extreme quietness of this place (grave yard) is artistically symbolised by the poet's use of people who are handicapped in: 1. "**I xitikwani xa mabofu, timbheveve na va madzinga-ndleve**" (It's a small land of the blind, the dumb and the deaf). By the use of "**the blind**", "**the dumb**" and "**the deaf**", the poet implies that many they are, they cannot see each other, converse with each other and cannot hear each other. The only thing heard there is: 4. "**.... the singing of a bird**". The inability of these people is displayed by the poet in:

2. *Kona ko dzumba ku wisiwe hi minhlana,*
Right there where people rest on their backs,

3. *Mibedwa ya kona yi dzumba yi kombe tinhloko tlhelo ri ri rin'we.*

The beds of that place always face one direction only.

The unique style of the poet is shown by the way he uses personal euphemism coupled with humour for the statement: **“Once you die and get burried in your grave, you’ll never come back home again”**. To a Mutsonga, this statement is unpolite, offensive and heavily loaded with grieving words like for instance: **“die”** and **“burried”**. Hence the poet uses the most acceptable and humourous statement: **“Ku vhaka kona hi loko na wena u ya tlhoma wa wena ntsonga kona”** (Once you visit the place, you are obliged to pitch up your own tent there).

In the second stanza, the poet quickly switches over to the positive side of death, namely: free from anger, free from gossip, free from hatred and envy, and he compares this kind of **“freedom”** with overwhelming blessings:

6. *I xivandla xa nkateko lowu khapaka khapi!*

It’s a place of overwhelming blessings!

7. *Laha vamakelwana va nga kokelaniki milomo ni tinhompfu,*

Where neighbours do not express their anger through their mouths and noses,

8. *Nhlevo ni revengo kun'we ni mavondzo a swi ngheni kona.*

Gossip, hatred and envy do not enter there.

In the 9th and 10th lines, the poet seems to take a dramatic change of language - In the preceding lines, he used a fair lay-man’s language with no ideological nor belief implications. At this stage the poet states in no uncertain terms that he subscribes to the Christian religion and Eschatological expectation: 9. **“Un’wana ni un’wana u langutele ku avanyisiwa ka yena”** (Everyone awaits one’s judgement). The poet’s belief goes along with *The New Testament* (1988: 406) verse which says:

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but
after this the judgement.

He goes a step further and indicate that he is not only a subscriber to the Christian religion and Eschatological expectation, but one who also waits in anticipation for that Great Day: 10. **“Hi lexi na mina ndzi rilelaka xona hi masiku”** (That is what I’m craving for every day).

The poet starts off the third stanza with a deliberate contrast of line 11 with line 1 to paint us a picture of the current size of the grave yard. In line 1 he talks of a **“Xitikwani”** to describe the initial size of the grave yard whereas in line 11 he talks of a **“Muti”** to describe the ever growing size of the grave yard. The use of the Xitsonga verb stems **“andlalanile”** (long) and **“anamile”** (wide) give a clear picture of the perpetual long and wide grave yard.

In line 12. **“Byi akile byiyisa kona u nga xisiwi,”** (Guys have built incredible houses, never be fooled), the poet has used humour to put his message across in a more palatable way rather than saying: **“Byi celeriwile byiyisa hi vunyingi kona u nga xisiwi”** (People have been buried in big numbers there, make no mistake).

The poet surprisingly changes his tone again in line 13 no more as a poet this time but as a theological adviser. He appeals to the living not to be obsessed with their daily responsibilities and activities but also to pay more attention to the reality of the life-here-after: **“Wena u ha rivataka hi leswi na leswiya”** (You who are kept busy by this and that).

From lines 14-20, the poet explains the death relationship of three specific groups of people viz: friends, relative and dates or lovers. The relationship of all these groups is normally characterised by among other things intimacy, warmth, openness, laughter, jests, playfulness, informality and togetherness. But in this strange **“land”** of the poet, all these features take a back seat:

14. *Muti wa xivundza xo tlula na xivundza.*
A settlement of extreme loneliness.
15. *Vanghana, maxaka ni varhandzani vo ka va nga hlamulani,*
Friends, relatives and dates do not converse,
16. *Kasi loko va nge se rhurhela kona a va dzahisana fole badi!*
Before they migrated to the settlement they were intimate!
17. *Hi ri maxaka ma kumanile,*
Relatives are brought together,
18. *Kambe vuxaka byi xaxile.*
But the relationship is ice cold.
19. *Varhandzani va divene,*
Dates or lovers are brought together,
20. *Kambe a ra ha pfurhi tani hi tolo ni tolweni.*
But they do not burn with the passion of love of yesterday and
the previous day.

In line 21, the poet comes out with the fourth different group from the former whose relationship is characterised by among other things hatred, quarrel, swearing, denegration, accusation, fighting and murdering. Strange enough, these enemies who have been brought together through death are not doing what they are expected to do. As a result the poet writes:

21. *Valala va hlangene,*
Enemies are brought together,
22. *Kambe byasi bya mila.*
No fighting takes place.

The poet switches over to the lay-man's language once more in the fourth stanza. The verb stem "**kukumuka**" and the compound descriptive "**katsongo-katsongo**" explain the extent to which the grave yard has expanded. Since it is nomore a "**xitikwana**" (small land) the pace of those who pass away increases to such an extent that it

becomes a daily and weekly event: “**Siku hi siku, vhiki hi vhiki**” (Day by day, week by week). This state of affairs prompts the poet to make it clear to anyone that the end of the road is death and the grave:

25. *Leswo na wena u nga ya aka kona mundzuku wa swi khumbuka ke?*

Does it ever cross your mind that you may settle there one day?

26. *Vuchavelo hi byebyo,*

There is no other haven save there,

27. *Kumbe u tiva byin'wana hi tsutsumela kona ke?*

Do you know another one so that we may go there?

28. *We murhandziwa hi ta ya hlangana konavu.*

You darling, we shall meet there.

In the fifth stanza, the poet exhibits his personal talent that makes him different from other poets. Contrary to the first stanza which is predominately descriptive in nature, the poet now resorts to an interrogative style of highlighting the strangeness of the “**land**”. What he says in this stanza is not different in essence from what is contained in the first stanza. What makes the difference is the way in which the poet varies his writing skills and tempo. In the latter stanza, the poet seems to have gained momentum and consequently demands definite answers:

29. *I muti muni wo pfumala hambu mpfikulo wa ricece ke?*

What kind of a settlement that has no infant cry?

30. *I vanhu muni vo tsandzeka hambu ku tiputa ke?*

What kind of people who do not complain?

He leaves it to his audience to come up with their own perspective of this settlement - A settlement that has many infants who are known to be expressing their protest through crying loudly. A settlement that has many adults who are known to be

complaining over almost everything; wheather, money, misbehaving kids, unfaithful spouses, big tummies, food, furniture, cars, dropping standard of Education, racism, tribalism, gender equality, population growth etc, but they are surprisingly quiet. Hence he writes:

31. *Ka titimela hambu ka hisa va lo rhwee!*
Whether ice cold or extremely hot they are like statues!
32. *Kasi hina loko ku titimela i nandzu,*
We complain when it becomes cold,
33. *Ku hisa ka ha ri wun'wana!*
When it becomes hot we complain again!

To explain that death is a point of no return, and that it renders one motionless, the poet uses the art of humour in presentation in order to avoid offending the feelings of his audience:

34. *Ku rhurhela kona ekaya a wa ha vhaki manana.*
If one visits there never sets food home again.
35. *Hambu wo va u rivele swin'wana swa nkoka.*
Even when one has forgotten some important items.
36. *U ta lerisa mani ku ya swi teka hikuva u na manyunyuni,*
Who will you send to fetch it cause everybody is proud,
37. *A wu ndzawuti munhu futhi a wu pfluxelani na munhu.*
You do not greet anyone nor converse with anyone.
38. *Mpfhuka xa kona u nga fundza marhama,*
Yours is to balloon your cheeks,
39. *Hambu lava nga khunguvanyaka va pfa va vuyisa moya.*
Even those who have been wronged do reconcile.
40. *Wena ke?*
What about you?

In conclusion, the poet makes it clear that though these strange people are reluctant to converse and perhaps inform the living about the situation and state of affairs in their new settlement, they should be rest assured that the living are coming in massive numbers to invade their land. The use of the verb stem “**Manyukutana**” (squeeze together) in line 44 strongly suggests that the living need not be invited nor welcome but they will surely make their way to the graves through death:

44. *Ma hamba hi ta ya manyukutana kweleyo hinkwerhu ka hina.*
No ways we shall all squeeze in together over there.
45. *Rini hambu rini hi nga mi kandziya,*
Any day we may arrive there,
46. *Hi ta kombisana swin'wana na swin'wana swa misava.*
So that we can advise one another about this and that.

There is no doubt that the poet's experiential background played a role in the authorship of this poem “**An area of the dumb**”. Rikhotso (1989: 28b-29) informs that the poet:

Was once a secretary of a burial association by the name of “**A hi lahlaneni Gaza**” (Gaza people let us bury one another) a Sunday school teacher of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church at Soshanguve.

As a secretary of a burial association, the poet must have attended different kinds of funeral services for different people. He might have observed with interest how death brings lovers, enemies, the elite, the poor, young and old together at the grave yard to quietly await the final judgement: 9. “**Everyone is awaiting one's judgement**”. As a Christian Sunday school teacher, the poet exhibits his ardent hope for the life-here-after (eschatological expectation) : 10. “**That is what I'm craving for every day**”. (NB: Due to financial constraints, the researcher could not conduct personal

interviews with the target poets).

b. “Tinhenha ti lan’wela makumu”

1. *Varhangeri va mabyongo lamo basa tani hi gamboko,*
2. *Va fambisi va Israel va mphaphamo;*
3. *Tinhenha ta marito lamo hola*
4. *Tani hi phiriva endzeni ka khuwani,*
5. *Ni tindleve leti rhendzeleke nhloko hinkwayo.*

6. *Varhangeri lava swi kotaka ku porofita;*
7. *Ta swi kota ku porofita hambu mafu ya to vinyi.*
8. *Ti hela ti helela ntiyiso ni vutlhari bya tona.*
9. *Ti munyiwa ti munyeriwa vutivi bya tona.*
10. *Mawaku n’we tinhenha hi ku tswariwa.*
11. *Tiko ri sala ri ahlamise milomo.*
12. *Hinkwerhu hi sala hi khome hi xangulele xa vutomi.*
13. *Ti lan’wetela ti lan’wela makumu.*

14. *Namuntlha misava yi tele hi tinhloko ta tinxakanxaka.*
15. *Kasi varhangeri va te:*
16. **“Misava pfuleka hi nghena”.**
17. *Ti lan’wile tinghwazi leta swifiva leswo enta.*
18. *Leti saleke i tinhenha hi mavito;*
19. *I tinhenha to tinyuma,*
20. *Vukarhi bya tona ta ha lombisile,*
21. *Ti kutsiwile, ti lakatsiwile ni vuxungu byinene,*
22. *Byi khuluka ni mati ya ndlela.*
23. *Ti guriwe ni meno ya tona ya xiviri,*
24. *Leswaku ti nga tshuki ti luma ni siku ni rin’we.*
25. *Kutani ti nghenisiwile meno laya xilungu:*

26. *A ti lumi to nyakala kunene.*

In translation.

b. "The warriors loose patience forever"

1. Leaders with brains white as a show,
2. Alert leaders of Israel;
3. Heroes of warm words,
4. Like African beer in its initial stage in earthen ware pot,
5. And with ears all over the head.

6. Leaders with the gift of prophecy;
7. Who are able to foretell their own death.
8. They are exterminated 'cause of their truth and wisdom.
9. They are drained because of thier knowledge.
10. You are admired you natural heroes.
11. The land is left with its mouth opened.
12. We are all left with an anxiety of life.
13. They have lost patience forever.

14. Today the world is full of different heads.
15. Whereas the leaders have said:
16. **"Earth open up so that we can enter"**
17. The knowledgeable heroes have lost patience.
18. The ones left behind are just heroes by names;
19. They are shy heroes,
20. They have lent their bravery to others,
21. Their killer instinct has been wiped away completly,
22. And it flows with the path water.
23. Their genuine set of teeth has been removed,

24. So that they should not bite anymore.
25. Now they have been provided with a set of false teeth.
26. They do not bite but simply caress.

i. The subject matter of the poem

In this poem the poet sadly reflects on the late genuine leaders of yesteryears. His main concern is that their absence causes things not to go well especially politically. The docility and manipulability of the current political leaders strengthen his wish of possible resurrection of the late genuine leaders so that things may return to normality.

ii. The theme of the poem

THE INTEGRITY AND GENUINENESS OF THE LATE POLITICAL LEADERS ARE NOMORE FOUND IN CURRENT DOCILE AND MANIPULABLE POLITICAL LEADERS.

iii. Analysis

In the first stanza, the poet begins by highlighting the leaders' intelligence, exceptional leadership qualities, eloquence and sensibility. In the first line: "**Varhangeri va mabyongo lamo basa tani hi gamboko**" (Leaders with brains white as snow), the poet uses metaphor to great effect to accentuate that the leaders were people of high intelligence who could not be easily tricked by anybody. Their intelligence goes hand in hand with their exceptional leadership qualities. Their leadership is likened to the Israelite historical leaders like Moses¹ and Joshua¹ who led

¹ Apparently, the poet was comparing genuine political leaders like, for example, Chief Luthuli, Prof Z K Matthews, Dr Nelson Mandela, Mr Walter Sisulu etc, and homeland leaders of his day who were the direct opposite of the genuine leaders in terms of intelligence, leadership qualities etc.

Israel to a series of miraculous achievements: “**Vafambisi va Israel va mphaphamo**” (Alert leaders of Israel). Their exceptional eloquence is presented to the reader metaphorically; their speeches influenced their followers to do what they were expected to do just like “**African beer in its initial stage in earthen ware pot**”. 5. “**Ni tindleve leti rhendzeleke nhloko hinkwayo**” (And with ears all over the head) the poet intelligently uses hyperbole to accentuate the sensibility of the leaders (especially their capacity to listen) in matters concerning their followers’ social, psychological, material, educational and political affairs. The quality is sadly lacking in the current leaders who merely REACT to problems.

The second stanza endeavours to reflect on specific unique things those leaders could do, the ills done to them and the poor state of affairs after they had been exterminated. In line 6. “**Varhangeri lava swi kotaka ku porofita**”² (Leaders with a gift of prophecy), the poet qualifies their leadership as being characterised by foresight, sagacity and vision. Some could even foretell their own death so as to make suitable replacement in time. The ills done to these leaders are represented by the use of the auxiliary verb “**hela**” in line 8 and the verb stem “**munyiwa**” in line 9 to accentuate that those leaders were exterminated on account of *telling the truth*, unquestionable wisdom and vast knowledge. Before the ex-South African President of the minority government unbanned all political organisation in 1989, we had leaders both black and white who were detained, bannished, forced to exile, interrogated and killed by the said regime. To clearly demonstrate that the country is left poorer because of the extermination of such leaders the poet says:

11. *Tiko ri sala ri ahlamise milomo.*

The land is left with its mouth opened.

² It would appear that the poet was referring to prophecies of leaders like, for example, King Shaka who prophesied white domination before he dropped dead, Kgosi Sekhukhune who hesitated to accept christianity and subsequently persecuted christians in 1864-1865, Prophet Nsikana who prophesied about peace and protection through submission to the will of God.

12. *Hinkwerhu hi sala hi khome hi xangulele xa vutomi.*

We are all left with anxiety of life.

The poet concludes this stanza by using the art or poetic device of repetition in 13. "**Ti lan'wetela ti lan'wela makumu**". The subject concord "**ti**" stands for the ideal leaders, the verb stem "**lan'wetela**" means two things: doing things repeatedly and also doing things simultaneously. In the context of the poem it means those leaders were repeatedly and simultaneously removed from community. Among other terrible atrocities committed by the Nationalist regime was the mass shooting of blacks in the early sixties (e.g. Sharpsville massacre), mass detention of predominantly ANC and PAC leaders, mass shooting of black school pupils in 1976 and mysterious series of disappearance of black and white activists and the death in detention of many more (like Steve Bantu Biko). The second verb stem "**lan'wela makumu**" drives home the fact that they were no more to be found amongst the people.

The third and last stanza displays the poet's anger and violent attack on the puppet leaders (**probably homeland leaders**). This is the climax of the poem. What makes it more interesting is that the poet does not provide a resolution stanza as one would expect but prefers to finish up in an angry note. In line 14. "**Namuntlha misava yi tele hi tinhloko ta tinxaka-nxaka**" (Today the world is full of different heads), the poet uses the art of plurality. It means that the world is full of all kinds of human creatures, and it also means that there are many people today with diverse ideas but none of them possesses leadership qualities of the exterminated ideal leaders:

15. *Kasi varhangeri va te:*

Whereas the leaders have said:

16. *"Misava pfuleka hi nghena".*

"Earth open up so that we can enter"

17. *Ti lan'wile tinghwazi leta swifuva leswo enta.*

The knowledgeable heroes have lost patience.

He describes the puppet leaders as leaders who claim to be but not in the true sense of the word: “**Leti saleke i tinhenha hi mavito**” (The ones left behind are just heroes by name). The extent of their inability is contained in the Xitsonga derivative verb stem “**tinyuma**” in line 19 which simply means self acknowledgement of inefficiency. Though these leaders do not say publicly that they are inefficient, their conscience tells them that they are. To show that they are somebody’s stoogies, the poet uses strong verb stems that indicate actions done to somebody by a person who wants him to be reduced into an object. They are: “**lombisile**” (lent to), “**kutsiwile**” (sucked), “**lakatsiwile**” (licked), “**guriwile**” (plucked) and “**nghenisiwile**” (fitted with). The uselessness of these leaders is explained in sarcastic statements:

23. *Ti guriwile ni meno ya tona ya xiviri,*
Their genuine set of teeth has been removed,
24. *Leswaku ti nga tshuki ti luma ni siku ni rin’we.*
So that they should not bite anymore.
25. *Kutani ti nghenisiwile meno ya xilungu:*
Now they are provided with a set of false teeth:
26. *A ti lumi to nyakala kunene.*
They do not bite, but simply caress.

(See also Mbetse, 1990: 3-11).

3.3.4.3 “Emahosi ka yindlu ya n’wankumi”

1. *Emahosi ka yindlu ya n’wankumi,*
2. *Ku ni bakwanyana leri akeriweke nandza,*
3. *Vutomi bya yena byi beriwe ndzilekano,*
4. *U hanya byakwe a ri yexe,*
5. *Voko rakwe u ta ri vona ku suka engoleni ku fika emahosi.*
6. *U dya masalela, marha ni xikoko.*

7. *Vutomi byakwe byi pereteriwe engubyeni ya n'wini,*
8. *N'wini u ni mbyana, ximanga na huku,*
9. *Yena i mbyana ya vumbirhi,*
10. *U tidzunisa hi ntirho wakwe.*
11. *Hi masiku u hlengeleta a'chulula.*

12. *Timbita na mikombe swi tiva yena,*
13. *Swakudya i swa yena loko swa ha ri swimbisi,*
14. *Loko swi vupfile swi ni vini,*
15. *N'wini u rivele tintiho leti xekeleleke,*
16. *Meno yakwe ya fihla vukari bya mbilu.*

17. *Ku Khazamula u to twa hi maxaka yakwe,*
18. *Le mahosi u vitiwa "boyi".*
19. *Vumuna byakwe byi dumeriwile,*
20. *U hlawula marito loko a vulavula ni n'wini,*
21. *U titsongahata eka hinkwaswo,*
22. *Eka hinkwaswo u tivona nandzu.*

23. *Vutomi bya ku risiwa byi n'wi thurisile nawu,*
24. *U thurile nawu wa vumbhisa ni vuoswi,*
25. *Nsati wa xuma n'wankumi u ala no n'wi vona,*
26. *Vusweti byi n'wi hundzule ricece,*
27. *Swimunya swi n'wi rivata maxangu.*

28. *Byanyi bya rihlaza ni mirhi ya swiluva,*
29. *Swi bombisile muti hi vubombi bya nkorhoki,*
30. *Swi kombisa vuswikoti bya ntukulu wa Gaza,*
31. *U karhi ku vuyetela hi tintiho, ku tsakela ku vona n'wini a tshama a tsakile.*

32. *Namuntlha Khazamula u kwala kaya,*

33. *Mongo va xokorile ku sele xikangalafula,*
34. *Ku pfumaleka ni mbuti ya ririmi ra rihlaza,*
35. *Misava ni tilo swi kumile ngoti yo kokelana,*
36. *Tinhlolo ti ba valoyi.*

37. *Lava buku va n'wi tiyisa nhlana,*
38. *Va n'wi byela timhaka ta Abraham,*
39. *Va n'wi byela ta Lazaro ni xifumi,*
40. *Hina hi yimela ntsena ku rila ka nsimbhi,*
41. *Hi ta vungavunga hi ya hisa.*

In translation.

a. "At the back-yard of a rich man"

1. At the back-yard of a rich man,
2. There is a small cave built for a servant,
3. His life has been kept within boundries,
4. He lives by himself alone,
5. His hand is seen from the entrance to the back door.

6. He eats the left-overs, saliva and crust.
7. His life is pinned in his master's garment,
8. His master has a dog, a cat and a chicken,
9. He is his master's second dog,
10. He is proud of his servant's service.
11. Every day he collects and stores.

12. Pots and spoons know him,
13. Food is his before it's cooked
14. When cooked it belongs to the master,

15. The master has forgotten the hands that prepared,
16. His teeth hide his anger.

17. That he is a Khazamula you only hear him called by his relatives,
18. At his place of employment he is called “**boy**”
19. His manhood has been castrated,
20. He chooses non-offensive words when addressing his master,
21. He excercises humility in all,
22. In everything he finds himself guilty.

23. Isolation life has caused him to break the law,
24. The law of immorality and adultery,
25. His master does not allow his legal wife to pay him a visit,
26. Poverty has turned him into an infant,
27. Inticing things make him forget his troubles.

28. The green grass and green flower leaves,
29. Beautify the house through the servant’s efforts,
30. They display the ability of the descendand of Gaza,
31. He utilises his fingers to make his master happy.

32. Today Khazamula is at home,
33. His strength has been consumed, what is left is a walking corpse,
34. He has absolutely nothing,
35. He is between life and death,
36. The divining bones point at the witches

37. Priests give him words of encouragement,
38. They tell him about Abraham,
39. They tell him about Lazarus and the rich man,
40. We are just waiting for the bell to ring,

41. So that we can collect and throw into the fire.

i. The subject matter of the poem

This poem reflects on a rich master who exploits his loyal servant who tries by all means to deliver to the best of his ability but surprising enough, his master does not appreciate his honest service. He deprives him of his social, marital, economic and spiritual freedom by restricting his movements. When this servant reaches his retirement age, he dumps him at his place of birth with no retirement package at all, ultimately he dies as a donkey.

ii. The theme of the poem

EXPLOITATION ENRICHES THE ELITE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE POOR
DEFENSELESS WORKING CLASS.

iii. Analysis

Before we endeavour to delve into analysis, it is imperative to give a brief specific biographical background of this poem so that we can experience maximum appreciation of Magaisa's art. Rikhotso (1989: 39) informs that:

From 1971-1972 Magaisa worked as a gardener in Johannesburg. While working there he met with a Mr Z Zulberg, a lawyer by profession who encouraged him to go back to school to further his studies.

His experience as a gardener in Johannesburg made him realise how the elite exploited and enriched themselves at the expense of the poor defenseless working class. You had to be a black gardener in the seventies like the poet to understand

what to be a gardener really meant. This poem is a true reflection of the poet's experience as a gardener and a South African citizen from a disadvantaged background.

In the first stanza, the poet sketches the scene where this servant stays and the horrible restrictive laws he has to abide by. He kicks off by indicating that the servant does not stay at his master's house but at the back-yard, probably at a shack which the poet correctly implies in: 2. "**Ku ni bakwanyana leri akeriweke nandza**" (There is a small cave built for a servant).

To show that this servant does not enjoy social mobility even after working hours, the poet uses the plural noun boundaries in: "**Vutomi bya yena byi beriwe ndzilekano**" (His life has been kept within boundaries). In those years (i.e. the seventies) the Africans' social mobility was restricted by the pass laws as well as the permit laws popularly known as "**phomende**". As a result of these restrictions, this poor servant is forced to violate the social law (i.e. the influx control laws). A person is a social being he cannot live in isolation, hence the poet writes: "**U hanya byakwe a ri yexe**" (He lives by himself alone).

In line 5. "**Voko rakwe u ta ri vona ku suka engoleni ku fika emahosi**" (His hand is seen from the entrance to the back door), the poet purposely uses a synecdoche to accentuate that the servant's hard work can be realised from the gate, the tidiness of the garden and up to the cleanliness of his master's house.

To highlight that the servant never receives fresh and first grade food, the poet uses a hyperbolic statement in: "**U dya masalela, marha ni xikoko**" (He eats the left-over, saliva and crust). This state of affairs reduces the servant into a less-than-person, a second grade animal:

8. *N'wini u ni mbyana, ximanga na huku,*
His master has a dog, a cat and a chicken,

9. *Yena i mbyana ya vumbirhi,*
He is his master's second dog,

What annoys the poet the most is the fact that the master heaps praises unto himself and never gives it where it is due. It does not matter how delicious the food might have been cooked, the servant is never thanked. If anything at all, he might be given some. About this inhumanity of man to man the poet says:

12. *Timbita na mikombe swi tiva yena,*
Pots and spoons know him,
13. *Swakudya i swa yena loko swa ha ri swimbisi,*
Food is his before it's cooked,
14. *Loko swi vupfile swi ni vini,*
When cooked it belongs to the master,
15. *N'wini u rivele tintiho leti xekeleleke,*
The master has forgotten the fingers that prepared,
16. *Meno yakwe ya fihla vukari bya mbilu.*
His teeth hide his anger.

During the poet's term of service as a gardener in Johannesburg in the seventies, most of the white elite, especially the Afrikaners had a tendency of calling their workers with all sorts of insulting, offensive and embarrassing names like: "boy", "kaffir", "dog", "girl" and "maid" etc. The poet's cruel master does not even bother to know his name, only his relatives know it and call him by it:

17. *Ku Khazamula u to twa hi maxaka yakwe,*
That he is a Khazamula you only hear him called by his
relatives,
18. *Le mahosi u vitiwa "boyi"*
At his place of employment he is called "boy".

The implication of calling a man like Khazamula a “**boy**” is that he is being deprived his right of being treated with dignity, his social right to associate with his people, his right to stay together with his own wife and family. What else could he be save a “**boy**”. The poet further says about his condition: 19. “**Vununa byakwe byi dumeriwile**” (His manhood has been castrated”. “**Castration**” is a symbol of rendering this servant dependent, manipulable, and controllable. The results of such cruel and inhuman conditioning is that the “**boy**” now often compromises in all respects, always apologetic and always blames himself under all circumstances:

20. *U hlawula marito loko a vulavula ni n'wini.*
He chooses non-offensive words when addressing his master.
21. *U titsongahata eka hinkwaswo,*
He exercises humility in all,
22. *Eka hinkwaswo u tivona nandzu.*
In everything he finds himself guilty.

The defunct Influx Control Laws and the Group Area Act have caused thousands of black families to be disorganized. The “**boy's**” family was no exception:

23. *Vutomi bya ku risiwa byi n'wi thurisile nawu,*
Isolation life has caused him to break the law,
24. *U thurile nawu wa vumbhisa ni vuoswi,*
The law of immorality and adultery,

His boss lives with his family, probably has one or two senior degrees in the field of Sociology, and every Sunday he goes to church to listen to the Priest preaching a sermon on the importance of an organized family as recorded in Ephesians 5:31. Contrary to all this, he goes on to break the moral law: line 25. “**Nsati wa xuma n'wankumi u ala no n'wi vona**”, (His master does not allow his legal wife to pay him a visit).

The sixth stanza suggests that the servant serves both as a gardener and a house-keeper. Apparently he is not remunerated for both tasks. His is to endeavour to please his hard to please boss. 31. “**U karhi ku vuyetela hi tintiho, ku tsakela ku vona n’wini a tshama a tsakile**” (He utilises his fingers to make his master happy).

The seventh stanza exhibits the poet’s unique gift. In order to break the monotony, he changes the scene completely. Very few poets employ Magaisa’s technique. He takes us out of the elite environment into the disadvantaged environment characterized by among other things poverty, diseases and bone divination. The poet sketches this scene in this manner:

32. *Namuntlha Khazamula u kwala kaya,*
Today Khazamula is at home,
33. *Mongo va xokorile ku sele xikangalafula,*
His strength has been consumed, what is left is a walking corpse,
34. *Ku pfumaleka ni mbuti ya ririmi ra rihlaza,*
He has absolutely nothing,
35. *Misava ni tilo swi kumile ngoti yo kokelana,*
He is between life and death,
36. *Tinhlole ti ba valoyi.*
The divining bones point at the witches.

In line 35. “**Misava ni tilo swi kume ngoti yo kokelana**”, Magaisa personifies a state of being between life and death. Heaven and earth are compared to two equally strong persons engaged in a tug-of-war like the Scots. This implies that Khazamula has been dumped at his rural home with absolutely no means of survival. (i.e. no pension benefit worth talking about). Death and life are tugging at him with equal force but death is sure to win in the end.

In the last stanza, Magaisa changes from a poet per se to a critic; perhaps a bitter one

at that. He takes a swipe at the Christian preacher who, while in earthly comfort himself, preaches the nobility of earthly deprivation with an odd chance of heavenly wealth and bliss. Delight in your earthly misery because this is a passport to happiness beyond the grave - everlasting happiness: just like the miserable Lazarus who ended-up on the lap of Abraham.

38. *Va n'wi byela timhaka ta Abraham,*

They tell him about Abraham,

39. *Va n'wi byela timhaka ta Lazaro ni xifumi,*

They tell him about Lazarus and the rich man,

Just like the poor Lazarus who lived on crusts and left-overs and ultimately died without a proper funeral service, Khazamula is likewise encouraged to follow the example of Lazarus, Magaisa is in fact challenging the subscribers to the Christian faith to be more realistic and honest in their sermons. They should avoid sermons which are biased. They should use the holistic approach in order to avoid over-emphasizing one aspect at the expense of the others.

In line 36. "**Tinhlolo ti ba valoyi**", the poet balances his attack on the christian preacher by attacking traditional African diviners who always point at the witches through their diving bones when misfortune strikes. They fail to point at the culprit (the ex-boss) who exploited Khazamula when he was still energetic; and at his retirement age he (i.e. the ex-boss) dumped him at his home without any means of living.

In conclusion, the poet sees no other resolution save waiting for Khazamula's death and burial. He is old, weak, ill, poor, and without a family of his own. What is left is to say:

40. *Hina hi yimerile ntsena ku rila ka nsimbhi,*

We are just waiting for the bell to ring,

41. *Hi ta vungavunga hi ya hisa.*
So that we can collect and throw into the fire.

b. “Xirilo xa n’wana wa Afrika”

1. *Vutivi byi ndzi chela rivengo.*
2. *Rivengo leri pfindlusaka ntengo wa timbilu,*
3. *Onge ndzi nga sombholota xikhomankarhi,*
4. *Ndzi vumbuludza tihora ta malembe,*
5. *Ndzi vuyisela dyambu exithukwini xa rona,*
6. *Ndzi omisa ni malwandle lama vangeke vatluti,*
7. *Kumbe ndzi pfluxa Chaka, Muhlava tihosi,*
8. *Ndzi hingakanya Afrika na Yuropa hi nqhoko,*
9. *Onge ndzi nga vuyetela hinkwaswo swirhengele,*
10. *Ndzi vumba Afrika lontshwa wa ntima,*
11. *Ndzi rhidela makhumbi ya yena hi xirhidelo xa nsimbhi,*
12. *Ndzi phomela matshaku yakwe hi phomo ya ntima,*
13. *Ina*
14. *Onge ndzi nga sombholota voko leri fambisaka nkarhi,*
15. *Ndzi vanga Edeni lonene wo pfumala xikhutu,*
16. *Ndzi pfukula tihosi va-Chaka, Nghunghunyana Muzila.*

In translation:

b. “The cry of the child of Africa”

1. Knowledge has injected hatred in me,
2. Hatred that disturbs peace of hearts,
3. As if I could change the clock,
4. Roll the hours of the years,
5. Reverse the sun to its rightful place,

6. And dry up the oceans that brought about sailors,
7. Or resurrect Shaka, Muhlava the kings,
8. And dermacate Africa and Europe with a huge beam,
9. As if I could join together all the potsherd,
10. And build up a black New Africa,
11. And smear its walls with iron paint,
12. And seal its floor with a black seal,
13. Yea
14. As if I could turn the clock anti-clock-wise,
15. And produce a new blameless Eden,
16. And dig up Kings Shaka, Nghunghunyana Muzila.

i. The subject matter of the poem

The poet uses the imagery of an African child to protest the invasion of Africa by the colonialists who brought about unsolicited changes that brought misery to the indigenous people of Africa. His desire is to see ALL the colonialists back to Europe and the Africans remaining under the leadership of their Kings such as Shaka, Nghunghunyana, Muzila and Muhlava.

ii. The theme of the poem

COLONIALISM HAS BROUGHT ABOUT TREMENDOUS HARDSHIP TO THE BLACK AFRICANS.

iii. Analysis

In the first two lines, the poet sees Western-style education as the source of his misery. His education has made it possible for him to know History - to know about the scramble for Africa when people of caucasian origin invaded Africa and colonised her for their own selfish ends. This knowledge embitters him and makes

it impossible for him to have peace of mind. And so he laments:

1. *Vutomi byi ndzi chele rivengo.*
Knowledge has injected hatred in me,
2. *Rivengo leri pfindlusaka ntengo wa timbilu,*
Hatred that disturbs peace of hearts,

From the third line to the ninth line, the poet agonises on his inability to turn back the clock of time, to reverse history, to re-write it in a different guise, to make it just but he knows that this is impossible in human terms. YOU CANNOT reverse time, cause planet earth to revolve anticlockwise, dry up the oceans, resurrect the dead kings and demarcate Europe and Africa with a huge beam. Even optimism gone wild can contemplate such obvious impossibility in terms of a possibility. Impossible as it might be, it is nonetheless a cry of the son of the soil. This is what caused many young Africans to go into self-imposed exile to overseas countries to devise some means of restoring Africa to its rightful owners.

This is what caused many young Africans to sacrifice their lives within and outside Africa. Some of their graves are not known.

There is a strong tone of political ideology in the 10th line through the 13th. The tone is that of *Africanism* versus *Chartism*. He wants to build up his Africa on black colour only. By building on “**black colour**” implies an Africa consisting of black indigenous people only. He does not have the term “**multiracialism**” in his dictionary. Colonists must go back to Europe. Hence the poet says:

10. *Ndzi vumba Africa lontshwa wa ntima.*
And build up a new black Africa,
11. *Ndzi rhidela makhumbi ya yena hi xirhidelo xa nsimbi,*
And smear its walls with iron paint,
12. *Ndzi phomela matshaku yakwe hi phomo ya ntima,*

And seal its floor with a black seal,

13. *Ina*

Yes

The poet repeats the resurrection of his ideal kings twice in line seven and line sixteen as a symbol of Africanism. They are all late kings of integrity in their own right. Their victory feats against all odds cannot be matched. They are a symbol of ONLY black majority rule verses other forms of governance which the poet is oppose to:

7. *Kumbe ndzi pfluxa Chaka, Muhlava tihosi.*

Or resurrect Shaka, Muhlava the kings,

16. *Ndzi pfukula tihosi va-Chaka, Nghunghunyana Muzila.*

And dig up kings Shaka, Nghunghunyana Muzila.

3.4 SUMMARY

This study has endeavoured to provide an example of a format of literary criticism in Xitsonga in general in a manner appropriate for classroom presentation at the level of standard 8, 9 and 10. In order to activate maximum appreciation for appraisal, the researcher has provided some background comments on the titles of the three anthologies. The titles of the three anthologies strike the reader's curiosity and in the process suggest what could be expected inside. There is a relationship between the titles of the three anthologies and the contents (the poems). It has been made clear that it is not a rule that there be a relationship between title and contents. It all depends on the poet's style.

Some light has been shed on the category under which the anthologies fall. The three anthologies have distinguished themselves as falling under the category of modern poetry in the sense that they are highly individual, characterised by dramatic and lyric qualities, they use complex private symbols, they express the opinion of the poets, they express their hearts and minds out and also they philosophize on what goes on around the poets.

In the context of a sample of poems analysed under 3.3.3, biographical accounts of the poets serve as an essential asset in shedding light on the thoughts and poetic style of the three poets. By and large, the poets' experiential background played a role in the authorship of the poems. It is not a rule that biographical account be studied before attempting critique, but the researcher recommends it. It also informs us that on the average, the three poets capped their junior degrees within the country. This qualifies them to be well vested with what goes on politically in the country which is a recipe for quality and relevant poetry authorship.

Attempts have been made to provide two types of critique methodology which find their backing from the standard 8, 9 and 10 syllabi as provided by the outgoing Department of Education and Training. Between the two, the researcher recommends the 1x3 critique methodology based on the text in question.

The themes that the three poets address have been given in an over view manner in order to highlight the poets' interest. It has been discovered that they devote much of their efforts on philosophical themes and comparatively less on politically oriented ones. This could be attributed to the restrictive laws of the Regime of the day and the market that shied away from any writing that was politically challenging in terms of message and tone.

A sample of a total of six poems that best typify the poets has been analysed with the hope of benefitting the high school pupils (i.e. standard 8, 9 and 10 pupils). The critique has followed a 1x3 formula which is generally used in high schools and in some South African universities. The formula seeks to provide the subject matter of each poem, the theme and analysis of each poem. Most of the secondary school pupils even some university students find it difficult to understand certain poems which in the process renders critique an impossible exercise. Pupils and students should be encouraged to read widely. Modern poetry demands knowledge of one's political, educational, social, economical and spiritual background. Unlike transitional poetry, non-existent or vague knowledge of a variety of subjects could make modern poetry analysis a task of the chosen few.

CHAPTER 4: SAMPLING OF AND COMMENT ON RESEARCH DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims at:

- 4.1.1 describing the specific type of research instruments the researcher used for data elicitation and how they were administered;
- 4.1.2 commenting on possible limitations to this study and measures of control used to minimise the limitations to an acceptable scientific level,
- 4.1.3 describing the target groups and the environment both inside and outside the sample schools.

4.2 DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS AND HOW THEY WERE ADMINISTERED

Research data were sampled by means of a questionnaire and through structured interviews. The questionnaire was administered personally to a sample group of learners and teachers as well as to the standard 10 Chief Examiner in Xitsonga literature and a Subject Adviser in that language. Structured interviews with these target groups were conducted as adjuncts to the questionnaire. A back-up research instruments is always useful especially where the researcher seeks detail as well as thoroughness.

4.2.1 Administration of the Questionnaire

The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to:

- A sample of 108 learner-respondents from two semi-urban, two rural and

two typically-rural schools. In each target standard (i.e. standard 8, 9 and 10) of each school, three male and three female pupil-respondents were required to complete the questionnaire under the strict supervision of the researcher. This was done in order to ensure reliability of data sampled.

- A sample of 18 teachers of Xitsonga poetry were selected from two semi-urban, two rural and two typically-rural schools and were required to complete the questionnaire as individuals for the same above reason.
- The Matric Chief External Examiner as well as the Subject Adviser were required to complete the questionnaire and return it as urgently as it was administratively possible. This research option was resorted to largely for logistical reasons since it was hardly possible or desirable to arrange a session with these Senior Officers especially to fill-in a questionnaire.

The researcher preferred to administer the bulk of the questionnaire personally for the following reasons:

- a. It rendered maximum assurance to the researcher that all the questionnaires administered were properly completed and returned to him.
- b. All the problems relating to the filling-in of the questionnaire could be cleared-up quickly without influencing the respondent's responses in anyway.
- c. Since authentic response was the researcher's major aim, all the respondents filled in the questionnaire as individuals rather than by consulting with colleagues in the case of teacher-respondents and education administrators, and with their classmates in the case of pupil-respondents.
- d. It was important for the researcher to explain to the target groups the value

of the research to education in general and to the teaching of Xitsonga literary criticism in particular.

4.2.2 How oral interviews were conducted

All the pupil- and teacher-interviewees were interviewed one at a time. The rest waited outside the library for their turn to come. Due to logistical problems, both the Education Administrators (i.e. Subject Adviser and Matric Chief Examiner) could not be interviewed personally but each of them was served with a set of structured interview copies to complete and return them to the researcher as soon as it was administratively possible for them.

4.2.3 Possible limitations to the sampling of data and measures adopted to control them

Although the researcher exercised extreme care to maintain the highest possible level of objectivity and authenticity in the administration of the questionnaires and structured interviews, possible limitations must be conceded. The following are such possibilities:

- a. In the process of explaining what might not have been clear enough, especially to the pupil- and teacher-respondents, the researcher could have unwittingly influenced responses. But great care was taken to avoid this possible limitation by focusing on specific problems only without suggesting any definite answer(s).
- b. Probably some of the respondents filled-in responses they believed would please the researcher or place them in a favourable light. But this possible limitation should have been minimized by two things, namely: the fact that the respondents were not expected to write their names on the questionnaire and by the researcher's expressed instruction that responses

must be **frank** and **honest** in order to be objectively **authentic** and reliable from a research point of view.

- c. Probably some of the respondents especially the pupil- and teacher-respondents might have felt that the time allowed for them to fill-in the questionnaire was too short or too long depending on the individual. Since in all the six schools the researcher administered the questionnaire there was no specific complaint about time on the part of the respondents, the researcher is satisfied that this possible limitation was reduced to a minimum, low enough not to affect the reliability of the research results.
- d. Possibly, some respondents might have thought that supplying genuine answers to the questionnaire especially to questions of “**uncertain**” might make the researcher under-rate them. Supplying the required information especially by teacher- and administrator-respondents might also have been seen as a way of assisting the researcher to be better qualified than the respondents themselves. But, once again, these possible limitations in data collection must have been adequately countered by the researcher’s assurance to the respondents that the primary aim of the research is to improve the contents, techniques and methodology of teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry at senior secondary school level. The researcher impressed it upon the respondents that it was the responsibility of all stake-holders, namely; pupils, teachers, education administrators and the researcher to improve this important aspect of education in general and language education in particular.
- e. Perhaps some respondents might have regarded the answering of the questionnaire an unnecessary assignment that had little or nothing to do with their work areas. Answering it faithfully might, therefore, have been seen as unnecessary. But the researcher’s brief lecture on the importance of the project and his assurance to them that the information as well as the

data provided would most certainly go a long way in contributing to the reshaping and restructuring of our teacher education (training) language methodology programme must have gone a long way towards off-setting this possible limitation.

- f. Since the project involved content and methodology in a classroom situation, and also requiring the three types of stake-holders, namely, the pupils, the teachers and the education administrators to provide genuine and to a large extent sensitive responses, some might well have thought the researcher to be some kind of fault-finder in the case of pupil-respondents, and exposer of their possible inefficiency/incompetency in the case of the teacher- and education administrator-respondents. But, again these possible limitations must have been substantially neutralised by the pre-completion of questionnaire - briefing on the primary aim of the project in the case of pupil- and teacher-respondents, and by the fact that the education officials themselves were not altogether happy with their teacher- and pupil-performances in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry both provincially and nationally (see Subject Adviser questionnaire and Chief Examiner questionnaire).

4.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE TARGET GROUPS

This study identified three categories of research target groups for purpose of data-collection, namely; learners, teachers and education administrators. A sample of 18 teachers and 108 learners from semi-urban, rural and typically-rural schools in Mhala Region of Mpumalanga Province were identified for data collection. Also two sets of questionnaire were administered on two education administrators in that Province. To supplement questionnaire data, structured interviews were also conducted to a sample of 36 pupils and a sample of 18 teachers in the semi-urban, rural and typically-rural schools in the target research areas. In addition, two sets of structured interviews were also conducted with the two education administrators cited above.

4.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE TARGET SCHOOLS

The researcher selected three girls and three boys in each standard randomly. He first combined all the pupils in each standard in the case for example, standard 8 a, b, c, and d, and chose three girls and three boys. No class-teacher's suggestion was entertained in the selection. The researcher satisfied himself that the selection inside the schools was done randomly by himself alone in order to render the data authentic and reliable from an empirical research point of view.

In all the six schools, the researcher was allowed to use the school libraries to administer his research instruments. The pupil respondents were spread well enough not to influence one another in the process of the completion of the questionnaire. The researcher used the same procedure in administering the teacher questionnaire. In the case of the structured oral interviews, the interviewees were interviewed one at a time. The rest waited outside the library for their turn to come. This applied to both target groups (i.e. pupils and teachers).

All the six target schools are situated approximately forty kilometres from the Kruger National Park. Although Mpumalanga is a largely rural Province, one third of the schools selected qualifies to be termed semi-urban in that the areas where they are situated are highly populated by middle class citizens. The second third (i.e. $\frac{1}{3}$) of the schools selected are rural in nature in the sense that they are situated in areas highly populated by largely lower class worker-citizenry and the last third ($\frac{1}{3}$) of the schools are typically-rural in nature in that the areas in which they are situated are populated by the very low class citizens the majority of whom are unemployed, often single parents and peasantry in character.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter endeavoured to describe the specific type of research instruments the researcher used for data elicitation, namely, the questionnaire and structured oral interview; the target groups and the environment inside and outside the target schools. It also gave an account of how the questionnaires were administered as well as how the structured oral interviews were carried out on all the target groups. Some comments on possible limitations and measures of control were also made. In chapter 5 below, detailed analyses, interpretation and some comments on the research data gathered by means of the questionnaire and structured oral interviews are carried out.

CHAPTER 5 : ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH DATA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is three-fold, namely; the analysis, interpretation and comment on both questionnaire- and interview-data already briefly outlined in chapter 4, on the teaching of literary criticism in Xitsonga poetry to secondary school learners in Mhala, Region of Mpumalanga Province. The data were sampled from 18 teachers and 108 learners from two semi-urban, two rural and two typically-rural schools. The pupil-respondents in the semi-urban, rural and typically-rural schools consisted of 9 males and 9 females in each school. On the other hand, the teacher respondents in semi-urban, rural and typically-rural schools were sampled not according to gender but according to the standard in which they taught. The sample consisted of six respondents in each category of areas. Also, two sets of questionnaire were administered to two Education Administrators in the target research area.

To supplement the questionnaire data, interviews were conducted with thirty six pupils in two semi-urban, two rural and two typically-rural schools. In each class, one boy and one girl were personally interviewed by the researcher (interviewer). In like manner, eighteen teacher respondents were interviewed in two semi-urban, two rural and two typically-rural schools in the Region. In each school, three Xitsonga teachers were interviewed accordingly. And lastly, interviews were also conducted with two Education Administrators who were directly involved in Xitsonga literature in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular.

A. PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE

5.2 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Analysis and interpretation of pupil questionnaire yielded the following research findings collated largely on item-by-item format of the questionnaire:

ITEM 1: Do you think the prescription of poetry for the senior secondary school learners is necessary?

TABLE 1 : INDICATION OF THE NECESSITY FOR THE PRESCRIPTION OF XITSONGA POETRY FROM STANDARD 8 TO 10

Area and Total Number of respondents	Gender of respondents	Responses			TOTAL
		Yes	No	Uncertain	
SEMI-URBAN (36)	Males	90%	5%	5%	100%
	Females	90%	-	10%	100%
RURAL (36)	Males	85%	15%	-	100%
	Females	95%	-	5%	100%
TYPICALLY-RURAL (36)	Males	95%	-	5%	100%
	Females	90%	-	10%	100%
TOTAL = 108		90%	4%	6%	100%

5.2.1 Analysis of TABLE 1

According to this TABLE, 90% of both the male and the female respondents in the semi-urban areas favoured the prescription of Xitsonga poetry for the senior secondary school learners as compared to only 5% of the male respondents who were not in favour. Further, 5% of the male respondents and 10% of the female

respondents respectively in the same areas were uncertain.

In the rural areas, however, the TABLE points a slightly different picture to that of the semi-urban areas. Of the total male respondents, 85% were in favour of the prescription of poetry. This is lower by 5% as compared to their semi-urban male counter-parts. Of the total female respondents, 95% felt that poetry should be prescribed. This is higher by 5% compared to the female respondents in the semi-urban areas.

In the typically rural areas, the TABLE depicts a slight increase of the male positive responses as compared to the female positive ones in the same areas. Of the total male respondents, 95% were in favour of the prescription of poetry. Of the total female respondents, 90% were in favour of the prescription of Xitsonga poetry. This is lower by 5% as compared to the male respondents in the same areas.

Further, only 5% of the male respondents and 10% of the female respondents in the same areas were uncertain.

The overall picture suggested by this TABLE is that 90% of all respondents across the three target areas were in favour of the prescription of Xitsonga poetry at senior secondary school level. Only 4% were not in favour while 6% were uncertain.

5.2.2 Interpretation of TABLE 1

According to this TABLE, there is a definite tendency of pupils in the three target areas to adopt a positive attitude towards the inclusion of poetry in the Xitsonga syllabus for the senior secondary school. This attitude seems to suggest that the majority of the respondents acknowledge the fact that poetry is an aesthetic voice of a nation and therefore should form part and parcel of their education. A

syllabus that excludes aesthetic values from its education empoverishes itself spiritually and may well end-up with young citizens who cannot appreciate things beautiful in nature and art. Such a citizenry may, for example, watch its environment decay into lost beauty since they would be lacking spiritual values to drive it to beautify it.

However, the minority respondents of about 10% that adopt a negative attitude towards the inclusion of poetry in the Xitsonga syllabus for the senior secondary school are a cause for concern. We should not lose sight of the fact that these are final secondary school pupils. Perhaps this implies that their pre-primary, primary and junior secondary school poetry lessons had been at best an unpleasant learning experience or at worst totally irrelevant to their life-needs. The subsequent research data, i.e. TABLE 2 attempts to elucidate the matter further. It will be particularly interesting to note the responses relating to the reasons why the respondents felt poetry should not be prescribed. These and other comments follow in the next TABLE based on item two of the pupil questionnaire.

ITEM 2: Why should poetry not be prescribed? Please tick in the relevant box

Data analysis on which TABLE 2, below is based was collected, collated and consolidated as part of an initial survey of the target research areas. The data was reduced to eleven broad attitudes or feelings about possible reasons why poetry should not be prescribed as part of the Xitsonga secondary school syllabus. Respondents were required to tick one or more of the eleven reasons only if they felt poetry should not be included in the Xitsonga secondary school syllabus or were uncertain about the need for its inclusion.

Those who were **for the inclusion** of poetry in the Xitsonga syllabus were **not requested** to respond to this questionnaire item. The totals of the research sample are reflected at the top of the TABLE for the sake of completeness of data. **Gaps indicate no responses.**

TABLE 2: INDICATION OF POSSIBLE REASONS WHY POETRY SHOULD NOT BE PRESCRIBED

	SEMI-URBAN AREAS 36		RURAL AREAS 36		TYPICALLY-RURAL AREAS 36	
	Males 18	Females 18	Males 18	Females 18	Males 18	Females 18
1. Poetry is too difficult to be comprehended	5%	5%	5%			
2. Poetry is an unnecessary additional work for the pupils						
3. Poetry is irrelevant to the pedagogical needs of the pupils						
4. Poetry is out of tune with modern life						
5. There are more important sections of the Xitsonga syllabus to be learnt than poetry						
6. Poetry is boring	5%					
7. Pupils find it difficult to answer questions on poetry in tests and examinations		5%		5%		
8. Pupils dislike it						
9. Only those who are born poets should learn it						
10. All of the above			5%		5%	5%
11. No reason(s) advanced			5%			5%

5.2.3 Analysis of TABLE 2

This TABLE shows that only 5% of the male and 5% of the female respondents in the semi-urban areas said that poetry should not be prescribed because **it is too difficult to be comprehended**. In the rural areas only 5% of the male respondents said it should not be prescribed for the same reason.

That **poetry is boring** is indicated by only 5% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas.

The TABLE also shows that in the semi-urban areas again, only 5% of the female respondents said that pupils find it difficult to answer questions on poetry in tests and examinations and the same percentage of the female respondents in the rural areas felt the same way.

That poetry is too difficult to be comprehended, is an unnecessary additional work for the pupils, is irrelevant to the pedagogical needs of the pupils, is out of tune with modern life, there are more important sections of the Xitsonga syllabus to be learnt than poetry, is boring, pupils find it difficult to answer questions on poetry in tests and examinations, pupils dislike it and only those who are born poets should learn it was indicated by 5% of the male respondents in the rural areas, 5% of the male and 5% of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas. The respondents that advanced no reasons for their negative responses consisted 5% of the males in the rural areas and 5% of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas.

5.2.4 Interpretation of TABLE 2

TABLE 2 essentially attempts to explain why certain respondents in TABLE 1 above entered a negative attitude towards the inclusion of poetry in the Xitsonga standard 8-10 syllabuses. No provision was made in the questionnaire for

respondents to indicate their reasons one way or the other since it was felt that such an inclusion will not be useful at this early stage of questionnaire completion. (Inclusion of reasons for preference of Xitsonga poetry at this level of schooling is being pursued as a separate study area which, if possible, might be developed and published in article form).

It is clear from TABLE 2 that **only a few learners are averse to the prescription of poetry** in their Xitsonga secondary school syllabuses. There are a number of possible reasons why learners grow averse towards a curriculum, a subject within the curriculum or even part of a syllabus as is the case with poetry in the Xitsonga syllabuses. Reasons could range from sheer ignorance on the value of poetry in education, to a misunderstanding of how language syllabuses are designed for first language learners, to ineffective teaching-learning strategies on the part of the teacher. By definition, many learners could be classified as under-achievers in terms of response to poetry. Unfortunately some teachers tend to pay more attention to the above average-achievers and the average at the expense of the below average or under-achievers in a classroom situation. It is not uncommon for example to hear some of these misguided teachers say: *“if you people can make it to the next standard this year, cats can wear suits”*¹. **They forget that this group of learners need to be taught about the basics of poetry. To them poetry is a closed book. The key to unlock its door is partly in the teacher’s hand who unfortunately is often too busy focussing on the didactic needs of the average and above average learners to properly attend to the needs of the weaker, under-achieving learners.** No wonder they find poetry to be too difficult to be comprehended, as unnecessary additional work, as irrelevant to their pedagogical needs, as out of tune with modern life, as an unimportant section of Xitsonga syllabus, as boring, as difficult to answer questions on tests and examinations, as a dislikable genre and as a genre that can only be learnt by those who are born poets

¹ Personal experience of researcher as secondary school poetry teacher and university lecturer for the past eight years.

(Refer to TABLE 2 above).

Although the appreciation of the beautiful in nature and art is not easy to teach, it should nonetheless be brought to the attention of this group of learners that poetry is an expression of one's inspired feeling, thought or imagination in verse form. It is the language of the heart. It deals with emotions. It is a means by which man expresses his deepest feelings.

What the poet says in a quality piece of work is often implicit rather than explicit. Its implicitness can be realised by the artful use of, *inter alia*, figures of speech. Marivate (1984: 8) refers to the implicitness of poetry as **mental association**. About the latter (i.e. mental association) he further defines as:

The process of associating an object
suggested by a word with another object
already known (*loc. cit.*).

The next discussion below seeks to address the question of specific standard in the senior Secondary school level at which the pupil-respondents felt Xitsonga poetry should be taught.

ITEM 3: At what standard should poetry be prescribed? (i.e. standard 8, 9 or 10)

Please tick in relevant box.

95% of the entire sample i.e. semi-urban, rural and typically-rural areas felt that poetry should be taught at all senior secondary school levels as part of Xitsonga First language course. This is significant since it implies that despite whatever problems might occur in the actual teaching of poetry, the Vatsonga children, despite areas of residence, have a positive outlook towards this section of the Xitsonga literature syllabus. Positive attitude yields higher motivation and higher

motivation matrixes good achievement in language teaching and learning or for any aspect of the curriculum for that matter.

Item 4 below seeks to elicit specific data on the criteria the pupil respondents felt should be used in the selection of Xitsonga poetry anthology for the Senior Secondary School pupils.

ITEM 4: What criteria should be used in the selection of Xitsonga poetry anthology for the Senior Secondary School pupils? Rank 1-8 in order of importance.

TABLE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF LEARNERS ACCORDING TO CRITERIA OF SELECTING A POETRY ANTHOLOGY

	SEMI-URBAN AREAS		RURAL AREAS		TYPICALLY-RURAL AREAS	
	Males %	Females %	Males %	Females %	Males %	Females %
The selection should be enjoyable	30	40	45	47	45	49
The selection should include modern poetry	50	52	51	55	55	55
The selection should be within the pupils world of experience only	40	42	60	65	65	66
The selection should be of good quality	80	80	83	85	90	90
The length of the poem should be taken into account	100	100	100	100	100	100
The selection should widen the pupils' world of experience	100	100	100	100	100	100

The selection should mirror the Xitsonga cultural heritage	100	100	100	100	100	100
The selection should include poems that could be easily sung by the pupils	50	60	45	66	50	70

5.2.5 Analysis of TABLE 3

Scores comprising TABLE 3 were worked out *individually* out of the total of 18 males and 18 females for each of the three groups i.e. semi-urban areas, rural areas and typically-rural areas. The criteria suggested were arrived at on the basis of pre-research in and beyond the target group and ultimately selected for this research project. This seemed the best qualifiable research method to employ for the study.

According to TABLE 3, all the test subjects regardless of gender or environment, indicated that a Xitsonga poetry anthology should have poems whose *length suited the class*; that such poems should *widen the learners world of experience* and that the anthology as a whole should *reflect the cultural heritage of the Vatsonga*.

Between 80% - 95% of all the respondents felt that poetry anthologies should be *selected on the basis of quality*. It was not part of the questionnaire item to define what “**quality**” meant save that the best possible poems should be included in such an anthology. Effectively this would mean the poet should be one of standing (such as the three that have been selected for this research project), the reviewers who recommended the anthology for publication should be people of knowledge and integrity and the publishers should have satisfied themselves that the poems are in fact good.

Between 50% - 55% of the learner-respondents in the semi-urban, rural and

typically-rural areas were of the opinion that a good poetry anthology should include modern poetry.

This is understandable since many young South Africans are more comfortable with themes that occur within their life-world and also within their current life-experiences.

It is interesting to note that between 60 - 65% of learners in the rural and typically-rural areas as against slightly over 40% of the semi-urban learners opined that selection of poetry should be within the learners' life experience only. At the time of writing this report i.e. November - December 1996, the question of selecting literature material that is only within the World experience of the learner was beginning to become a contested area. The reason was that it is doubtful whether it is in the best interest of the African learner to be exposed only to what the learner knows or experiences. It seem more desirable to expose the learner to an ever-widening circle of experiences through literature.

Poetry should be an enjoyable experience; not a drudgery to be swotted. It was therefore somewhat, disturbing that the lowest entering of between 30% - 49% indicated that poetry to be selected at secondary school level should be enjoyable. Perhaps the fault is not entirely with the learners; perhaps it is the teachers' methodology that is to blame. Whatever the reason, teachers and learners must revisit both their attitude towards poetry and the manner in which poetry is taught.

Between 60 - 70% of the female respondents in all three environments felt that *poetry should be sung* as against between 45% - 50% of the male respondents. This seems to suggest that if song is used as part of literature teaching, girls will not only enjoy lessons more than the boys, but may also be more richly edified by such lessons.

5.2.6 Interpretation of TABLE 3

If the data reflected in TABLE 3 above could be generalised to the teaching of Xitsonga Poetry across the board, it would appear that Vatsonga learners would list criteria for the selection of poetry anthology as follows:

- Appropriate length of the poems; should mirror the culture of the learner; widen the experience of the learner
- Only should be within the pupils' world of experience
- Modern poetry is important,
- Poetry should be sung and
- Poetry should be enjoyed.

The next item, (i.e. ITEM 5 below) seeks to ascertain the specific poetry aspects the pupils find *easiest to understand and appreciate*.

ITEM 5: Which aspects of poetry do you find easiest to understand and appreciate? Rank 1-8 in order of preference.

TABLE 4: INDICATION OF POETRY ASPECTS PUPILS FIND EASIEST (AND MOST DIFFICULT) TO UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE

	SEMI-URBAN AREAS RESPONDENTS 36		RURAL AREAS RESPONDENTS 36		TYPICALLY-RURAL AREAS RESPONDENTS 36	
	MALES 18	FEMALES 18	MALES 18	FEMALES 18	MALES 18	FEMALES 18
1	Imagery Sounds Subject matter 39,57%	Imagery 12,51%	Imagery Subject matter 26,38%	Analysis 15,97%	Imagery Vocabulary and syntax 25%	Analysis 15,97%
2	Figurative language 12,51%	Analysis Background knowledge about the poet 19,44%	Figurative language Theme Vocabulary and syntax Analysis 47,20%	Imagery Theme 25%	Theme Background knowledge about the poet 23,60%	Theme 13,88%
3	Background knowledge about the poet 11,80%	Figurative language Sounds Subject matter 27,06%	Sounds 11,12%	Figurative language Sounds 23,60%	Figurative language Sounds Subject matter Analysis 44,44%	Imagery Figurative language Sounds 37,50%
4	Analysis 10,42%	Theme Vocabulary and syntax 16,66%	Background knowledge about the poet 10,42%	Subject matter Background knowledge about the poet 22,22%	Uncertain 6,96%	Subject matter 11,81%
5	Theme Vocabulary and syntax 19,44%	Uncertain 24,33%	Uncertain 4,88%	Vocabulary and syntax 8,34%	Vocabulary and syntax 9,73%	Vocabulary and syntax 9,73%

6	Uncertain 6,26%			Uncertain 4,87%	Background knowledge about the poet 9,03%
7					Uncertain 2,08%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

5.2.7 Analysis of TABLE 4

According to this TABLE, *imagery, sounds and subject matter are the poetry aspects equally best understood and appreciated*, 39,57% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas indicated as much. 12,51% of the female respondents in the same areas indicated that they understood and appreciated imagery best. 12,51% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas placed figurative language as second on the list, whilst 19,44% of the female respondents in the same areas placed analysis and background knowledge about the poet second on the list. 11,80% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas placed background knowledge about the poet as third on the list, as against 27,06 of the female respondents in the semi-urban areas who placed figurative language, sounds and subject matter as third on the list. 10,42% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas placed analysis as fourth on the list, while 16,66% of their female counter-parts placed theme and vocabulary and syntax fourth on the list. 19,44% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas placed theme and vocabulary and syntax fifth on the list. 6,26% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas were uncertain as compared to 24,33% of the female respondents in the same areas who were uncertain.

In the rural areas, 26,38% of the male respondents placed imagery and subject matter as the first aspects of poetry they understood and appreciated most as against 15,97% of their female counter-parts in the same areas who indicated analysis as first on the list. 47,20% of the male respondents in the rural areas placed figurative language, theme, analysis and vocabulary and syntax as second on the list compared to 25% of the female respondents who placed imagery and theme as second on the list in the same areas. 11,12% of the male respondents in the rural areas placed sounds as third on the list as opposed to 23,60% of the female respondents in the same areas who placed figurative language and sounds as third on the list. 10,42% of the male respondents in the rural areas placed background knowledge about the poet as fourth on the list as compared to 22,22%

of the female respondents in the same areas who placed subject matter and the background knowledge about the poet as fourth on the list. 8,34% of the female respondents in the rural areas placed vocabulary and syntax as fifth on the list. 4,88% of the male respondents in the rural areas were uncertain as well as 4,87% of the female respondents in the same areas.

In the typically-rural areas, 25% of the male respondents placed imagery and vocabulary and syntax as first on the list of aspects they best understood and appreciated as opposed to 15,97% of the female respondents in the same areas who placed analysis as first on the list. 23,60% of the male respondents in the typically-rural areas placed theme and background knowledge about the poet as second on the list as opposed to 13,88% of the female respondents in the same areas who placed theme as second on the list. 44,44% of the male respondents in the typically-rural areas placed figurative language, sounds, subjects matter and analysis as third on the list as compared to 37,50% of the female respondents in the same areas who placed imagery, figurative language and sounds as third on the list. 11,81% of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas placed subject matter as fourth on the list. 9,73% of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas placed vocabulary and syntax as fifth on the list and 9,03% of the female respondents in the same areas placed background knowledge about the poet as sixth on the list. 6,96% of the male respondents in the typically-rural areas were uncertain as compared to only 2,08% of the female respondents who were uncertain in the same areas.

5.2.8 Interpretation of TABLE 4

This TABLE reveals that 93,75% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas and 75,70% of the female respondents in the same areas opted for a vertical response in indicating the poetry aspects they understood and appreciated best. A tiny minority of 6,25% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas and 24,30% of the female respondents in the semi-urban areas opted for a non-

committal option. This questionnaire had a number of options for the respondents to choose from. Apart from the vertical option, one could have opted for the T, the apple or the ball and the horizontal options. In the light of the responses at hand, one can infer that *there is a general tendency of teaching and learning poetry aspects in selective terms as opposed to holistic terms.*

It appears that 39,57% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas fully understood and appreciated the use of the art of imagery in a poem - they derive pleasure in detecting how the poet creates images or pictures in their minds. They equally comprehend the art of creating rhythm and rhyme in a poem and they equally comprehend how one comes to know the subject matter of a poem - what the poem is all about, as opposed to 12,51% of the female respondents who understand and appreciate imagery more than any other poetry aspect.

Second on the list of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas who consist of 12,51% is figurative language. They seem to come to terms with the art of implied meaning rather than literal meaning in poetry. On the contrary, 19,44% of the female respondents in the semi-urban areas, indicated analysis and background knowledge about the poet second on the list. They seem to understand the important task of the learner as that of a literary critic in the making rather than one who parrots and regurgitates what the teacher presents. Further more, they seem to realize the importance of the poet's experiential background in fully exploiting the scientific determination of how the poet communicates his message to the reader.

11,80% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas indicated background knowledge about the poet third on the list. According to this research sample, it would appear that understanding the writer's background experience is more complex than understanding figurative language, imagery, sounds and subject matter. On the other hand, their female counter-parts who consisted of 27,06% ranked figurative language, sounds and subject matter third on the list. It would

appear that imagery, analysis and background knowledge about the poet are poetry aspects better understood by this research group as compared to their male counter-parts in the same areas.

The fact that 10,42% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas ranked analysis fourth on the list is not encouraging. Analysis should be the most exciting poetry aspect to deal with. Besides, one cannot be an analyst or critic without fully understanding this aspect. Almost 95% of the tests and examinations questions on poetry are on the ability of the pupil to apply analysis. On the other hand, their female counter-parts who consist of 16,66% ranked theme, vocabulary and syntax as the last aspects on the list. It would appear that more male respondents in the semi-urban areas find these aspects more difficult as compared to 16,66% of their female counter-parts in the same areas. As already explained in chapter 3 above, by theme is meant the determination of the poet's message in a statement or figurative language form. For example, in the Xitsonga novel *N'waninginingi Ma Ka Tindleve* by Thuketana F A, the theme could be in this idiomatic expression: "**KU YINGISA SWI TLULA MAGANDZELO**". In translation: "**OBEDIENCE IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICES**". Vocabulary and syntax should be understood against the background of the day-to-day use of the language as opposed to the writer's or poet's independent expression(s) and word order in a poem. For example, Masebenza, B J's poem "**Swihloni**" from the anthology *Chochela-mandleni* uses independent expressions and also violates syntactic rule in:

23. *Hi le Joni la':*
24. *Ka jika-va-jikile,*
25. *Gila-va-girile,*
26. *Hi le Joni la'.*

Instead of using simple and complex sentences in the above lines, he uses short and effective words and sentences. He also coins suitable compound nouns like

“**Ka jika-va-jikile**” (Where people do amazing things) to suit his independent style.

The fact that 24,33% of the female respondents in the semi-urban areas were uncertain as opposed to only 6,25% of their male counter-parts from the same areas is a worrying factor. The difference of 18,07% sends a loud warning bell to all the stake holders of language learning and methodology. Women are the custodians of a language. The fact that 24,33% of them in the said areas were uncertain about certain poetry aspects implies that there is something didactically wrong with them, or something wrong with the contents or something wrong with the teachers of poetry, or something wrong with the methodology applied in the teaching and learning of poetry or more precisely, Xitsonga poetry. The next TABLE (i.e. TABLE 5 below) will seek to provide some possibilities regarding these uncertainties.

(In the rural areas, 95% of the male respondents and 95% of the female respondents opted for a vertical option as compared to 93,75% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas and 75,70% of the female respondents in the same areas. There is an increase support of this option (i.e. the vertical option) by 1,25% of the male respondents and 19,30% of the female respondents in the rural areas).

Imagery appears to be the most understood poetry aspect in all the three main areas. It is also ranked joint first with subject matter by 26,38% of the male respondents in the rural areas. Their female counter-parts who consisted of 15,97% of the respondents ranked analysis first. It would appear that the female respondents found understanding how the poet succeeds in painting his/her overall picture (i.e. the poem's) comparatively easier. This could be an indicator that this research group would do better in literature in general and poetry in particular.

47,20% of the male respondents in the rural areas ranked figurative language,

theme, vocabulary and syntax and analysis second on the list. To them, the implied language, the message of the poem, the poet's independent expression and violation of word order and how the poet communicates his/her message are not as easy as mind images and what the poem is all about. This calls for more attention on the part of the stake holders in contents and methodology to apply their teaching techniques effectively to the benefit of this group (more of these techniques will be discussed under the subheadings; teaching aids, some techniques of introducing an interesting lesson and teaching methods). On the other hand, 25% of the female respondents in the same areas ranked imagery and the message of the poem second. Comparatively speaking therefore, for purposes of a group such as the one under research, more attention should be given to the male respondents than to the female ones.

It is interesting to note that both male and female respondents in the rural areas ranked sounds third on the list. The only difference is in percentage and equal grouping - the male respondents grouped sounds third alone whereas the female respondents grouped sounds and figurative language joint third on the list. The female respondents were more by 12,48% as compared to 11,12% of the male respondents in the same areas. The female respondents found implied language, rhyme and rhythm less understandable and appreciable as compared to their male counter-parts who only found rhythm and rhyme less understandable and appreciable. This implies that more attention should be given to the female respondents on these aspects. Just like the latter, both male and female respondents in the rural areas ranked background knowledge about the poet fourth on the list. The only difference is in percentage and a number of items in a rank. 10,42% of the male respondents ranked background knowledge about the poet as fourth whereas 22,22% of their female counter-parts ranked subject matter and background knowledge about the poet fourth on the list. The female respondents are more by 11,80% compared to their male counter-parts. It would appear that though all the two groups (i.e. males and female respondents) need help, more attention should be given to the female group for better performance. The issue of

the subject matter should be explained in simple and dramatic terms as done in chapter 3 above. Also, the issue of the background knowledge about the poet should be given more emphasis so that the pupils may appreciate some of the poems that need the poet's experiential background. For example, in Chapter 3, it would appear that Masebenza's unpleasant personal experience played a role in the genesis of his poem "**Rimenyo**" (See Chapter 3 above).

Last on the list of the female respondents who consisted of 8,33% was vocabulary and syntax. To this group, the poet's use of independent words and expressions and violation of word order appeared to be a problem. It would appear that more attention is given to analysis, imagery, theme, figurative language, sounds, subject matter and to a less extent background knowledge about the poet at the expense of this aspect by both teacher and pupil (i.e. vocabulary and syntax).

It is also interesting to note that both male and female respondents in the rural areas had almost equal percentages of 4,88% and 4,87% of the respondents respectively who were uncertain. If this research finding is generalised, it would appear that some pupils in the Xitsonga class need more attention on the part of the teacher to cope as first language learners! Teachers may want to arrange special lessons in order to get them on board. On the positive note however, both male and female respondents in the rural areas were less by 20,84% compared to their semi-urban areas counter-parts.

In the light of this difference, *one can infer that poetic language is more closer to the rural pupils than the semi-urban ones.* Perhaps this is as it should be since the rural milieu is a stronghold of traditional culture and so of the type of language that carries and transmits this culture. Discourse in verse tends to characterise certain domains of social interaction in the rural areas than in the urban or semi-urban areas.

As is the case with the respondents in the semi-urban and rural areas, 93,04% of

the male respondents and 97,89% of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas also opted for the vertical option. This implies that the pupils do not understand and appreciate these aspects of poetry equally. If this research finding is generalised, it could be attributed to the fact that some teachers are very selective in teaching poetry aspects and subsequently put more emphasis on certain aspects at the expense of the others - a limitation that must engage attention sooner than later.

The fact that 15,97% of the female respondents in typically-rural areas placed analysis on top of the list suggests that it is best understood and appreciated by a sizable number of the female respondents compared to their male counter-parts in all the three category of areas. This may suggest that more attention should be paid to explaining analysis in details to the same respondents in all the three areas than their female counter-parts. On the other hand 25% of the male respondents in the typically-rural areas placed imagery and vocabulary and syntax on top of the list compared to their female counter-parts in the same areas who placed analysis on top of the list.

It is interesting to note that both the male and the female respondents in the typically-rural areas put theme second on the list. The only difference lies with the percentage and the number of aspects in each rank. 23,60% of the male respondents ranked theme together with background knowledge about the poet as second on the list, whereas 13,88% of their female counter-parts ranked theme second alone. It is also remarkable to note that in all the three target areas, theme and background knowledge about the poet were never ranked first on the list. This suggests that much is still to be done to get the pupils across the three target areas understand and appreciate these aspects.

It is also discouraging to note that 44,44% of the male respondents in the typically-rural areas placed figurative language, sounds, subject matter and analysis third and last on the list. This implies that these four aspects are least understood and

appreciated by almost half the number of the male respondents in the typically-rural areas. What one reads into this finding is that these pupils are not likely to make it in poetry at the end of the year unless something drastic is done by both teacher and pupil. On the contrary, 37,50% of their female counter-parts placed imagery, figurative language, and sounds third on the list. Why imagery and figurative language are less understood and appreciated by this group as compared to analysis and theme is amazing. In the study of poetry usually one needs to know more about imagery, figurative language and sounds before one can successfully embark on analysis.

It would appear that much attention should be paid to clarifying the poetry aspects of subject matter, vocabulary and syntax and background knowledge about the poet which are placed fourth, fifth and sixth down the line by 11,80%, 9,72% and 9,02% of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas respectively.

It is also encouraging to note that only 6,96% of the male respondents and only 2,08% of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas were uncertain. There is a reduction of 2,80% uncertain respondents in the typically-rural areas compared to their rural counter-parts. In the light of this difference, one can infer that language is more closer to the typically-rural areas than to the rural and semi-urban areas.

The overall picture that emerges from TABLE 4 could be summarised as follows:

- a. It would appear that some Xitsonga teachers tend to teach aspects of Xitsonga poetry *selectively* instead of *holistically*. As the above interpretation of TABLE 4 shows, this lopsided approach to poetry presentation has a tendency of producing learners who develop an incomplete vista of poetry learning. The implications of this limitation can have far-reaching consequences for Xitsonga literature teaching if not arrested and corrected either at in-service-training level or at preservice

training.

- b. It would appear from the above research findings that male respondents manifest a deficient knowledge of the poetry aspect of analysis when compared with female respondents at the same level of schooling. It was not immediately apparent why this should be so but one could opine that females in this community are simply more tuned-in to details and thoroughness than their male counter-parts.

- c. According to this study, the linguistic sensitivity or consciousness of rural and typically-rural folk is higher than that of their semi-urban (perhaps urban too) counter-parts. If we consider the fact that it is in the rural areas where rituals and related traditional activities occur and are accompanied by utterances in verse, i.e. chants, praises, and even songs, the finding is congruous to expectation. That urbanisation has tended to “dilute” African languages especially in the province of verse cannot be denied. The Xitsonga teacher has a dual challenge here viz cash-in on the facility of the rural learners and aim at excellence and recognise the limitation of the semi-urban learners and mount remedial and support efforts.

The next item seeks to establish how the secondary school pupils rate their interest in modern poetry.

ITEM 6: How do you rate your interest in modern poetry?

Almost the entire research sample i.e. 96% rated their interest in modern poetry as *high*. Only 4% said their interest is exceptionally high. These responses are not easy to interpret since *high* may seem a more “reasonable” indication of interest level than *Exceptionally High* or *Average*. But if this data is analysed against TABLE 4 above, it could be interpreted as consistent with the 30% - 49% level of poetry enjoyment indicated for item 4 (i.e. criteria for poetry selection).

Item 7 also seeks to establish the specific type of poetry senior secondary school pupils find difficult to comprehend in Xitsonga.

ITEM 7: What type of poetry do you find difficult to comprehend in Xitsonga

It would appear *learners from a predominantly urban environment regardless of gender experience more difficulty with traditional and transitional poetry when compared with their rural and typically-rural counter-parts*. In the study sample used for this research project between 50% - 55% of learners in the semi-urban areas said they found these two types of poetry difficult to comprehend as against 40% - 45% of their rural and typically-rural community.

In this case it would appear the case made elsewhere in this study i.e. that *the rural environment is generally more supportive to poetry appreciation, especially traditional and transitional poetry, holds good*.

In the case of modern poetry it would appear the environment does not play too prominent a role. For all three environments between 40% - 45% of the learners indicated that they found difficult to comprehend. If these responses are interpreted against those of item 6, one could say that *although Vatsonga learners at secondary school are highly interested in modern poetry, they nonetheless find it difficult to comprehend*.

Only a negligible percentage (i.e. 5%) of those who found all three types of poetry difficult to comprehend was recorded. And an even smaller percentage (i.e. 2%) said they had no problem at all with all three types of poetry.

The next TABLE, (i.e. TABLE 5) will seek to experiment on the efficiency of the pupils in applying the poetry aspects they claim to know as indicated in TABLE 4 above in practical terms.

ITEM 8: Choose a poem you understand best from the attached three poems and analyse it the way your poetry teacher(s) has/have taught you. Your analysis should be about a page (Copies of the poems were given to the learners).

The rationale for choosing three poems from three anthologies is threefold, viz to meet the pupils' choice with regard to the length of the poems, the themes of the poems and lastly, their efficiency/competency in applying/detecting the poetry aspects in these poems.

It is beyond the scope of this study to do justice to the first two reasons above since they will need an intensive study that could well be developed into a complete article for publication. Nonetheless, the findings from ITEM 8 could be summarised as follows:

60% of the respondents across the target areas chose Chauke's poem which is reasonably long compared to the other two poems (see Addendum). 21% and 19% of the respondents across the target areas chose Magaisa and Masebenza's poems respectively. If this research finding is generalised, it would appear that *the length of the poem should not be much of a deterrent factor in the choice of the Xitsonga anthology* for the secondary school pupils but the theme of the poem etc, may well be. Of course, this leads us to the second reason which is the theme. The three poets' themes could be categorised into three aspects of life viz, "**Life's destination**" in the case of Chuake, "**Protest against puppet political leaders**" in the case of Magaisa and "**Human Conflict**" in the case of Masebenza. It is interesting to note that *80% of the female respondents across the target areas chose to analyse on "Life's destination"* as against 20% of their male counterparts across the target areas. *65% of the male respondents across the target areas chose to analyse on "Protest against puppet political leaders"* as against 35% of their female counterparts across the target areas, and *63% of the male respondents across the target areas chose to analyse on "Human conflict"* as compared to

37% of their female counterparts across the target areas. In the light of the research finding on the themes, one can infer that *female secondary school pupils would do well in analysing poems that appeal to human spiritual destination* as against the majority of their *male counterparts who would do well in analysing poems that are protesting against puppet political leaders and those that challenge human conflict*. Hereunder are some detailed findings about the secondary school pupils' efficiency in applying some poetry aspects in these poems.

TABLE 5: PUPILS' RESULTS ON EFFICIENCY IN POETRY ANALYSIS

	SEMI-URBAN AREAS RESPONDENTS 36		RURAL AREAS RESPONDENTS 36		TYPICALLY-RURAL AREAS RESPONDENTS 36	
	18 MALES	18 FEMALE	18 MALES	18 FEMALES	18 MALES	18 FEMALES
Subject matter poorly attempted	55,55%	44,44%	33,33%	44,44%	44,44%	44,44%
Subject matter not attempted	22,22%	16,66%	33,33%	33,33%	27,77%	27,77%
Subject matter irrelevantly attempted	11,11%	5,55%	5,55%	5,55%	00,00%	11,11%
Subject matter fairly and satisfactory attempted	11,11%	33,33%	27,77%	16,66%	27,77%	16,66%
Theme poorly attempted	5,55%	11,11%	5,55%	5,55%	5,55%	5,55%
Theme not attempted	77,77%	88,88%	94,44%	88,88%	94,45%	83,33%
Theme irrelevantly attempted	16,66%	00,00%	00,00%	5,55%	00,00%	11,11%
Theme fairly and satisfactory attempted	00,00%	00,00%	00,00%	00,00%	00,00%	00,00%
Analysis poorly attempted	72,22%	50,00%	44,44%	61,11%	50,00%	50,00%
Analysis not attempted	00,00%	00,00%	00,00%	00,00%	00,00%	00,00%
Analysis irrelevantly attempted	11,11%	5,55%	11,11%	5,55%	11,11%	16,66%
Analysis fairly and satisfactory attempted	16,66%	44,44%	44,44%	33,31%	32,33%	33,33%

5.2.9 Analysis of TABLE 5

Data reflected in TABLE 5 was calculated *individually* for each of the categories listed vertically in the TABLE. It is for this reason that percentages reflected are not computed into a gross of 100% whether in terms of horizontal totals or vertical totals.

a. Overview of learner-competence in applying poetry aspects in practice

Analysis of responses to item 8 shows that only 16,66% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas are competent in poetry aspects application compared to 50% of their female counter-parts in the same areas. The male respondents in the semi-urban areas are out-numbered by 33,34% of the female respondents in the same areas.

In the rural areas, 44,44% of the male respondents are competent to apply the poetry aspects in a poem whereas only 33,33% of the female respondents in the same areas are. In these areas, the male respondents out-number their female counter-parts by 11,11%. There is an increase of 27,78% of the male respondents in competency in this areas as compared to their semi-urban male counter-parts. On the other hand, there is a decrease of 16,67% of the female respondents in the rural areas compared to their semi-urban female counter-parts.

In the typically-rural areas, only 38,88% of the male respondents are competent in applying the poetry aspects they claim to know successfully in a poem as compared to only 33,88% of their female counter-parts from the same areas. There is a decrease of 5,56% of the male respondents in the typically-rural areas compared to their rural male counter-parts, while on the other hand, one sees an increase of 5,55% of the female respondents in the same areas as compared to their rural female counter-parts.

The foregoing analysis gives a sample overview of the results of the pupils' performance in applying some of the poetry aspects in practical terms. Furthermore, this TABLE depicts some of the specific poetry aspects the respondents find difficulties in or the ones they find easy to cope with. For the sake of our study, the poetry aspects focused on are divided into three parts, viz subject matter, theme and analysis. Under each division, the study will seek to find out whether or not the pupils attempted the poetry aspect in question either relevantly, fairly, satisfactory, poorly or none at all.

b. Analysis of TABLE 5 per se

i) Subject matter poorly attempted

According to this TABLE, 55,55% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas attempted the subject matter poorly as compared to 44,44% of the female respondents in the same areas. The male respondents are less by 11,11% as compared to their female counter-parts. There is however a 22,22% sharp decrease of the male respondents who attempted the subject matter poorly in the rural areas compared to their male counter-parts in the semi-urban areas. On the other hand, the rural and semi-urban female respondents are all level at 44,44% in attempting the subject matter poorly.

44,44% of the male respondents as well as 44,44% of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas attempted the subject matter poorly. There is an increase of 11,11% of the male respondents who attempted the subject matter poorly in the typically-rural areas compared to their male counter-parts in the rural areas. On the contrary, there is no increase nor decrease of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas who attempted the subject matter poorly as compared to their female counter-parts in the rural areas.

ii) Subject matter not attempted

This TABLE shows that 22,22% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas did not attempt the subject matter at all. On the contrary, only 16,66% of the female respondents in the same areas failed to attempt it. There is a difference of 5,56% between the two groups of respondents.

In the rural areas, 33,33% of the male respondents as well as 33,33% of the female respondents did not attempt the subject matter at all. There is an increase of 11,11% of the male respondents and 16,67% of the female respondents in the rural areas compared to their male and female semi-urban counter-parts.

27,77% of the male respondents and 27,77% of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas did not attempt the subject matter at all. There is a decrease of 5,56% of the male respondents and also of 5,56% of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas compared to the rural areas' male and female respondents who did not attempt the subject matter.

iii) Subject matter irrelevantly attempted

According to this TABLE, 11,11% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas as well as 5,55% of their female counter-parts in the same areas attempted the subject matter irrelevantly. There is a difference of 5,56% between the two groups of respondents.

In the rural areas, 5,55% of the male respondents and also 5,55% of the female respondents attempted the subject matter irrelevantly. There is a decrease of 5,56% of the male respondents in the rural areas compared to their semi-urban counter-parts. On the other hand, there is no increase nor decrease of the female respondents in the rural areas compared to their female counter-parts in the semi-urban areas.

In the typically-rural areas, none of the male respondents attempted the subject matter irrelevantly compared to 11,11% of their female counter-parts who attempted it irrelevantly. There is an increase of 5,56% of the female respondents who attempted it irrelevantly in the typically-rural areas compared to their female counter-parts in the rural areas.

iv) Subject matter fairly and satisfactory attempted

According to this TABLE, 11,11% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas attempted the subject matter fairly and satisfactory. On the contrary, 33,33% of the female respondents in the same areas attempted it fairly and satisfactory. The female respondents are more by 22,22% as compared to their male counter-parts in the same areas.

In the rural areas, 27,77% of the male respondents attempted the subject matter fairly and satisfactory. On the other hand, only 16,66% of the female respondents in the same areas attempted it fairly and satisfactory. The female respondents are less by 11,11% compared to their male counter-parts in the same areas who attempted the subject matter fairly and satisfactory. There is however, a sharp increase of 16,66% of the male respondents in the rural areas compared to their male counter-parts in the semi-urban areas. On the other hand, there is a sharp decrease of 16,67% of the female respondents in the rural areas compared to their semi-urban counter-parts who attempted it fairly and satisfactory.

In the typically-rural areas, the situation is similar to that of the rural areas. 27,77% of the male respondents and 16,66% of their female counter-parts attempted the subject matter competently. The male respondents out number their female counter-parts in the typically-rural areas by 11,11%.

c. i) Theme poorly attempted

According to this TABLE, 5,55% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas attempted the theme poorly, while on the other hand, 11,11% of their female counter-parts attempted it poorly. The semi-urban male respondents are outnumbered by 5,56% of the female respondents in the same areas.

In the rural areas, 5,55% of the male respondents as well as 5,55% of the female respondents in the same areas attempted the theme poorly. There is no decrease nor increase of the male respondents who attempted the theme poorly in the rural areas compared to the semi-urban male respondents. On the other hand, there is a decrease of 5,56% of the female respondents who attempted the theme poorly in the rural areas.

5,55% of the male respondents as well as 5,55% of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas attempted the theme poorly. It would appear that there is no increase nor decrease of both the male and the female respondents in the typically-rural areas compared to their rural counter-parts.

ii) Theme not attempted

According to this TABLE, 77,77% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas did not attempt the theme at all. 88,88% of their female counter-parts did not attempt the theme as well. The female respondents outnumber their male counter-parts in the same areas by 11,11%.

In the rural areas, 94,44% of the male respondents did not attempt the theme as compared to 88,88% of their female counter-parts in the same areas. The female respondents are less by 5,56% compared to their male counter-parts in the same areas. There is an increase of 16,67% of the male respondents who never attempted the theme in the rural areas compared to their semi-urban male counter-

parts. There is no percentage change for both the semi-urban and rural female respondents. They both stand at 88,88% of none theme attempters.

94,44% of the male respondents in the typically-rural areas did not attempt the theme compared to 83,33% of their female counter-parts in the same areas. The female respondents outnumber their female counter-parts by 11,11% of none theme attempters. There is a 5,55% decrease of female none theme attempters in the typically-rural areas compared to their rural female counter-parts. The typically-rural and the rural male respondents of none theme attempters both stand at 88,88%.

iii) Theme irrelevantly attempted

The TABLE further shows that 16,66% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas attempted the theme in an irrelevant manner. None of their female counter-parts in the same areas did so.

None of the male respondents in the rural areas attempted the theme irrelevantly, while on the contrary, 5,55% of their female counter-parts did so.

None of the male respondents in the typically-rural areas attempted the theme irrelevantly compared to 11,11% of their female counter-parts. There is an increase of 5,56% of the female respondents who attempted the theme irrelevantly in the typically-rural areas compared to their rural female counter-parts.

iv) Theme fairly and satisfactory attempted

None of the male respondents in the semi-urban, rural and typically-rural areas attempted the theme fairly and satisfactory. The same applies to the female respondents in the semi-urban, rural and typically-rural areas.

d. i) Analysis poorly attempted

According to this TABLE, 72,22% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas attempted analysis poorly. On the other hand, 50% of their female counterparts in the same areas did so. The female respondents in the semi-urban areas are less by 22,22% compared to their male counterparts in the same areas.

In the rural areas, 44,44% of the male respondents attempted analysis poorly compared to 61,11% of the female respondents who did so in the same areas. There is an increase of 16,67% of the female respondents in the rural areas who did so. Further, one sees a decrease of 27,78% of the male respondents in the rural areas who poorly attempted analysis compared to their semi-urban counterparts. On the contrary to the latter, one sees an increase of 11,11% of the female rural respondents who attempted analysis poorly compared to their semi-urban female counterparts.

In the typically-rural areas, 50% of the male respondents as well as 50% of their female counterparts attempted analysis poorly compared to their rural male and female counterparts. Comparatively speaking, there is a decrease of 11,11% of the typically-rural female respondents as compared to their female rural counterparts as well as an increase of 5,56% of the male respondents in the typically-rural areas compared to their rural male counterparts.

ii) Analysis not attempted

None of the male respondents in the semi-urban, rural and typically-rural areas totally failed to attempt analysis though in most cases hopelessly so. The same applies to the female respondents in the semi-urban, rural and typically-rural areas.

iii) Analysis attempted irrelevantly

According to this TABLE, 11,11% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas attempted analysis in an irrelevant manner compared to 5,55% of their female counter-parts in the same areas. The male respondents in the semi-urban areas out-number their female counter-parts by 5,56% of the respondents who attempted analysis irrelevantly.

In the rural areas, 11,11% of the male respondents and 5,55% of their female counter-parts attempted analysis in an irrelevant manner. As is the case with the semi-urban areas, the male respondents in the rural areas out-number their female counter-parts by 5,56% of the respondents who attempted analysis in an irrelevant manner. There is an increase of 11,11% of the female respondents who attempted analysis irrelevantly in the typically-rural areas compared to their rural female counter-parts while on the other hand both rural and typically-rural male respondents stand at 11,11% each.

iv) Analysis fairly and satisfactory attempted

According to this TABLE, 16,66% of the male respondents and 44,44% of the female respondents in the semi-urban areas attempted analysis in a fair and satisfactory manner. The female respondents in the semi-urban areas out-number their male counter-parts in the same areas by 27,78% of the respondents who attempted analysis fairly and satisfactory.

In the rural areas, 44,44% of the male respondents and 33,31% of their female counter-parts in the same areas attempted analysis fairly and satisfactory. The rural female respondents are out-numbered by 11,13% of their male counter-parts in the same areas. There is an increase of 27,78% of the rural male respondents who attempted analysis fairly and satisfactory compared to their semi-urban male counter-parts. On the contrary, there is a decrease of 11,11% of the female

respondents in the rural areas who attempted analysis fairly and satisfactory as compared to their semi-urban female counter-parts.

32,33% of the male respondents and 33,33% of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas attempted analysis in a fair and satisfactory manner while on the other hand there is a slight increase of 0,02% of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas who attempted analysis in a fair and satisfactory manner as well as 12,11% decrease of the male respondents who attempted analysis fairly and satisfactory in the typically-rural areas compared to their rural male counter-parts.

5.2.10 Interpretation of TABLE 5

The interpretation of TABLE 5 will be carried out in four phases, viz the overall performance of the pupils in applying the poetry aspects already indicated in TABLE 5 above, their practical efficiency in determining the subject matter, the theme and their efficiency in analysing a poem.

a. The overall performance of the pupils in applying the poetry aspects practically

This TABLE reveals that only 16,66% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas are able to apply the poetry aspects successfully and meaningfully in practice, while on the other hand 50% of their semi-urban female counter-parts are. If this research finding is generalised to broadly similar classroom context, we could say that since 83,34% male and 50% female respondents performed below the desired level, many learners who are doing Xitsonga First Language at high school level are likely to under-achieve in this section of literature learning. By extension of observation and comment, this calls for special attention to these pupils by the teacher. Furthermore, if we work on the basis of possible generalisation of these research findings, it would appear that special

methodological steps need to be taken since possibly the teaching of Xitsonga literature and poetry in particular is a little more than a tedious drudgery rather than an interesting and enjoyable learning experience for many learners at high school level. The fact that the semi-urban female respondents out-number their male counter-parts by 33,84% seem to suggest that in spite of the environment (i.e. semi-urban in this case) a nation finds itself in, its woman-folk are its mainstay for the preservation of its language and culture. Given this observation, perhaps the term “**mother tongue**” is a more appropriate designation than is generally conceded.

The fact that 44,44% of the male respondents and 33,33% of their female counter-parts in the rural areas managed to apply the poetry aspects successfully and meaningful in dealing with a poem seem to suggest that language methodologists and educational administrators simply cannot be complacent that all is well; much has to be done to increase the level of achievement in these aspects. Although there is a substantial increase of 27,78% of the male respondents in the rural areas who successfully applied the poetry aspects in a poem compared to their semi-urban counter-parts, higher achievement should be targeted especially when we consider the fact that the target research group is a Xitsonga L1 group with Xitsonga L1 teachers and in a largely Xitsonga speaking milieu. The fact that there is a decrease of 16,67% of the female respondents in the rural areas who applied the poetry aspects only fairly and satisfactory, further exacerbates the situation in the teaching and learning of poetry criticism in general and Xitsonga poetry criticism in particular. To return once more to the issue of language and milieu: in the rural areas is where one would expect high performance in a first language because the environment is more supportive to the language, its preservation and its promotion. That only 38,88% on average of both male and female respondents managed to do well in research test is incongruous to expectation and therefore requires aggressive address at pedagogy level.

The situation in the typically-rural areas is not good either. Indeed only 38,88% of

the male respondents as well as 38,88% of their female counter-parts managed to apply the poetry aspects meaningfully to a poem. The fact that on average 61,12% of both female and male respondents failed, suggests that the contents and teaching strategies in Xitsonga First Language need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Instead of an increase of the male respondents in the typically-rural areas, one actually sees a 5,56% decrease in competence in poetry aspects application. This situation can only be described as highly unsatisfactory and disturbing. On an encouraging note, however, one sees a slight 5,55% increase of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas compared to their rural female counter-parts who applied the poetry aspects successfully in a poem.

The situation revealed by the research description above suggests the need for urgent corrective measures at all levels. It would appear that there is a need for close co-operation and interaction among the teachers of Xitsonga poetry, the Subject Advisers, the Xitsonga Chief Examiners and the Regional and the Provincial Education Departments in order to address this disturbing situation in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry criticism most aggressively and holistically.

b. i) Practical efficiency in determining subject matter

The fact that 55,55% of the semi-urban male respondents and 44,44% of their female counter-parts in the same areas attempted the subject matter poorly indicates the extent to which this aspect is ineffectively handled by both the teacher and the pupil. The fact that the semi-urban male respondents out-number their female counter-parts by 11,11% could suggest that an imaginative and creative support instruction needs to be put in place to assist these learners. In terms of logistics, such a support instruction effort will, of necessity, be offered in the afternoon or, if possible, over week-ends.

In the rural areas, the picture is slightly different in that 33,33% of the male

respondents and 44,44% of their female counter-parts attempted the subject matter poorly. The fact that there is a decrease of 22,22% of the male respondents in the rural areas who attempted the subject matter poorly as compared to their semi-urban male counter-parts, and that there is no increase nor decrease of the rural female respondents compared to their semi-urban female counter-parts and the fact that the rural female respondents out-number their male counter-parts in the same areas by 11,11% shows that in the case of these groups it is the female learners who require special support instruction in this aspect than their male counter-parts.

In the typically-rural areas there is no improvement either. The fact that 44,44% of the male respondents as well as 44,44% of the female respondents attempted the subject matter poorly indicates that both the teachers and the pupils in these areas still have a long way to go as far as effective teaching and learning of this aspect in a poem is concerned. *According to the performance of all the respondents who attempted the subject matter poorly in the semi-urban, rural and typically-rural areas, they failed to fully understand the poems they had chosen to analyse.* A vague understanding of a poem leads to a vague determination of the subject matter. It seems a useful imperatival matter for the teachers of Xitsonga poetry to go back to the basics in teaching the pupils to successfully determine a subject matter in a poem. More of these basics will be discussed under the subheading: **“Subject matter not or irrelevantly attempted”** below (i.e. b. ii).

ii) **Subject matter not² or irrelevantly² attempted**

The fact that 33,33% of the male respondents and 22,21% of their female counter-parts in the semi-urban areas did not or were totally irrelevant in determining the subject matter shows clearly the difficult task that lies ahead for both the teachers and the pupils. It would appear that more attention should be paid to the male

² The two items were combined together in interpretation because of their similarity in the context of this project.

respondents than their female counter-parts in the semi-urban areas due to the fact that the former out-number the latter by 11,12%.

The failure of the pupils to determine the subject matter in the rural areas is shown by 38,38% of the male respondents as well as 38,38% of the female respondents. What disturbs most is the fact that there is an increase of 5,55% of the male respondents as well as an increase of 11,67% of the female respondents who totally failed to determine the subject matter than their male and female counter-parts in the semi-urban areas. As already stated in the preceding discussions, the rural and the typically-rural areas should be characterised by a high percentage of competency in poetry analysis by the pupils under normal circumstances than their semi-urban counter-parts. The Vatsonga culture should be very close to the rural and typically-rural citizens than the semi-urban ones. Language is one of the most important building blocks of culture. Poetry is one of the genres that forms this building block. The failure of these pupils to understand or determine what a poem is all about is a clear sign of a gradual language demise among the Vatsonga in the rural areas. There is therefore, an urgent need for language resuscitation in the teaching and learning of language in general and poetry in particular. Some of the techniques that could be tried out in a classroom situation will be fully discussed under the forth-coming discourse on the teaching methods.

One would also expect the pupils to perform better in determining the subject matter in the typically-rural areas than their counter-parts in the rural areas. The fact that 27,77% of the male respondents as well as 38,88% of the female respondents totally failed to determine the subject matter, indicates that much is also expected from all stake-holders in education about this poetry aspect. What worsens things is the fact that the female respondents in the typically-rural areas out-number their male counter-parts by 11,11%. This implies that the custodians and the preservers of the language do not understand poetry language or to be more precise they do not understand what they are supposed to keep and jealously preserve as a jewel of the nation. It should be made clear in simple terms to these

pupils that by subject matter is meant **what the poem is communicating about**. In other words, we are trying to answer the question: **“What does the poem communicate?”** or **“What is the poet saying?”** Further, they should be advised to read the poem not less than twice with sufficient attention in order to successfully determine the subject matter in a poem (See also, *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, volume 25, 1989: 709; Marivate, 1984: 15; Heese and Lawton, 1983: 73).

iii) **Subject matter fairly and satisfactory attempted**

The general performance of the male and female respondents in the semi-urban, rural and typically-rural areas is negative. On average, the male respondents obtained 22,21% as well as their female counter-parts who also obtained an average of 22,21% in competency in this aspect (i.e. the subject matter).

The fact that the female respondents in the semi-urban areas out-number their male counter-parts in the same areas by 22,22% on the one hand indicates that the perception that language is carefully kept and preserved by the female citizens of a country than their male counter-parts could be true, and on the other hand, is a clear message that more attention should be given to the male respondents in these areas than their female counter-parts on this aspect.

The fact that 27,77% of the male respondents in the rural areas out-number their female counter-parts who consist of only 16,66% by 11,11% indicates a better understanding of the determination of the subject matter by the former and on the other hand indicates a serious (i.e. by the performance of the latter) demise of poetry as a genre. The onus rests on the shoulders of all stake holders in education to see to it that this state of affairs in literature in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular is improved.

One would expect a better understanding of the subject matter by the pupils in the

typically-rural areas due to the rich cultural environment in which they find themselves. The fact that 27,77% of the male respondents and 16,66% of their female counter-parts are competent in determining the subject matter shows that the opposite is in fact true. The fact that the male respondents in the typically-rural areas also out-number their female counter-parts in the same areas by 11,11% indicates that the **rural** and the **typically-rural** areas compared to the semi-urban female counter-parts evidently do not take advantage of the tranquillity, richness, purity, stability and uniqueness of poetry language in those areas.

The overall performance of the respondents in the semi-urban, rural and typically rural areas suggests that the subject matter as a poetry aspect is not understood by the majority of them. The stakeholders in education need to start all over again in order to get these pupils on board. The next poetry aspects will highlight further how unfavourable things are in the field of teaching and learning Xitsonga poetry at secondary school level.

c. i) Theme poorly attempted

It would appear that the teachers' aims and objectives in teaching the theme were not realised in that the best the pupils could achieve was to attempt it poorly. It would appear that the only respondents who are a bit more in vaguely attempting the subject matter are the female ones in the semi-urban areas. They consist of 11,11% as compared to the semi-urban male, the rural male, the rural female, the typically-rural male and the typically-rural female respondents who each consist of 5,55% of respondents who vaguely attempted it. This implies that these respondents did not fully understand what was meant by the theme of the poem.

ii) **Theme not³ or irrelevantly³ attempted**

There is an alarming failure of the pupils in all the three target areas in their attempt to determine the theme of a poem. The fact that 94,43% of the male respondents and 88,88% of the female respondents in the semi-urban areas totally failed to determine the theme of the poems they had chosen shows that there is a likelihood that the theme as a poetry aspect is totally neglected by both the teachers and the pupils or the teachers are simply limited in treating this aspect as part of criticism in poetry teaching in Xitsonga.

The situation is equally gloomy in the rural areas. The fact that 94,44% of the male respondents and 94,43% of the female respondents totally failed to determine the theme indicates that somebody somewhere is not doing his/her job in as far as determining the theme of the poem is concerned. Perhaps the fact that the Chief Examiner of the External Standard 10 Papers set questions that examine the pupils' knowledge on determining the subject matter at the expense of the theme year after year could have also contributed to a large extent to the total neglect of this poetry aspect by both the teachers and the pupils in all the target areas. This implies that it would not be uncommon to hear the poetry teachers say pupils should not worry about the theme, theirs is to pay more attention to the mastery of the subject matter of the poem.

The fact that 94,45% of the male respondents as well as 94,44% of the female respondents in the typically-rural areas totally failed to attempt the theme, shows that as is the case in the semi-urban and rural areas, the theme as a poetry aspect is not given the necessary attention by the Chief Examiners. The Std. 8, 9 and 10 Xitsonga syllabi do not prescribe that questions should be set on the subject matter only at the expense of the theme. According to the 1989 Std. 10 syllabus (1989:

³ The two items were combined together in interpretation because of their similarity in the context of this project.

47), two types of questions should be set on:

Short questions on a particular poem with emphasis on literary insight; and
 A long literary question (1 - 1,5 pages).
 The poem (or part(s) thereof) which is examined, must be provided.

iii) Theme fairly and satisfactory attempted

There is absolutely no respondents in the semi-urban, rural and typically-rural areas who attempted the theme in a fair and satisfactory manner. In the light of this dismal performance by all the pupils in these areas, one can infer that sooner or latter, this poetry aspect will be totally forgotten. There is a need of impressing on the pupils that in determining the theme one is trying to find out exactly what urged the poet to write his/her poem. He/she could have been urged by, for instance; love, oppression, hatred, power, marriage, dishonesty, child abuse, good neighbourliness, poverty, envy, cruelty, freedom, criminality, youth, old age, nepotism, racism, pride, humility, humanity, long suffering, death, irresponsible husband, adultery, loneliness etc. That which urged the poet to write his poem is a message you ought to determine yourself. (See also Chapter 3 above).

d. i) Analysis poorly attempted

According to this TABLE, there is an up-swing of the respondents in all the target areas who attempted this poetry aspect (i.e. analysis) compared to the latter (i.e. theme). The fact that 72,22% of the male respondents and 50% of their female counter-parts attempted analysis poorly in the semi-urban areas shows that the majority of the male respondents are poor at analysing a poem compared to only a half of their female counter-parts in the same areas. This implies that more attention should be given to the male respondents than their female counter-parts

in the same areas by the Xitsonga poetry teachers. On the other hand, it supports the perception that women are the custodians of their native language.

The fact that 44,44% of the male respondents and 61,11% of the female respondents in the rural areas attempted analysis poorly indicates a lack of the knowledge of analysing a poem by the 3/5 majority of the female respondents as compared to less than a half of their male counter-parts. This implies that their lack of proper analysis of the poem they had chosen could be attributed to the vague understanding of the standard language employed by the three writers viz Masebenza, Chauke and Magaisa. What disturbs most is that the 3/5 majority of these female respondents place the future of poetry as a genre in danger due to the fact that our future mothers are supposed to be the custodians of our language.

d. ii) Analysis not⁴ or irrelevantly⁴ attempted

It is interesting to note that no respondent in the semi-urban, rural and typically-rural areas totally failed to attempt analysing a poem. The teachers of Xitsonga poetry need to be commended in that they have succeeded in at least teaching their pupils the basics about this aspect. It would appear that all the pupils know what is meant by analysis but in the same breath the majority do not know how it is carried out in practical terms. The fact that 11,11% of the male respondents and 5,55% of the female respondents in the semi-urban areas attempted analysis irrelevantly shows that there are minority groups that do not have a light about what is meant by analysis and how it is carried out in a poem situation. The first minority which consists of 11,11% of the male respondents, a large group compared to their female counter-parts by 5,56%, most probably belong to the below average pupils. The poetry teachers need to remember that in order to assist them (i.e. the below average pupils) positively, they need to apply certain didactic

⁴ The two items were combined together in interpretation because of their similarity in the context of this project.

techniques. The traditional ones most unfortunately seem to benefit the average and the above average ones in this case. Nkatini (1982: 19-20) suggests, among other things, that in order to help these pupils properly one has to acquaint oneself with the home background of these pupils since their performance might be adversely affected by, say, poverty, parents' separation, child abuse and similar affective-based causes, apart from being the victims of below 84 IQ score. In general it will help if audio-visual aids are generously utilised in the presentation of poetry lessons. Not all learners have the natural capacity to process word pictures that make up poetry. The teacher ought to repeat his/her lesson until he/she is satisfied that its aims have been achieved. Slower learners often benefit more by redundancy in lesson-presentation than comparatively quicker ones. The teacher ought to employ a variety of teaching methods in order to ascertain that this group moves along with him/her. Varying teaching strategies is a good pedagogical routine since what is effective for one learner in terms of methodology may not be as effective for another pupil. This is what individual differences in a classroom is all about.

In the rural areas also, the teachers of Xitsonga poetry, need to dig deep into their professional reserves in order to get the 11,11% of the male respondents and their 5,55% female counter-parts on board. Apparently, these pupils do not make head or tail of how analysis should be carried out. According to their response-scripts marked by the researcher, analysis was carried out out of context. They seem to think that it has to do with synonyms or literal meaning of the words in the poems. In chapter 3 above, the researcher endeavoured to give some practical examples of how analysis could be carried out to the benefit of the secondary school pupils.

The fact that the female respondents in the typically-rural areas who consist of 16,66% outnumber their male counter-parts who consist of 11,11% by 5,55% shows that there is a need of special attention by the Xitsonga poetry teachers to the female respondents than the male ones. Though most probably these pupils belong to the below average group, there is a need of applying special techniques

and teaching methods in order to benefit them. What is somewhat disturbing is that the future mothers who are in the majority compared to their male counterparts in the same areas do not understand the poetry language they are supposed to be custodians of.

iii) Analysis fairly and satisfactory attempted

The overall 34,26% performance of all the respondents in all the three target areas suggests that in practice poetry aspects are understood and appreciated by only a third of the pupils across the target research areas. Hereunder are some of the similarities and dissimilarities found in these target areas as well as some possible reasons they are attributed to:

The fact that 16,16% of the male respondents in the semi-urban areas are outnumbered by 27,78% of their counter-parts who consist of 44,44% respondents who carried out their analysis fairly and satisfactory shows that there is a tendency of deliberate or undeliberated neglect of this important and exciting poetry aspect by the 4/5 majority of male respondents. In the light of these imbalances, one can infer that the male respondents in these areas are not favoured by the environment in which they find themselves as compared to their female counter-parts. On the other hand, one is somewhat encouraged to note that on the average, 30,55% of the respondents in these areas (i.e. both male and female respondents) know exactly how analysis is carried out. Their individual performance range from 40% - 52%. However, it will still take much effort on the part of all stake holders in African literature in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular to produce straight As and Bs in these areas.

The fact that 44,44% of the male respondents in the rural areas attempted analysis fairly and satisfactory better than their semi-urban male counter-parts by 27,78% shows the validity of the perception that the environment in which one finds oneself contributes to a large extent to language competency, or in the context of

our study higher facility in poetry analysis. On the other hand, the fact that the male respondents in the rural areas out-number their female counter-parts in the same areas by 11,11% and that the latter, viz the female respondents are lower by 11,11% compared to their semi-urban female counter-parts suggests that the mothers of tomorrow are losing touch with the nitty-gritty of the language they are suppose to preserve. Poetry as part of the Xitsonga language, among other things is full of colourful words, concepts and expressions. A nation that ignores it, especially the mothers who are suppose to jealously preserve it, do so to their disadvantage and the community at large. The fact that their performance range from 40% - 60%, suggests that much has to be done in order to produce symbols A and B material.

The fact that 32,33% of the male respondents and 33,33% of their female counter-parts in the typically-rural areas managed to carry out analysis fairly and satisfactory suggests that there is almost a balance of matter transmission on the part of the teachers, and on the other hand, lack of the will on the part of both the male and the female respondents to take advantage of the environment in which they find themselves compared to their semi-urban and rural male and female counter-parts. The fact that their individual performance range from 40% - 65% suggests that a lot still has to be done in order to get their performance on par to, say Afrikaans L1 or English L1 pupils'.

The fact that only a third of the respondents across the three target areas attempted analysis fairly and satisfactory reveals that the majority are still at sea which in the process suggests the seriousness of the state of affairs in the teaching and learning of poetry analysis in Xitsonga. The short-term answer to this problem is that the teacher should try his/her best to impress upon the pupils that analysis requires them to determine how the poet communicates his/her message to them as the readers. Their duty as learner-analyst is to identify all the word pictures in the poem and to see how each (i.e. word picture) helps to build this overall picture of the poem. In Chapter 3 above, the researcher maintains that the essential elements

detectable in all poems are figures of sounds, figures of speech, phonology, morphology and others. (See also Heese and Lawton, 1983: 73-74 and Chapter 3 of this study above). The medium and long-term solutions to this problems will be discussed in the next TABLE(s) and in Chapter 6.

The next TABLE(s) and discourse will endeavour to show the extent to which the teachers of Xitsonga poetry, the Subject Advisers, the Chief Examiners, the Education Departments and the institutions of higher learning contribute either positively or negatively to the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry to Secondary School learners in the target research areas.

B. TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

5.3 INTRODUCTION

The researcher has time and again in his analysis, interpretation and comments on the research data described and analysed thus far, highlighted the need for closer co-operation and interaction among the key stake holders in Education in general and Xitsonga literature in particular. This research project will confine itself to the content and methodology these stake holders (of course, with the exception of the pupil respondents' whose methodological data is entirely similar to that of the teacher respondents) engage in teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry at Senior Secondary School level. Now follows an item-by-item analysis of responses to the teacher questionnaire.

ITEM 1: What is your highest academic qualification?

5.3.1 Teacher qualifications : Academic

The secondary school poetry teachers in the semi-urban, rural and typically-rural areas and the Education Administrators were required to indicate their academic and professional qualifications in order to establish their competence in the

teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry. This study has subsequently revealed that 33,33% of the teachers across the three target areas are matriculants, 50% of them across the three target areas are BA graduates, 16,67% of the rest of the teachers across the three target areas are BA Honours graduates. Both the Education Administrators have at least BA Honours degrees (i.e. Subject Adviser has a BA Honours degree and Chief Examiner has an M Sc degree).

The implication of these qualifications is that on average, 67,67% of the teachers across the target research areas are academically well qualified to teach Xitsonga poetry at secondary school level and the remaining 33,33% though not as highly qualified compared to the former, they nonetheless have a fair knowledge by virtue of being College of Education Diploma holders to handle poetry at secondary school level. In a nutshell, *this study reveals that 100% of the respondents are on average academically qualified to successfully handle poetry at senior secondary school level.*

All the teachers sampled indicated that they had majored in Xitsonga (i.e. *three courses* and above for the university graduates). In addition, all the teachers sampled indicated that they had Xitsonga as one of their method courses. It was not necessary to analyse the distribution of the other method subjects since these were not immediately relevant to the study. The only problem observed was that although all the teachers sampled were qualified teachers, some of the college graduates were trained as primary school teachers and not as secondary school teachers. This observation is taken-up immediately below.

ITEM 2: What is your highest professional qualification?

5.3.2 Teacher qualifications : Professional

The secondary school poetry teachers in the semi-urban, rural and typically-rural areas and the two Education Administrators sampled, were also required to

indicate their professional qualifications in order to establish their professional credibility in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry at secondary school level. This study revealed that 16,67% of the Xitsonga poetry teachers across the three target areas are holders of Secondary Teacher Diplomas (STD), 33,33% of the Xitsonga poetry teachers across the three target areas are holders of Primary Teacher Diploma (PTD), 11,11% of the teachers across the three target areas are holders of University Higher Education Diplomas (HED) and 38,89% of these teachers across the three target areas are holders of BA-Paed professional qualifications. Most unfortunately, the two Education Administrators sampled are holders of Primary Teachers' Certificates (PTC).

The implication of these professional qualifications is that *66,67% of the Xitsonga poetry teachers across the three target areas are professionally qualified to teach poetry successfully at senior secondary school level*. While the remaining *33,33% do not qualify professionally to teach poetry at secondary school level* since they were in fact trained to teach at primary school level. It is an unfortunate fact in African education that the Education Departments (especially the former DET) have been too lenient about this professional irregularity for a long time.

Although some of these teachers are doing sterling work in the classroom, they are nonetheless misplaced didactically because the content and methodology offered in the professional training of primary and secondary school poetry teachers are, of necessity, dissimilar. The primary school programmes concentrate more on developing the pupils' memory and recall, while the secondary school ones concentrate more on deeper understanding, knowledge and application of poetry aspects in a poem. It is therefore important for Education Administrators to separate the two areas of training i.e. primary and secondary if results in the teaching of African literature in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular are to improve. The fact that on average only 36,97% of the pupil respondents who participated in analysing specific poems across the three target areas managed to pass perhaps could be attributed in part to the lack of proper professional qualifications by the 33,33% of these teachers across the three target areas. If

these teachers (i.e. teachers with primary school professional qualifications) apply the primary school approach to secondary school poetry teaching of mechanical reading, memorization and reciting will do an injustice to the secondary school pupils' learning of poetry. No wonder in TABLE 3 above they indicated that poetry should not be prescribed because it is boring, irrelevant, very difficult to answer test and exam questions on.

ITEM 3: For how long have you been teaching poetry?

5.3.3 Teaching experience

Despite these limitations in the levels of professional training of the Xitsonga teachers sampled, a plus-factor was that all but two had five years or more teaching experience. In enterprising teachers, experiences can, to a large extent, neutralise professional limitations. This possibility was not explored in this study since it is an areas of study all by itself and will need a separate and focused research project. A further plus-factor was that all the teachers sampled spoke Xitsonga as L1.

ITEM 4: Do you think the prescription of poetry for the Senior Secondary learners is necessary?

Analysis of teacher-responses as regards opinion in respect of the need for poetry to be prescribed for secondary school learners revealed the following information:

TABLE 6: DISTRIBUTION OF TEACHER-OPINION ON POETRY PRESCRIPTION IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

	NO	YES	UNCERTAIN	TOTAL
Semi-urban areas	5%	80%	15%	100%
Rural areas	0%	95%	5%	100%
Typically-rural areas	0%	95%	5%	100%

An average of 90% of the teachers sampled favoured the inclusion of poetry in the Xitsonga literature syllabus. This preference represents the opinion of teachers and not an indication that they are comfortable with the teaching and learning of all the poetry aspects. The importance of the finding is that most teachers have a positive attitude towards poetry.

In addition to this general finding, there is also a confirmation of a finding and comment made elsewhere in this study that on the whole rural folk are more at home with verse i.e. poetry, chants, song than urban folk. Since poetry carries so much of cultural language and traditional heritage, the rural areas may be seen as the home of the mother tongue.

An average of 8,30% of the teacher-respondents sampled for this study said they were uncertain as to whether poetry should be allowed to continue as part of the Xitsonga literature syllabus. On the other hand, an average of only 1,67% of the teacher-respondents sampled for this study said they do not want poetry to be included in the Xitsonga literature syllabus. The reasons given for the *NO* and *UNCERTAIN* responses were so broad and varied that no particular strong trend emerged save for opinions bearing on “**poetry is too difficult to teach**”, “**It is difficult to test and examine**”, “**It is irrelevant to the pedagogical needs of the learners**”.

These reasons are, however, important to note since they provide us researchers and educational Administrators with pointers to note in planning in the new and democratic society. To achieve equity and parity as between African languages such as Xitsonga on the one hand and English and Afrikaans on the other, pointers such as these cannot be over-looked.

ITEM 5: At what standard should poetry be prescribed?

To opine that Xitsonga poetry should be taught in our secondary school literature classroom is one thing but to decide at what level, i.e. standard it should be taught to advantage quite another thing. In this study, teacher-opinion was sought on this matter. Questionnaire analysis yielded the following distribution.

TABLE 7: DISTRIBUTION OF TEACHER-OPINION ON STANDARD AT WHICH POETRY SHOULD BE TAUGHT

	STD 8	STD 9	STD 10	TOTALS
Semi-urban areas	10%	40%	50%	100%
Rural areas	20%	40%	40%	100%
Typically-rural areas	20%	40%	40%	100%

In some way TABLE 7 corroborates the data reflected in TABLE 6 above in that *all the teachers sampled seem to feel that poetry should be taught in our secondary schools*. According to TABLE 7, an average of 40% of the teacher-respondents, are of the opinion that poetry should be taught in STD 9 while an average of 43,30% opined that poetry should be taught in STD 10. The margin of difference is only 3,30%.

Given this narrow margin, we could conclude that *the majority of the teachers would like to see poetry taught mainly as from Standard 9 up to 10*. An average of

18,80% however, feel that poetry teaching should be carried out even at Standard 8 level.

Perhaps this distribution implies that poetry should be taught at STD 8 level but with an increase in volume and detail as the learner progresses through his/her secondary education. If this interpretation is correct, then a conclusion could be drawn to the effect that although poetry should form part of the Xitsonga secondary school literature syllabus, *it should be taught in ever-widening circles from STD 8 to STD 10.*

ITEM 6: What criteria should be born in mind when selecting Xitsonga poetry anthology for Secondary School learners?

It is interesting to note that 70% of the teacher-respondents in the semi-urban areas listed the criteria for the selection of poetry anthology in a descending order of importance just like the majority of the pupils across the target research areas as against only 30% of their counter-parts in the same areas who listed them horizontally. 90% of the teacher-respondents in the rural areas listed the criteria for the selection of poetry anthology for the senior secondary school pupils in a horizontal fashion as against only 10% of their counter-parts in the areas who listed them vertically. In the typically-rural areas, 93% of the teacher-respondents listed the criteria for the selection of poetry anthology in a horizontal manner as compared to only 7% of their counter-parts in the same areas who listed them vertically.

On average, 84,33% of the teacher respondents across the reserch areas listed the criteria for the selection of Xitsonga poetry anthology for the senior secondary school pupils horizontally as opposed to an average of only 15,67% of their counter-parts in the same areas who listed them vertically.

The implication of this research data is that the majority of the teachers across the target areas would be happy if the criteria for the selection of Xitsonga poetry

anthology could be viewed in an holistic manner. What one reads into this is that these criteria are interrelated and interdependent. This implies that any selection that is of “**good quality**” should be “**within the pupils’ world of experience**” as a means to an end. In pedagogical terms we would say, “**from the known**”, at the same time that leads to the selection that “**widens the pupils’ world of experience**” (to the unknown), that takes into account the importance of the “**modern poetry**”, whose “**stanzas’ length are of standard nature**” (i.e. not too short nor too long). To make the teaching and learning of Xitsoga poetry an “**enjoyable and exciting exercise**”, the anthology should include poems that could be “**easily sung by the pupils**”. On the contrary however, the minority of the teacher-respondents (i.e. 15,67%) across the target research areas’ suggested criteria for the selection of poetry anthology could be listed vertically as follows:

- Appropriate length of the poems, should mirror the culture of the learners and widen the experience of the learners,
- Poetry should be within the pupils world of experience;
- Modern poetry is important,
- Poetry could be sung and
- Poetry should be enjoyable.

The next item seeks to establish the particular poetry aspects the teachers across the three target areas are best able or least able to teach or focus on.

ITEM 7: Which aspects of Xitsonga poetry are you best or least able to teach or to focus on?

Experience and pre-research samples from Xitsonga secondary school teachers reveal that to varying degrees, teachers find the following aspects of poetry more difficult or less difficult.

- Figurative language
- Figures of sound

- Subject matter
- Theme
- Detailed analysis
- Imagery
- Background knowledge about the poet and
- Vocabulary and syntax.

The purpose of this questionnaire item was to rank these in order of difficulty or otherwise for semi-urban, rural and typically-rural teachers in order to gain insight into this area of L1 teaching and learning.

TABLE 8: INDICATION OF POETRY ASPECTS THAT SECONDARY POETRY TEACHERS ARE BEST OR LEAST ABLE TO TEACH OR TO FOCUS ON

SEMI-URBAN AREAS	RANK IN ORDER OF ABILITY (1 - 9)									Those they cannot teach	Uncertain		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9			10	11
	Figurative language Subject matter Theme Detailed analysis	Figurative language Subject matter Theme Detailed analysis	Figurative language Sounds Subject matter Theme	Figurative language Sounds Theme Detailed analysis Vocabulary and Syntax	Figurative language Theme Analysis Vocabulary and syntax	Imagery Background knowledge about the Poet Vocabulary and syntax	Sounds Imagery Background knowledge about the Poet	Sounds Imagery Background knowledge about the Poet	8	9	10	11	
	10%	10%	10%	8,33%	10%	8,33%	5%	8,33%				30,01%	100%

RURAL AREAS	Figurative language Theme	Figurative language Theme	Figurative language Sounds	Subject matter Theme	Subject matter Analysis	Sounds Subject matter	Sounds Subject matter Imagery Back-ground knowledge about the Poet Vocabulary and syntax	Imagery Back-ground knowledge about the Poet Vocabulary and syntax	Sounds Back-ground knowledge about the Poet Vocabulary and syntax			100%
	10%	10%	10%	10%	11,66%	8,33%	8,33%	6,66%	25,02%			
TYPICALLY-RURAL AREAS	Figurative language Sounds Subject matter Theme Analysis Imagery Back-ground knowledge about the Poet	Subject matter Theme Vocabulary and syntax	Figurative language Theme Vocabulary and syntax	Analysis Subject matter	Figurative language Imagery	Analysis	Figurative language	Back-ground knowledge about the Poet Vocabulary and syntax	Figurative language Sounds Subject matter Imagery Back-ground knowledge about the Poet Vocabulary and syntax			100%
	16%	6%	6%	6%	4%	2%	2%	4%	54%			

5.3.4 Analysis of TABLE 8

According to this TABLE, 10% of the teacher-respondents in the semi-urban areas ranked figurative language, subject matter, theme and detailed analysis first on the list. Their counter-parts in the rural areas who also consisted of 10% ranked figurative language, theme, detailed analysis and vocabulary and syntax first on the list. The difference between the two groups of respondents in the semi-urban and rural areas is in the one poetry aspect viz the inclusion of subject matter in the case of the semi-urban teacher-respondents and inclusion of vocabulary and syntax in the case of rural teacher-respondents. 16% of the teacher-respondents in the typically-rural areas ranked figurative language, sounds, subject matter, theme, analysis, imagery and background knowledge about the poet first on the list. The latter out-numbered their counter-parts in the semi-urban and rural areas by 6%. This is attributed to the fact that they included imagery and background knowledge about the poet on their list which the former exclude.

The teacher-respondents in the semi-urban areas who consisted of only 10% listed figurative language, subject matter, theme and detailed analysis second on the list. 10% of the teacher-respondents in the rural areas listed figurative language, theme and detailed analysis second on their list. The difference between the two groups of teacher-respondents is the inclusion of the subject matter by the former and its exclusion by the latter. The teacher-respondents in the typically-rural areas who consisted of only 6% listed subject matter, theme and vocabulary and syntax second on the list. The latter are out-numbered by 4% by their semi-urban and rural areas counter-parts.

The teacher respondents in the semi-urban areas who consisted of 10% indicated figurative language, sounds, subject matter and theme third on the list. Their rural counter-parts who consisted of 10% ranked figurative language, sounds, theme and imagery third on the list. The difference between the two groups is that the former included subject matter in its ranking whereas the latter included imagery in its

ranking. The typically-rural areas teacher-respondents who consisted of only 6% ranked figurative language, theme, vocabulary and syntax third on their list. Just like the latter's rank one, and two, they were out-numbered by their semi-urban and rural counter-parts by 4%.

8,33% of the teacher-respondents in the semi-urban areas listed figurative language, sounds, theme, detailed analysis and vocabulary and syntax fourth on their list. 10% of the teacher-respondents in the rural areas listed subject matter, theme, detailed analysis and vocabulary and syntax fourth on their list. The former were out-numbered by the latter by 1,67%. The teacher-respondents in the typically-rural areas who consisted of 6% ranked analysis and subject matter fourth on their list. They were out-numbered by 4% of the teacher-respondents in the rural areas and by 2,33% of the teacher-respondents in the semi-urban areas.

10% of the teacher-respondents in the semi-urban areas ranked figurative language, theme, detailed analysis and vocabulary and syntax fifth on the list compared to 11,66% of the teacher-respondents in the rural areas who ranked subject matter, detailed analysis, imagery, background knowledge about the poet and vocabulary and syntax fifth on the list. The latter out-numbered the former by 1,66%. The typically-rural areas teacher-respondents who consisted of 4% listed figurative language and imagery fifth on their list. They were out-numbered by 7,66% of their counter-parts in the rural areas and also by 6% of their counter-parts in the semi-urban areas.

8,33% of the teacher-respondents in the semi-urban areas ranked imagery, background knowledge about the poet and vocabulary and syntax sixth on the list as well as 8,33% of their counter-parts in the rural areas who ranked sounds, subject matter, detailed analysis and imagery sixth on the list. The difference is that the former had three items in their ranking whereas the latter had four in their ranking (rank). The typically-rural areas teacher-respondents who consisted of 2% ranked analysis sixth on the list. They were out-numbered by their counter-parts

in the semi-urban and rural areas by 6,33% respectively.

The TABLE further indicates that the semi-urban teacher respondents who consisted of 5% ranked sounds, imagery and background knowledge about the poet seventh on their list, while their counter-parts in the rural areas who consisted of 8,33% ranked sounds, subject matter, imagery, background knowledge about the poet and vocabulary and syntax seventh on the list. The latter out-numbered the former by 3,33%. The typically-rural areas teacher-respondents who consisted of 2% listed figurative language seventh on the list. They were out-numbered by their counter-parts in the semi-urban areas by 3% and the rural areas ones by 6,33%.

8,33% of the semi-urban areas teacher-respondents ranked sounds, imagery and backgrounds knowledge about the poet eighth on their list compared to their rural counter-parts who consisted of 6,66% who ranked imagery, background knowledge about the poet and vocabulary and syntax eighth on the list. The former out-numbered the latter by 1,67%. The typically-rural areas teacher-respondents who consisted of 4% ranked background knowledge about the poet and vocabulary and syntax eighth on their list. They were out-numbered by their counter-parts in the semi-urban areas by 4,33% and the rural areas ones by 2,66%. None of the teacher-respondents in the semi-urban areas, rural areas and typically-rural areas utilized the comments or others column.

25,02% of the rural areas teacher-respondents indicated that sounds, background knowledge about the poet and vocabulary and syntax were the poetry aspects they could not teach at all. On the other hand, 54% of the typically-rural areas teacher-respondents indicated that figurative language, sounds, subject matter, imagery, background knowledge about the poet and vocabulary and syntax were the poetry aspects they also could not teach at all. The latter out-numbered the former by 28,98%.

This TABLE further shows that 30,01% of the teacher-respondents in the semi-urban areas were uncertain about ranking the poetry aspects of sounds, detailed analysis, imagery, background knowledge about the poet and vocabulary and syntax.

5.3.5 Interpretation of TABLE 8

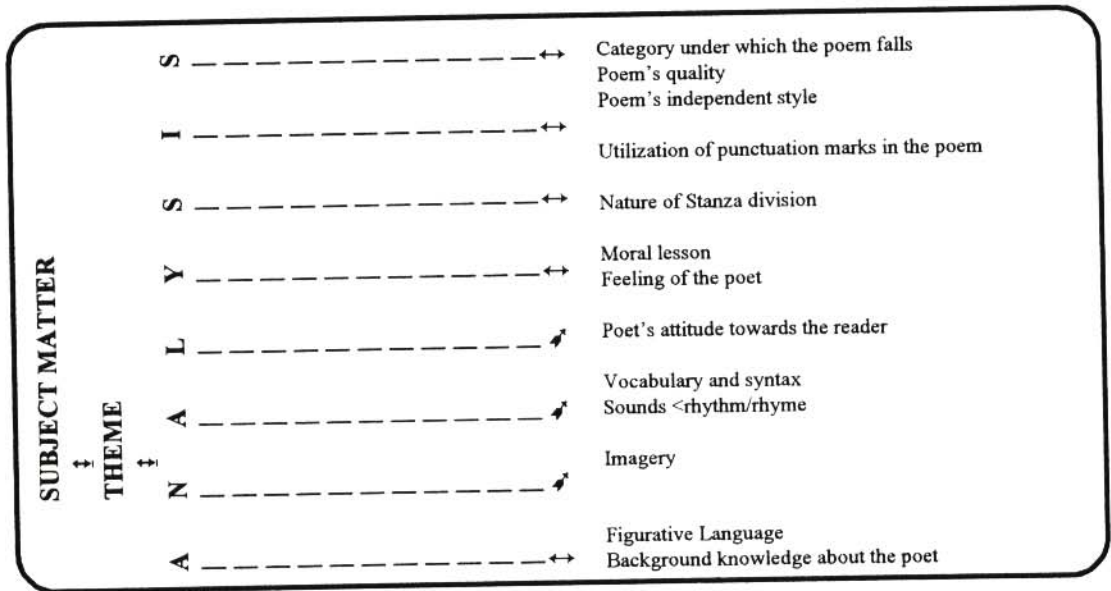
This TABLE reveals that the state of affairs among the teachers of Xitsonga poetry at secondary school level leaves much to be desired. 69,99% of the teacher-respondents in the semi-urban areas, 74,98% of the teacher-respondents in the rural areas and 56% of the teacher-respondents in the typically-rural areas opted for the vertical response in indicating the poetry aspects they are best able to teach at the expense of the apple or ball, the T and the horizontal options (see illustration on page 215).

The TABLE further shows that 30,01% of the semi-urban teacher-respondents are uncertain about teaching certain poetry aspects, 25,02% and 54% of their counterparts in the rural and typically-rural areas respectively cannot teach certain poetry aspects at all.

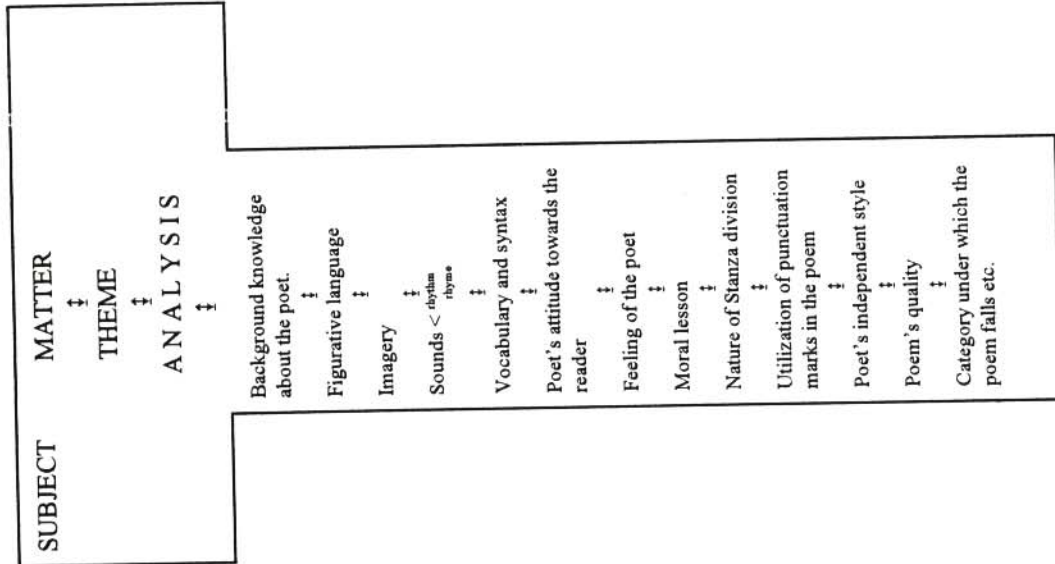
In the light of the responses at hand, one can infer that the teachers of Xitsonga poetry have directly contributed to the pupils' selective learning of the poetry aspects. If the Xitsonga poetry teachers over-emphasize other poetry aspects at the expense of others, are uncertain about other poetry aspects and are unable to teach other poetry aspects altogether, one cannot expect the pupils to do well in poetry. If we were to adopt the English saying "**Like father like son**" in the light of the context of this research project, we would say "**Like teacher like pupil**", or as Maibelo (1989: 139) puts it: "**Kgoši ya hlotša balata re a hlotša**". This Sepedi idiomatic expression means that servants do things the way the Chief or King does things.

ILLUSTRATION OF THREE POSSIBLE OPTIONS APART FROM THE POPULAR VERTICAL ONE

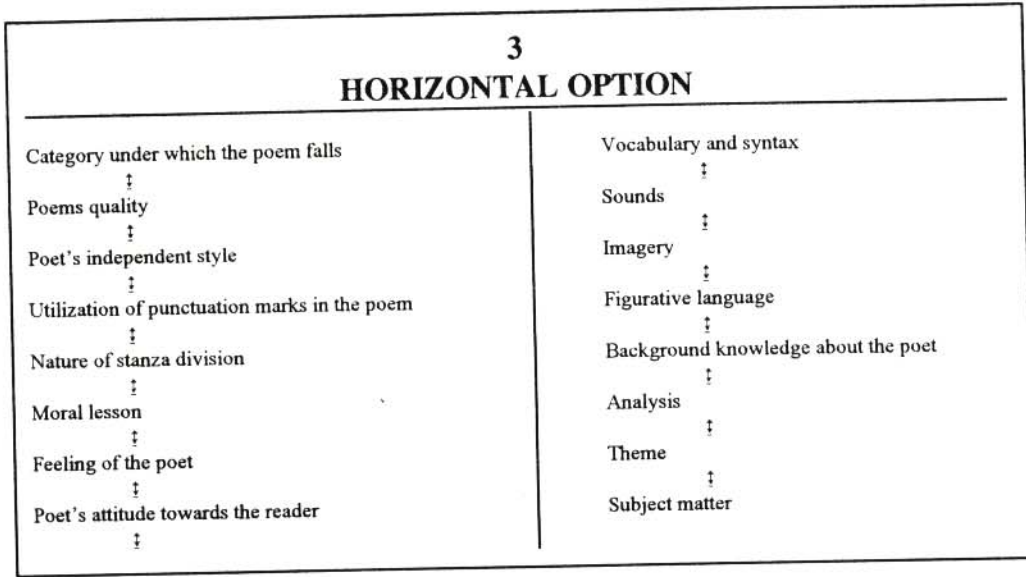
1
BALL OPTION



2
T OPTION



3
HORIZONTAL OPTION



Hereunder, this study shall endeavour to further interpret this TABLE (i.e. TABLE 8) against the subheadings semi-urban areas teacher-respondents, rural teacher-respondents and typically-rural areas teacher-respondents.

The fact that 10% of the semi-urban areas teacher-respondents listed figurative language, subject matter, theme and detailed analysis first justifies the researcher's finding that there is a pitfall among the Xitsonga poetry teachers of much concentration on the poet's art of utilizing implied meaning in his/her poem, the determination of what the poem is all about, the central message of the poem and the detailed discourse on how the poet communicates his/her message to the reader(s) at the expense of the other poetry aspects.

The rural areas teacher-respondents who consist of 10% are also the victims of the selective approach in teaching the poetry aspects to secondary school pupils as opposed to the holistic approach. The latter differ with their semi-urban areas counter-parts by one item only. They excluded the determination of what the poet is all about in their list and listed the poet's use of independent words and violation of word order.

The fact that 16% of the typically areas teacher-respondents listed the implied meaning as opposed to literal meaning in the poem, the application of rhythm and rhyme in the poem, the determination of what the poem is all about, the determination of the central message of the poem, the detailed discourse on how the poet communicates his/her message to the reader(s), the ability of the poet to create images in the mind of the reader(s) and the knowledge of the poet's background experience in order to appreciate some of the poems that need his/her experiential background shows that there is a sizable number of poetry items that these teachers are best able to teach compared to their counter-parts in the semi-urban and rural areas. This implies, as noted elsewhere in this study that language is more closer to the typically-rural areas than in the semi-urban and rural areas.

The fact that 10% of the semi-urban areas teacher-respondents ranked the implied meaning in the poem, what the poem is all about, the central message of the poem and the detailed discussion on how the poet communicates his/her message to the reader second on the list shows the extent to which the selective approach is used by these teachers in teaching Xitsonga poetry.

10% of the teacher-respondents in the rural areas who also ranked the implied meaning in the poem, the central message of the poem, the detailed discussion on how the poet communicates his/her message to the reader second on the list proves that they and their counter-parts in the semi-urban areas are birds of a feather. One would expect the rural teacher-respondents to do better than their counter-parts in the semi-urban areas because of the culturally rich environment in which they are residing.

The fact that only 6% of the teacher-respondents in the typically-rural areas placed what the poem is all about, the central message of the poem and the poet's independent words and expression and violation of word order second on the list indicates a decrease by 4% of the teacher-respondents in these areas compared to their counter-parts in the semi-urban and rural areas.

The vertical approach of these three categories of the teacher-respondents goes on up to rank 8 with no meaningful difference to write home about. It is interesting to note however that the totally neglected poetry aspects by these teachers who consist of 8,33% are the rhythm and the rhyme in the poem, the creation of mind pictures and the knowledge of the poet's background experience in order to appreciate some of the poems that need his/her experiential background in the semi-urban areas. Their counter-parts in the rural areas who consist of 6,66% totally neglect mind pictures, background knowledge about the poet and the poet's independent words and expressions and violation of word order in the poem. 4% of the teacher-respondents in the typically-rural areas appear to totally neglect background knowledge about the poet and vocabulary

and syntax.

In the light of this negligence by the Xitsonga poetry teachers in the semi-urban, rural and typically-rural areas, the pupils in the process are losing out the touch of appreciating “**the food of the ear**” in the case of the rhythm in the poem and “**the food of the eyes**” in the case of the rhyme in the poem; the pleasure of temporarily being engrossed in the poet’s creation of mind pictures in the poem (see also Marivate, 1984: 28), the valuable knowledge of the poet’s experience in order to fully appreciate some of the poems that need his/her experiential background (see Chapter 3 above), and the poet’s use of independent words and expressions as against conventional use and deliberate violation of word order in the poem for effect and related poetic qualities (see also Maibelo, 1989: 165). Since the pupils are the teachers of tomorrow as well as the custodians of the Vatsonga culture, one does not see the survival of these neglected poetry aspects beyond the next generation or two unless something drastic is done by all stakeholders in education about it.

What rubs salt into the wound is that 30,01% of these teachers in the semi-urban areas are not only negligent but are uncertain or to be more precise, are ignorant about how best or how badly they can teach the secondary school pupils the figures of sounds, how to analyse a poem in detail, how mind pictures are created in a poet and background knowledge about the poet and vocabulary and syntax. The implication of this uncertainty in the teaching and learning situation is that the best the teacher can deliver on these poetry aspects is at best to distort them, or at worst encourage mechanical reading of the poems in order to avoid exposing his/her limitation to the pupils who in the process unfortunately get the impression that poetry is, for example boring, irrelevant and out of tune with modern life. It will not be inconsistent with fact if the majority of these teachers should consist of those with Primary Teacher Diploma and Primary Teacher Certificate professional qualifications who also consist of 33,33% and 11,11% respectively. These teachers, as observed elsewhere in this study, though

professionally trained, are nonetheless not specifically trained to deal with the level of content of poetry that their graduate counter-parts have been steeped in and therefore they need to be placed where their professional training can be best utilised lest their limitation should disadvantage the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry at secondary school level.

In the rural areas the situation is not encouraging either. The fact that 25,02% of the teacher-respondents cannot teach rhythm and rhyme, background knowledge about the poet and vocabulary and syntax at all should be viewed in very serious light by the Education Faculties at Universities, Colleges of Education and Technikons which offer both academic and professional Xitsonga courses in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular. That rhythm and rhyme are poetry and musical aspects that are in the veins of a Mutsonga cannot be overemphasised. Indeed one does not even have to be a professional to appreciate their significance in poetry and music. A visit to the Vatsonga music festival and a look at how the young, the old, the illiterate and the educated respond artistically to the rhythm and rhyme of an artist like Makhuvele and Khohlawani Girls' piece *Mhana' S'bongile*, attest to this. The piece goes as follows:

*Mhana' S'bongile xana swi lo yini dali mama,
Mhana' S'bongile xana swi lo yini bebi mama,
Bebi mama a wu ndzi lavi bebi mama,
Bebi mama swi lo yini na bebi mama.*

In Translation

S'bongile's mother what is wrong darling mammy,
S'bongile's mother what is wrong baby mammy,
My baby my mammy don't you love me baby mammy,
My baby my mammy what is wrong baby mammy.

Look at them twist their hips side-ways, backward and forward simultaneously in

response to the rhyme and rhythm of Makhuvele's piece in the case of the females. Look at the males move three steps forward and three steps backward in response to the rhyme and rhythm of the said song. It is quite evident that there is a systematically orchestrated effort at undermining these poetry aspects (i.e. rhyme and rhythm) at some quarters. Very unfortunately, this problem appears to be a top-to-bottom one. These people are denying the pupils their natural heritage, their source of expressing their joy and happiness. What the researcher does not encourage however, is forcing rhythm and rhyme into a poem for the sake of displaying them. They should flow naturally and spontaneously in a poem and where they are correctly displayed, should be acknowledge and appreciated by both teacher and pupil.

These teachers, who are directly involved with the pupils on the ground, need to be reminded again that some of the poems they are assigned to teach at secondary school level, can only be fully appreciated if the background experiences of the poet that led to their authorship are known. In order to highlight the importance of this, the teacher can give his/her pupils an assignment to interview a poet like Masebenza or Magaisa on what specifically led them to write poems like **Rimenyo** in the case of Masebenza and **Emahosi Ka Yindlu ya N'wankumi** in the case of Magaisa. Getting the story from the horse's mouth as it were will go a long way in shedding some light in the analysis of the poems they are required to study. This research project in Chapter 3 for example has discovered that in the authorship of the poem **Rimenyo** by Masebenza, the poet's unpleasant personal background experience most probably played a role in the creation of the poem. This probability is matrixed in the following life-experience of Masebenza:

Although the poem **Rimenyo** was written before the poet's ultimate resignation of his post as Language Officer in 1985, nonetheless, it is a true reflection of his general discontent. His moving from one post to the next (See, for example, Rikhotso, 1989:58) was not just an up-ward mobility as such, but a human endeavour to avoid the apparent omnipresent of a **Swarm of biting ants**. When one scrutinizes the poet's posts from Johannesburg to Venda, one realises that they range from assistant teacher,

tutorship, Language Officer and Lectureship. Obviously these are no senior posts for a person of the poet's calibre. Apparently, it is against this background that the poet writes: **16 - Hi ta tsutsumela kwihi?** ("Where shall we run to for refuge"). (See also Chapter 3 above).

Xitsonga teachers should be reminded that by their failure to teach the pupils about the importance of vocabulary and syntax in a poem, they are also denying them (i.e. the pupils) the ability to know and appreciate the poet's use of independent words and expressions and deliberate violation of word order for poetic effect. In the poem "**Swihloni**" for example, Masebenza exhibits these poetry aspects in:

Hi le Joni la':
Ka jika-va-jikile,
Gila-va-girile
Hi le Joni la'.

The compound-nouns "jika-va-jikile" and gila-va-girile" are coined by the poet for effect. These compound-nouns also violate the syntactic rule but at the same time make more impact to the reader than their day to day usage. A similar poetic style adopted by Masebenza is evident in the poetry of Gerald Manley Hopkins in, for example, "**The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo**" :

" wimpled-water-dimpled ..."
 "...beauty-in-the-ghost"

The fact that 54% of the typically-rural areas teacher-respondents cannot teach figurative language, sounds, subject matter, imagery, background knowledge about the poet and vocabulary and syntax at all, should send a shock message to all stake holders in Education. How these teachers had made it through their matric and post-matric studies without the knowledge of the foregoing essential poetry aspects they maintain they cannot teach at all is a pedagogical mystery. Contrary to these shocking

revelations, this research project reveals that 100% of these teachers are holders of at least one post-matric qualification(s). I do not think that our institutions of higher learning should be proud of their products who after spending at least three years of both academic and professional training are totally unable to teach the secondary school pupils these poetry aspects to advantage.

What disturbs most is the fact that these teachers who cannot teach these poetry aspects are placed in an environment that is culture friendly and language supportive. These teachers should appreciate the fact that these poetry aspects are the building blocks of poetry that the poet desperately needs in his/her mission. One of the powerful tools that a poet uses in painting his/her colourful picture is figurative language or implied meaning. It should be an enjoyable exercise to these teachers to teach their pupils how, for example, a poet uses simile, metaphor, hyperbole, euphemism, irony, synecdoche, sarcasm, metonymy to drive his/her message home as against the day to day use of language (For practical use of figurative language in a poem see Chapter 3 above). Since the sounds, background knowledge about the poet and vocabulary and syntax were discussed under the rural areas teacher-respondents, there is no need to further elaborate on them. These teachers need to be advised that by subject matter it is meant the determination of what the poem is all about. This can only be achieved by attentively and carefully reading the poem twice or thrice before one can ask oneself what it is all about (See also Chapter 3, above). They need also to be reminded that the pupils have the right to know how a poet uses mind images in order to capture the attention of his/her readers in a poem. There is a relationship between imagery and personification. What the poet personifies (in most cases inanimate objects and other creatures apart from human beings) creates pictures in the minds of the readers. Marivate (1984:28) cites a good example of imagery in the poem "Pfuka" from *Nthavela ya Michleketo* by Nkondo E.M. It goes this way:

Vona dyambu

(Look at the sun)

Ri languti

(Just look at it)

Ri endle masingita etintshaveni

(It has performed miraculous deeds on the mountains)

Ri andlale sangu ra rihlaza erivaleni.

(It has spread a green mat on the plains).

In the foregoing lines, we find that the poet has succeeded in creating images in our minds in the form of the sun spreading a green mat over the mountains and the plains. The inanimate object, the sun is pictured in our minds as a living person who spreads a green mat over the mountains and the plains: “**Ri endle masingita etintshaveni. Ri andlale sangu ra rihlaza arivaleni**”.

The next item seeks to establish the specific type of poetry Xitsonga teachers find most difficult to teach.

ITEM 8: Which poetry do you find most difficult to teach?

Poetry usually prescribed for the Xitsonga syllabus in the secondary school is of three types viz traditional poetry, transitional poetry and modern poetry. A questionnaire item was designed to find out from the teachers whether they find any of these three types of poetry particularly difficult to teach and where possible to give some reasons why they find such poetry difficult to handle in the classroom. Analysis yielded the following spread summarised in TABLE 9 below.

TABLE 9: DISTRIBUTION OF TEACHER-OPINION IN RESPECT OF POETRY MOST DIFFICULT TO TEACH.

	TYPICALLY-RURAL	RURAL	SEMI-URBA
TRADITIONAL POETRY	10%	11%	56%
TRANSITIONAL POETRY	35%	39%	24%
MODERN POETRY	55%	50%	20%
TOTALS	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 9 supports the thesis that this study has tendered again and again viz that typically-rural and rural milieux are more supportive to language that is culturally-based and culturally-rich than urban or semi-urban milieux. The **TABLE** shows that Xitsonga teachers who dwell and teach in rural schools find traditional poetry least difficult to teach but find modern poetry (with its modern language and content) more difficult to teach. 90% and 89% (See page 224) respectively of the typically-rural and rural teachers sampled indicated that they find traditional poetry least difficult to teach while 55% and 50% of the said teachers respectively find modern poetry rather difficult to teach.

The situation is reversed in the case of teachers in semi-urban areas. 56% of these latter teachers indicated that they found traditional poetry rather difficult to teach while only 20% said they found modern poetry comparatively difficult to teach.

Quite understandably, the study revealed that transitional poetry is every teacher's problem to a greater or lesser extent. It is poetry in transition and will therefore have a problem for this teacher and an absence of a problem for that teacher. Questionnaire analysis suggested as much.

Urban or semi-urban teachers say they find traditional poetry difficult to teach because some of the references made and language idioms used are unfamiliar to them and therefore pose problems of interpretation and elaboration. Typically-rural and rural teachers on the other hand say modern poetry is not "pure Xitsonga poetry" in that it

occurs outside the traditional matrix of importance in themselves; what is important about them is that they show that certain teachers are more comfortable in certain type of poetry and uncomfortable in another type. This means that in service training for Xitsonga teachers is for example, very important if “balanced” teachers are to be found in our schools.

It is this latter finding that has made the researcher to do two things viz (a) talk to the teachers in greater details i.e. interview and (b) talk to the Subject Adviser and the STD 10 External Examiner in the same details. More detailed solicitation of data seemed justified over and above data provided by the questionnaire if a complete and comprehensive picture is to be painted. (See subsequent items below).

It seems the problems in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry this project has revealed so far are deep-seated. They seem to go beyond the Xitsonga poetry learners and teachers in that the Education Administrators who are suppose to be exemplary in encouraging holistic learning and teaching of application of poetry aspects, they themselves are evidently victims of the selective approach. For example, the Xitsonga Subject Adviser was required to indicate the kind of poetry aspects he emphasizes most to the teachers under his supervision. Just like the pupils and the teachers, the Subject Adviser also settled for the vertical option and, in the process leaving out the ball, the T and the horizontal options. The same applied to the Matric Literature Chief External Examiner.

In the light of these preliminary findings, the problem of teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry will definitely need a revolutionary approach on the part of all stake holders in order to get the desired positive results.

What concerns the researcher most, is the fact that findings of this nature which are suppose to be utilized and made accessible to the public in general and education stake holders in particular, often end-up unused on shelves of the Africana section of libraries. Secondly, there is a lack of a sense of urgency in matters that concern change

in general and the teaching of African literature in particular. Those entrusted with the responsibility of delivery in this respect are often tardy, unsure or both.

C. TEACHER ORAL INTERVIEWS

5.4 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this sub-section of the research is to get further details in respect of the teachers, the Xitsonga Subject Advisor and the Std 10 External Examiner especially as regards the **How** i.e. methodology in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry.

5.4.1 **The structured interview sought specific data bearing on whether or not the teacher interviewee made use of teaching aids in his/her poetry classes. His/hers was to choose his/her answer among three possible options, namely: "Yes", "No" and "Uncertain".**

According to the analysis of the oral interviews, 83, 34% of the teacher-respondents in the semi-urban areas indicated that they do make use of teaching aids, and 16,66% are uncertain as to whether they do. On the other hand, 100% of their counter-parts in the typically-rural areas indicated that they do engage teaching aids in their poetry lessons.

The fact that on the average 94,12% of the teacher-interviewees in all the three areas (i.e. semi-urban, rural and typically-rural) engaged teaching aids in their poetry lesson presentation shows that our Institution of Higher Learning have done a fine job of impressing upon our former student-teachers about the importance of teaching aids. They seem to come to terms with the fact that the audio-visual aids and other related teaching aids are essential instruments in language pedagogy. Among other things, they minimize much talking on the side of the teacher in that the lesson could easily be seen by the pupils on the

black-board or on the chart in the case of visual aids (See also Nkatini, 1982:44-58; Van der Stoep et al,1984: 151-152). On the other hand, it is disturbing to note that 16,66% of these teachers were uncertain as to whether they do use teaching aids in their poetry lessons or not. This implies that such teachers come ill-prepared or even unprepared for their poetry lessons. Effective use of teaching aids requires thorough lesson preparation on the side of the teacher. It would appear that these teachers are not dedicated to their call (i.e. if they are called at all) to serve the nation. They do not seem to derive pleasure in imparting knowledge on this exciting and informative genre and in the process make the pupils to have a negative attitude towards literature in general and poetry in particular.

5.4.2 The oral Structured interview required those whose answer was “Yes” to specify the teaching aids they used in presenting their poetry lessons.

The interviews under this item revealed that 80% of the teacher respondents in the semi-urban areas only engaged the prescribed book(s) and the chalkboard, piece of chalk and duster as their teaching aids in the presentation of their poetry lesson, contrary to only 20% of their counter-parts in the same areas who engaged the chalkboard, piece of chalk and duster as their teaching aids.

In the rural areas, 100% of the teacher-respondents engaged the prescribed book(s), the chalkboard, piece of chalk and duster as their teaching aids. The difference between the latter and the former is that 20% of the former engaged the chalkboard, piece of chalk and duster whereas the latter engaged the prescribed book(s), chalkboard, piece of chalk and duster as their lesson teaching aids.

40% of the teacher interviewees in the typically-rural areas engaged the prescribed book(s), the chalkboard, piece of chalk and duster as their teaching

aids, 40% of their counter-parts in the same areas engaged the chalkboard, piece of chalk and duster and 20% of the teacher-interviewees in the same areas engaged the prescribed book(s), the chalkboard, piece of chalk and duster as their lesson teaching aids. The similarities among the teacher-interviewees in the three categories of the target areas is that 40% of the latter (i.e. typically-rural areas) engaged two types of teaching aids, 100% of their counter-parts in the rural areas also engaged only two types of teaching aids and 80% of their counter-parts in the semi-urban areas as well engaged two types of teaching aids only 40% of the teacher-interviewees in the typically-rural areas engaged only one type of teaching aid as well as 20% of their counter-parts in the semi-urban areas. Only 20% of the teacher-interviewees in the typically-rural areas differed with the rest in that they engaged three types of teaching aids whereas the rest engaged either one or two teaching aids.

The fact that on the grand-average 73,33% of the teacher-interviewees in all the target areas engaged only two types of traditional teaching aids, 20% of their counter-parts across the target areas engaged only one traditional teaching aid and 6,67% of them across the target areas engaged three types of teaching aids is shocking in methodological terms. What disturbs most is that they only engaged ready-made teaching aids like the prescribed book(s), the chalkboard, piece of chalk and duster and to a less extent some teacher made charts. It would appear that these teachers do not realise the importance of the teaching aids in teaching literature in general and poetry in particular. They only use the three (i.e. Prescribed books(s), chalkboard and charts) simply because they are readily available and one does not need to exert much effort to utilize say a chalkboard or poetry book as compared to video or tape recorded poems, suitable objects or models, overhead projectors etc.

Our institutions of higher learning need to revise their courses on teaching aids or teaching media as a matter of urgency. It is quite evident that there is no

meaningful effort on the part of our institutions to impress upon the student-teachers that all forms of teaching aids are not only important but essential in the teaching and learning of poetry. The researcher, through the experience that he has gathered as a college lecturer, high school teacher and currently university lecturer appreciates the fact that teaching aids can contribute not less than 50% towards the learner's understanding of a lesson. Even the Greatest Teacher of them all who was also the Son of God did not leave out the teaching aids in His theological lessons He so successfully conducted almost 2 000 years ago. Who will ever forget the teaching aids He engaged to elucidate His dynamic lessons on, for example, *The Living Water*, John 4: 1-16, *The Bread of Life*, John 6: 1-41 and *The Good Shepherd*, John 10: 1-18 etc.

It is against this background that the researcher strongly recommends that our institutions of higher learning should introduce a fully-fledged Diploma course on utilizing teaching aids to advantage under the guidance and supervision of a specialist or an expert. This would most probably go a long way in making lesson presentation in general and poetry lesson in particular an interesting and enjoyable exercise. It could also serve to provide the basis on at least utilizing the chalkboard effectively to those "professors" who have had no professional training but at the same time adequately trained academically in their respective fields.

5.4.3 The interview also required the teacher-interviewees to state the manner in which they introduced their lessons as well as to state any other techniques apart from those cited by the interviewer.

The interviews of the above item revealed that 60% of the teacher-respondents in the semi-urban areas engaged only one technique in introducing their poetry lessons, and 40% of their counter-parts in the same areas engaged two techniques in introducing their poetry lessons.

In the rural areas, 66,66% of the teacher-respondents engaged only one type of technique (i.e. each of the four engage background lecture), 16,67% engage only one technique also (i.e. mechanical reading and questions) and 16,67% as well engaged only one technique (i.e. relevant questions by the teacher) in introducing their poetry lessons.

The picture in the typically-rural areas is a bit different from that of the semi-urban and rural areas in that 40% of the teacher-respondents engaged four techniques, 40% engaged one technique and the last 20% engaged two techniques in introducing their poetry lessons.

The fact that on average the semi-urban teacher-interviewees engaged 1,4 techniques in their introduction of poetry lessons shows that they do not utilize a sufficient variety of techniques in order to make their poetry lessons an enjoyable and interesting exercise. One's introduction can either make the whole lesson interesting or boring and in the case of the latter (i.e. boring introduction) the teaching aims could not be achieved at the end of the lesson.

One would expect the rural areas teacher-interviewees to engage a variety of techniques because of the closeness of the environment in which their schools are situated to the Vatsonga culture compared to the latter, but surprisingly the opposite is the case. On average, the teacher-interviewees in the rural areas engaged only one technique in introducing their poetry lessons. The former out-numbered the latter by 0,4 on average. It would appear that there is no effort on the part of the rural teachers to introduce their poetry lessons differently so as to motivate their pupils throughout the year. These teachers seem to forget that like in any other activity, variety is the spice of life in the classroom.

In the typically-rural areas, the teacher-interviewees engaged an average of 2,4 techniques compared to one (1) technique in the case of their rural counter-

parts and 1,4 techniques in the case of their semi-urban counter-parts. Though they out-numbered their rural counter-parts by 1,4 techniques and their semi-urban counter-parts by 1 (one) technique, nonetheless, their average use of a variety of techniques is not good either. Our teachers seem to forget that a variety of techniques at the beginning of every lesson is essential as well as for further maintenance of such motivation. About the importance of engaging a variety of techniques in presenting a lesson in general and poetry lesson in particular, Ceyhan E. (1988:48) writes:

A teacher should try to motivate his students at the beginning of every lesson during the first 10 minutes - and sustain that motivation throughout the lesson. There are many techniques that can be used to motivate the students.

Our teachers most probably were taught about many techniques that can be used at the beginning of poetry lessons. One of the **UNIN Evaluation Forms (i.e. Form D)**, states quite clearly that an introduction should entail among other things, arousing interest from the pupils, linking with the previous experience of the pupils and motivating the pupils to learn/listen. All these teachers went through the test and most probably highly impressed their lecturers and subsequently obtained As and Bs in the lesson introduction hence they are in the field today. It would appear that their monotonous introductions could be attributed to sheer laziness and taking things for granted. The researcher cannot agree with Ceyhan E. (*ibid*) more when he says:

Generally habits guide our behaviour;
they seem to make life easier for us.
More of the time we don't ask ourselves;

“What shall I do in this lesson?” We just do whatever we have been doing for many years. But teachers should take time to evaluate themselves on whether they are setting good examples for students and colleagues to follow.

Some of these techniques that could be engaged to advantage are starting a lesson with say: summary of the previous lesson, evaluating the previous lesson(s), giving some hints, having a short dialogue, showing an object, using a proverb or idiom, giving a logic quiz, repeating a riddle, encouraging pupil questions, asking the pupils relevant questions, engaging an anecdote, dramatizing a lesson, introducing a poet/critic to the pupils, getting acquainted and lastly but not least with relevant music. The researcher, however, wishes to caution our poetry teachers that each and every technique that is engaged in a lesson should be relevant to its **contents** otherwise the aim of engaging it will be defeated (For practical examples, see Ceyhan E., 1988:48-49).

5.4.4 The structured interview also required the teacher-respondents to specify the kind of teaching method(s) they employed in presenting their poetry lessons.

The researcher's interviews with the Xitsonga poetry teachers revealed that 16,66% of the teacher-interviewees in the semi-urban areas engaged only two teaching methods (viz lecture method and question-and-answer method), 66,68% of their colleagues in the same areas engaged only one teaching method in their presentation of poetry lessons, and 16,66% of these teachers in the same areas were uncertain. On average, the teacher-respondents in the semi-urban areas engaged only 1,20 teaching methods in their presentation of Xitsonga poetry lessons.

In the rural areas, the researcher's interviews revealed that 33,33% of the teacher respondents engaged only one teaching method (i.e. each of the two respondents engaged question-and-answer method) 16,67% of their colleagues engaged three teaching methods (i.e. question-and-answer method, self activity method and Text book method) and 50% of the rest in the same areas engaged two teaching methods only. On average, the teacher-respondents in the rural areas engaged 1,83 teaching methods in their presentation of Xitsonga poetry lessons. They out-numbered their semi-urban counter-parts by an average of 0,63 teaching methods.

The teacher-interviewees in the typically-rural areas differ with their counter-parts in the rural and semi-urban areas in the sense that 40% of them engaged a combination of teaching methods while at the same time 40% and 20% of them engaged two and one methods respectively just like their counter-parts in the rural and semi-urban areas. On average, the teacher-interviewees in the typically-rural areas engaged 4,20 teaching methods in their presentation of Xitsonga poetry lessons. The latter engaged more teaching methods on the average (i.e. 4,20 teaching methods) compared to their semi-urban and rural areas counter-parts who engaged 1,20 and 1,83 teaching methods on the average respectively.

In the light of the above research findings about the kind of teaching methods the teacher-interviewees in the target research areas employed in teaching poetry, one can infer that there is a tendency among some teachers to over work certain teaching methods, a total disengagement of certain teaching methods, uncertainty of some teachers as to whether they do employ teaching methods at all! and the minority of these teachers who engage a combination of teaching methods in their presentation of Xitsonga lessons.

The researcher takes the position that in practical terms no teaching method is superior to the other in all respects. All the teaching methods have some

advantages and disadvantages. What matters most is the manner in which the poetry teachers involve these teaching methods in their lesson presentation. According to the overall results of the interviews on the teaching methods, the question-and-answer method appears to be the most popular among these teachers. It is employed by a majority of 94,11% of the Xitsonga poetry teachers across the target research areas. Obviously, it is one of the useful techniques if engaged properly. Unfortunately, some unenterprising teachers tend to engage it unimaginatively, i.e. their questions are neither creative nor do they seem to be goal-directed in any meaningful way from a didactic point of view.

The fact that 41,17% of the teacher-interviewees across the target areas, engage only one teaching method could be attributed to the fact that consciously or unconsciously their tertiary institutions created the impression that for better results one needs to engage only one teaching method at a time. It is true that in introducing a lecture on lesson preparation for the first time to the student-teachers, lecturers tend to talk of one teaching method, but as a means to an end not an end in itself.

The fact that 5,88% of the teacher-interviewees across the target research areas were uncertain about the specific teaching methods they employed in presenting the Xitsonga poetry lessons is an indication of lack of professionalism among these teachers. Perhaps these are the teachers who just go to class to do anything ranging from mere sitting in class, mechanical reading of poems, unplanned class-work or class exercises, discussions on irrelevant topics to totally absenting themselves from class. Such teachers are not just violating the professional ethics of teaching, but also destroying the future of the Vatsonga potential leaders. Indeed, in one of the schools the researcher conducted some interviews with the pupils, it was brought to his attention that since the beginning of the year (i.e. 1995), teacher X had not taught them (i.e. pupils) anything on poetry as a genre. No wonder such

teachers were uncertain about the specific teaching methods they employed in the teaching of Xitsonga poetry.

It is a bit encouraging that a minority of 11,76% of the teacher-interviewees across the target areas engaged a combination of teaching methods. It would appear that these teachers are aware that these teaching methods are interdependent and interrelated in the successful presentation of lessons in general and poetry lessons in particular. In practical terms, you cannot talk of engaging, say a narrative method, without involving other teaching methods in the process. Before you start narrating, you need to find out whether the pupils know something about the lesson in question. How do you find out? The only practical way is to pose a question or some questions on the lesson in question. In the middle of the lesson you need to find out whether the pupils have been following what you have been narrating about, and at the end of the lesson you need to be certain whether the short term aim of the lesson has been achieved by means of say posing some relevant questions, group assignments, individual home-work, teacher-directed group discussion etc. Lindhard N et al (1987:13) on the interrelatedness and interdependentness of teaching methods writes:

Because of its disadvantages, the method must be varied with other methods, such as question-and-answer or discussion.

5.4.5 The teacher-interviews were also focussed on the manner in which the Xitsonga poetry teachers analyzed poems.

The analytical results of the foregoing interviews are that **74,47% of the teacher-interviewees across the target research areas followed a fixed pattern in presenting their poetry lessons.** It would appear that the majority

of our teachers are syllabus and exam driven in their approach to teaching Xitsonga poetry. Of course, we need to have a guideline on how to analyze poems of which our institutions of higher learning are succeeding if the 76,47% of the respondents could be used as a measuring rod, but at the same time, this should not be utilized in such a manner that the scope is narrowed and fixed. The pupils should be encouraged to read widely (i.e. about poetry related subjects that are not in the "scope") in order to widen their horizon on poetry analysis.

The most unfortunate finding in this study was that 5,88% of the interviewees indicated that they were not certain about the manner in which they analyze Xitsonga poetry. It would appear that these teachers are didactically confused and the implication is that the consumers of their confusion get the impression that Xitsonga poetry is out of tune with modern life, irrelevant to their pedagogical needs and extremely boring to say the least.

It was interesting to note that 5,88% of the teacher-interviewees still analyzed poems by means of explaining each and every word contained in the poem. This is hardly the way to guide learners into the fascinating field of creative writing in verse. Not all words in a given poem need to be explained. We need to highlight both the literal and literary meaning of key words in the context of the **specific message** or thought the poet wishes to drive home. To say: "**This is symbolism**" or "**This is an irony**" in itself is not enough in analytical terms. What the teachers need to be reminded of is that some of the words, phrases, sentences punctuation marks etc. are used by the poet for a specific literary reason. They need to ask themselves questions such as: "**Why does the poet use an irony?**" "**What literary effect does metonymy have in this verse?**" etc. (For further practical examples see Chapter 3 above).

The 11,77% of the teacher-interviewees who analyzed poetry by means of reading the poem and leaving the class to do the rest; allowing the pupils to

discuss among themselves for the whole period and allowing the pupils to exercise their skills in setting themselves questions on the poems in question could be a positive act of enriching the pupils on self-efficiency and self-activity approach to the creative world of literature in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular. On the other hand they could be creating an impression that Xitsonga poetry is so simple and insignificant that pupils could be left to their own devices to carry out analysis in any odd how. Much as the researcher supports the former method of analyzing the Xitsonga poems, he needs however, to caution the teachers strongly not to be passive spectators but to get involved in what ever form of activity the pupils are engaged in a classroom situation. Both guided-activity and self-activity on the part of the pupils need the sensitive supervision and intervention of the teacher in one way or the other (See also Lindhard N. et al, 1987:13).

5.4.6 The interviews further sought specific data bearing on whether the Xitsonga poetry teachers encouraged their classes to read or listen to other sources apart from the prescribed book(s).

The results were that 76,47% of the teacher-interviewees across the target areas said they did encourage their classes to supplement their knowledge by means of reading or listening to other sources apart from the prescribed books. These teachers seem to realise the importance of the valuable information that can be acquired by the pupils outside the classroom. 5,88% of the teachers across the target areas were, however, vague or uncertain as to whether they did encourage their poetry classes to read or listen to other sources apart from the prescribed books. It would appear that their uncertainty could be attributed to the fact that they themselves did not read or listen to any source apart from the prescribed books. 17,65% of the teachers across the target areas did not encourage their poetry classes to read and listen to other sources apart from the prescribed poetry book(s). This could be attributed to a number of factors. For example, to keep valuable supplementary information to

themselves so as to seem to be better informed than their classes, ignorance about the importance of supplementary poetry information for learners and ignorance of the existence of such valuable supplementary poetry information on the part of these teachers.

5.4.7 In the case of those whose answer was “Yes”, they were further asked to specify the sources they encourage their poetry classes to read or listen to.

It was somewhat disturbing from a research point of view to note that 54% of the teacher-interviewees who said: “Yes” were rather broad and general in the type of sources they actually encourage their poetry classes to read. The following are some of the sources they said they encouraged their poetry classes to read: Other poetry and grammar books (not specific); other previous poetry books (not specific) and any other poetry books (not specific). In the light of these generalisations, one can only infer that these teachers do not in fact know the kind of extra poetry and related books they expect their pupils to read.

But it was heartening to note, however that 46% of the teacher-interviewees who said “Yes” referred their poetry classes to specific supplementary poetry sources. These are the sources they said they encouraged their classes to read and listen to: News Papers on poetry, Radio and Television poetry programmes, books on various themes; **Up Beat, Folklore, novels** etc. It would appear that these teachers refer to these sources because they have an idea about them and their contents. It is imperative for a teacher to refer the pupils to sources he/she knows about in order to guide his/her pupils properly.

5.4.8 The interviews also sought some information bearing on whether the interviewees did at one stage invite poetry guest speakers to speak to their classes.

The overall results of these interviews was that 58,82% of the teacher-interviewees evidently did invite poetry guest speakers to speak to their classes about poetry. This is a sign of tremendous maturity on the part of these teachers. It would appear that these teachers have the welfare of the child at heart. So much so that they are not concerned about those who might say this is an admission of professional limitation in the area of literature and Xitsonga poetry in particular. Their primary concern is to see the child advancing to new academic heights and enriching themselves in the process.

On the contrary, however, the remaining 41,18% of the teacher-interviewees who did not invite poetry guest speakers to speak to their classes perhaps do not see the importance of doing so. These misguided teachers need to be advised that a guest speaker or a guest teacher makes a big difference in a didactic situation. About this issue Ceyhan E. (1988:49) writes;

Any new face in the classroom stimulates the students. The visitor will be happy to speak with the students, ask questions, and answer questions of him.

5.4.9 To the 58,82% of the teacher-interviewees across the target areas who said “Yes”, were required to specify the type of quest speakers they had invited to speak to their classes.

The results were as follows: 80% of the teacher-respondents who said “Yes” **invited their fellow teachers** to come and speak to their pupils on poetry. They further indicated that **they also used team-teaching** in their schools. This is most advantageous in that the teachers are readily available in the schools and the exercise is cost free. 10% of these teachers said **they invited academics in literature** to come and speak to their pupils on poetry.

Academics in literature can play an important role in guiding the pupils on the most recent techniques that could be engaged in, for example analyzing poems. The only problem could be the financial implications on the part of the school management. The last 10% of the teacher-respondents in the same areas indicated that **they invited the Subject Adviser** to come and guide them in Xitsonga literature in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular. Subject Advisers can be helpful in this task in that they are always in touch with the Education Departments and they have access to Education information that affect both teacher and pupil directly or indirectly.

5.4.10 The Xitsonga poetry teachers were interviewed on whether they did at one stage read the Chief Examiner's annual report on the final Matric candidates' performance in poetry in particular.

The majority of **70,60%** of the teacher-respondents across the target areas indicated that they did not utilize the Chief Examiner's annual report on final Matric Candidates' performance in poetry, and the minority of **29,40%** of their counter-parts across the target areas said they did. Comparatively speaking, this is a disturbing finding since the purpose of the Chief Examiner's Report is to advise and guide the teachers so that mistakes should not be repeated.

5.4.11 The teacher-interviewees whose answer was "No" were required to state some reasons for not utilizing the Chief Examiner's Annual Report on final Matric candidates' performance in poetry.

33,33% of the teacher-interviewees who said "No" indicated that they did not utilize the chief Examiner's Annual Report on final matric candidates' performance in poetry because **they had never heard about such reports.** **50%** of their counter-parts who said "No" indicated that **they did not have access to such reports** and **16,67%** of these teachers who said "No" indicated

that they did not see the importance of such reports to their actual teaching. The first and the second reasons advanced by these teachers appear to be attributed to Educational management incompetency in transmitting valuable information to the grass-roots. The top to bottom channels unfortunately do not always operate as a unit. Some valuable information get stuck somewhere down the line and as a result never reach those directly affected, for example, the teachers and the pupils. The researcher will elaborate more about this administrative problem in transmitting valuable educational information in Chapter 6 below. The last 16,67% of these teachers indicated that they do not see the Chief Examiner's annual report on final Matric candidates' performance in poetry important to their teaching of Xitsonga poetry. The researcher attributes the attitude of these teachers to sheer lack of professional sensitivity to available poetry assets. It should be stressed to all and sundry in the teaching profession that these annual reports help a great deal in informing the Xitsonga poetry teachers about all manner of errors their pupils committed in their endeavour to answer poetry exam questions. In Chapter I above, the researcher indicated that Mr G S Mayevu, the Chief Examiner for STD 10 JMB, Xitsonga Paper 3 Examination, strongly advised the literature teachers to guide their pupils in analyzing the poems according to instruction given i.e. analyzing the poem with reference to underlined words and phrases in the question rather than to simply paraphrase the whole poem without reference to the underlined words.

5.4.12 The teacher-interviewees were also sounded on how they rate their Xitsonga poetry classes' performance on the average.

11,76% of the teacher-interviewees across the target areas rated their class performance on the B average symbol (i.e. 70-79%), 29,41% of them across the target areas rated their class performance on the C average symbol (i.e. 60-69%), 47,05% of their counter-parts in the same areas rated their class performance on the D average symbol (i.e. 50-59%), 5,89% of them in the

same areas rated their class performance on the E average symbol (i.e. 45-49%) and lastly, 5,89% of these teachers across the target areas indicated that they were uncertain about the average of their class performance in Xitsonga poetry.

It is interesting to note that none of these teachers across the target areas rated their class on the A average symbol (i.e. 80-100%) and besides, only 11,76% of them rated their class performance on the B average (i.e. 70-79%) symbol. It would appear that on the whole, these teachers either have a low self image about themselves as teachers of Xitsonga literature or have a negative perception of their pupils' performance in this section of the Xitsonga L1 syllabus hence only a few rated their learner performance at a B average symbol. The fact that 47,05% of the teachers in these areas (the largest of them all) placed their pupils' performance on the D average symbol (i.e. 50-59%) further supports these possibilities.

What disturbs most, however, is the 5,89% of those teachers across the target areas who said that they were uncertain about the average performance of their pupils in poetry. It would appear that these teachers did not know whether they were coming or going in the profession of language teaching. If they did not know how their pupils performed in learning poetry it simply implied that they themselves were unsure of their goals in the teaching of poetry. This is pedagogically unfortunate since it denies the Vatsonga pupils the advantage of learning this interesting and educative literary genre to full advantage.

5.4.13 The interviews with the Xitsonga teachers were also focussed on how they rated their pupils' interest in learning poetry.

58,82% of the teacher-interviewees across the target areas rated the pupils' interest in learning poetry as average, 29,42% of their counter-parts in the same areas rated their pupils' interest in learning poetry as good, only

5,88% of those teachers in the same areas rated their pupils' interest in learning poetry as exceptionally good, and the last 5,88% of those teachers in the same areas indicated that they were uncertain about how they could rate their pupils' interest in learning poetry.

It is encouraging to note that on the whole the pupils' interest in learning poetry across the target areas range from average to exceptionally good. It is quite evident that 94,12% majority of these pupils value this genre as an important component of their culture. On the other hand, it is discouraging to note that 5,88% of the teachers across the target areas did not bother to know whether their pupils are interested in learning poetry or not. In plain language, they were not interested in teaching this genre. They only taught it (if at all they did!) because it had been assigned to them by the school management or the principal.

5.4.14 The interviews with the teachers also sought specific data bearing on whether they had ever attended a seminar, conference, special course, work-shop etc. on poetry teaching.

31,25% of the teacher-interviewees across the target areas indicated that they had attended such in-service education on poetry, and 68,75% of their counterparts in the same areas indicated that they had not attended such in-service education (training). If this finding is generalised into the future of L1 teaching as a whole it is most disturbing since the whole idea of language parity and language equity can only be realised in practice for all the eleven official languages through the upgrade of teachers in-service by means of seminars, work-shops, conferences, courses, etc.

5.4.15 The interviews with the Xitsonga poetry teachers sought data bearing on the specific persons(s) who conducted such in-service training (courses).

100% of the teacher-respondents across the target areas who said "Yes" indicated that the in-service training they attended was convened by the Xitsonga Subject Adviser. It would appear that this kind of valuable teacher education or in-service training only reach less than a 1/3 of the teachers across the target areas. This is not healthy for the teaching of literature in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular. The researcher will recommend some of the ways and means that could be engaged in order to reach as many teachers and other interested parties as possible in his recommendations in Chapter 6.

The next discussion below will seek to establish the extent to which the Education Administrators (viz Subject Adviser and Chief Examiner) contribute either positively or negatively to the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry to secondary school learners in the target research areas.

5.5 DATA FROM THE SUBJECT ADVISER AND THE MATRIC EXTERNAL EXAMINER, XITSONGA.

5.5.1 The Subject Adviser, Xitsonga.

The Subject Adviser's academic and professional qualifications have already been discussed in some detail above. Therefore, there is no need to further elaborate on them except to advise that he needs to improve his professional qualifications in order to be of better service in the quality of guiding the teachers on teaching Xitsonga literature in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular.

5.5.2 The following data was obtained from the questionnaire that the Xitsonga Subject Adviser completed.

- a) The Subject Adviser had only one-year experience in this post. This means that his experience was extremely limited for him to be an effective adviser to Matric L1 teachers. This was a disturbing limitation indeed.
- b) In the opinion of the Subject Adviser, Xitsonga poetry should be taught up to and including standard 8 only. Poetry should be discontinued at standard 9 and 10. This was a rather unusual response since one would have expected the Subject Adviser to recommend the inclusion of poetry as a literature genre in the higher classes of the secondary school for two possible reasons viz (i) at this level learners are reasonably matured to cope with the language of verse and (ii) it is at Matric level that learners are prepared for tertiary education. The Subject Adviser's opinion does not seem to be in the interest of the learners in as far as coverage of literature knowledge is concerned.
- c) As regards criteria for the selection of Xitsonga anthology, the Subject Adviser listed quality as primary followed by relevance in terms of learners experience, inclusion of modern poetry, mirror of Xitsonga cultural heritage, enjoyable and that the anthology should include poems that could be easily sung. The researcher found these criteria comprehensive and useful and certainly in the interest of poetry teaching.
- d) Just like the pupils and the teachers across the target areas, the Subject Adviser in his responses also settled for the vertical option at the expense of other possible options such as for example, the horizontal one. This is how he ranked them in order of importance: Theme,

figurative language, imagery, detailed analysis, subject matter, syntax and vocabulary, figures of sound, and background knowledge about the poet. It is quite evident that the selective teaching of poetry aspects is not only a teacher-pupil limitation but rather a top-to-bottom one.

- e) As regards aspects of poetry teachers find best able to teach, the Subject Adviser indicated the following order of ability: the theme is ranked first, the subject matter as second, figurative language as third, detailed analysis as fourth and last on the list. He also indicated the ones that they cannot teach at all as the following: the figures of sound, syntax and vocabulary and background knowledge about the poet. Again it seems necessary to impress it upon all the stakeholders in Education that the selective approach to the teaching and learning of poetry narrows the scope of information. Perhaps we need to look beyond the Education Department's syllabi in order to enrich the contents of poetry lessons.
- f) In response to the questionnaire item bearing on teachers' interest in teaching Xitsonga poetry, the Subject Adviser indicated that the teachers of Xitsonga poetry's interest was very low and that was attributed to the fact that tertiary institutions were rather negligent in instilling poetry interest in these teachers. The researcher cannot agree more with the Subject Adviser on the issue of the very low interest of those teachers in poetry. Their very low interest in poetry will most likely result in their reluctance to teach poetry despite the fact that they have received both the academic and professional training in it. This implies that our institutions of higher learning should carefully screen their prospective Xitsonga teachers. Those who have no interest in the language should be encouraged to follow other streams. This will probably go a long way in addressing the problems of training Xitsonga

teachers who have no interest of the language at heart.

- g) Lastly, the Subject Adviser was required to indicate the kind of poetry secondary school teachers found more difficult to teach and, if possible suggest possible reasons for this. According to the Subject Adviser, the secondary school teachers to a varying degrees found all three types of poetry, viz; Traditional, Transitional and Modern poetry difficult to teach. In his opinion, the Subject Adviser attributes the teachers' inefficiency to their lack of good background in poetry at both secondary school and tertiary levels.

Perhaps we need to stress that what the Subject Adviser says about the teachers and what the teachers say about themselves need not tally as the two parties were interviewed severally.

5.5.3 The following data was elicited from the questionnaire that the Xitsonga Matric Literature Chief External Examiner Completed.

- a) The Chief Examiner indicated that he had been in his post for three years. Although this is hardly a period long enough to speak authoritatively on Matric literature Exams, it is nonetheless adequate to enable the incumbent to guide and advise teachers on what could be done to teach Xitsonga poetry to some advantage.
- b) In response to the questionnaire item on poetry which the matric candidates seem to have most difficulty with, the Chief Examiner, just like the Subject Adviser, indicated that Matric candidates experience some problems in all three types of poetry, viz Traditional, Transitional and Modern poetry. He attributes their failure to lack of mastery of poetry exposition and the failure to appreciate the relationship of poetic language with life in general. What this Education Administrator

opines is in line with what the researcher has suggested in Chapter 3 above that pupils and students should be encouraged to read widely. Modern poetry demands knowledge of one's political, educational, social, economical and spiritual background ... non-existent or vague knowledge of a variety of subjects could make modern poetry analysis a task of the chosen few.

- c) As regards the aspects of Modern poetry that should be emphasised in the secondary school poetry syllabus, the Chief Examiner, just like the pupils and the teachers across the target areas and the Subject Adviser, also settled for the vertical option. The Chief Examiner listed figurative language first, theme second, detailed analysis as third, subject matter as fourth, syntax and vocabulary as fifth, imagery as sixth, figures of sound as seventh and background knowledge about the poet as eighth. It would appear that the selective approach to poetry analysis is favoured by almost all the respondents targeted by this project. The researcher, however takes the position that we need to **switch over to a holistic approach to literature** in order to widen the scope of teaching and learning of this exciting genre.
- d) In response to a questionnaire item requesting the manner in which he, the Chief Examiner ploughed back his valuable experience to the community, the respondent indicated that he did so through the Markers' participation in marking the STD 10 external Papers, through sending copies of guidelines to marking sessions and submitting reports to circuit inspectors for dissemination to relevant schools. Since as noted above, this valuable information only reaches 1/3 of the teachers across the target areas, it would appear alternative ways of disseminating this information must be sought and found. A strong possibility that could be explored is the radio. The radio is a viable tool for disseminating information since even rural communities possess

battery-operated radios.

- e) Lastly, the questionnaire sought specific data bearing on the average percentage performance of the 1994 final Matric candidates in poetry as an example. **The Chief Examiner rightfully gave an average percentage performance of the 1994 final Matric candidates as a D symbol (i.e. 50-59%). This justifies our concerns that not all is well with the teaching and learning of Xitsonga literature in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular.** If we consider the fact that the language at issue is the learners' and the teachers' L1 taught in predominately L1 environments, then the symbol D can only be described as highly unsatisfactory. A, B to C average will be more acceptable. Clearly much more is to be done if the level of performance in Xitsonga L1 is to be raised.

5.5.4 Oral Interview with Subject Adviser, Xitsonga.

The next discussion below focusses specifically on the outcome of the interview between the researcher and the Subject Adviser on the methodology he suggests would be utilized to advantage in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry at secondary school level.

- a) Regarding specific data bearing on whether or not the interviewees thought Xitsonga teachers utilized teaching aids effectively in teaching poetry, the Subject Adviser said that the Xitsonga poetry teachers **did not utilize teaching aids effectively** in their lesson presentation. This unfortunately, affected the teachers' capacity to teach poetry with maximum results.
- b) On the question of the specific type of teaching aids he recommended to the poetry teachers, the Subject Adviser said he recommended the

prescribed book(s). (The researcher, however, feels that the prescribed book should be supplemented by means of engaging tape recorded poems, video recorded poem (especially for better appreciation of figures of sound, viz rhyme and rhythm), chalkboard, charts, objects or models and over-head projector etc. for better results in teaching this unique genre).

- c) The Subject Adviser was of the opinion that a good technique of introducing Xitsonga poetry lesson to best advantage at secondary school level was through song or music. In this regard, the Subject Adviser's belief is in line with that expressed by Ceyhan E, (1988:49) when he writes as follows about foreign language teaching:

Everyone loves music, which unfortunately is infrequently used in foreign language classes. But a good folk or pop-music singer's meaningful words can effect the students deeply.

On his part, the researcher strongly recommends that music should be varied with other techniques in order to break the monotony of employing only one interesting technique.

- d) The interview also sought the Subject Adviser's opinion on the specific type of teaching methods he would suggest Senior Secondary School teachers should employ in teaching poetry to best advantage. In this regard, the Subject Adviser suggested that Senior Secondary School teachers should **employ a combination of various teaching methods** in presenting poetry lessons. Engaging a combination of teaching methods in teaching is an ideal way too of teaching literature in general

and Xitsonga poetry in particular. The researcher too takes this position.

- e) As regards the manner in which the senior secondary school teacher under his supervision analyzed poems, **the Subject Adviser indicated that his secondary school teachers analyzed poems by means of following a fixed pattern agreed upon.** (The researcher is of the opinion that any pattern that becomes fixed and rigid should be discouraged since poems, circumstances and pupils differ and therefore flexibility in terms of lesson presentation should be allowed if not encouraged).
- f) The Subject Adviser was also asked to comment on specific poetic devices teachers under his supervision emphasized most in teaching poetry. The respondent indicated that the senior secondary school teachers under his supervision emphasized the following poetic devices in order of importance: Figurative Language, subject matter, Theme, detailed analysis, imagery, figures of sound and vocabulary and syntax. He further indicated that most teachers did not attempt teaching the background knowledge about the poet at all.

It would appear that these teachers approach poetry the way their Subject Adviser does. They tend to over-emphasize certain poetry aspects at the expense of the others. For example, they ignore or overlook information about the poet's background. Perhaps they are so syllabus-driven that they tend to miss-out valuable support information that could assist in elucidating the poet's intention. The researcher still maintains that the holistic approach to literature should be encouraged among the teachers of Xitsonga literature in general.

- g) Further information the interviewee was required to provide was whether he did at one stage organize poetry up-date classes (courses) for the senior secondary school teachers under his supervision. In this **the respondent frankly admitted that he had never organized any poetry up-date classes for the teachers under his supervision.** The researcher found this view rather odd since by definition or job description a Subject Adviser **advises.** How else can an adviser perform his task to advantage without calling together his teachers and giving them the benefit of his expertise?
- h) The Subject Adviser was also required to indicate whether or not he advised the poetry teachers under his supervision to make use of the Education Department's Chief Examiners's Annual Reports on final matric candidates' performance in Xitsonga poetry. **The Subject Adviser indicated that he did not do so because his colleagues (i.e. The Chief Examiners) never sent him such reports.** If a Subject Adviser who is occupying such a high administrative post does not get these annual reports, what more of the people on the ground! As already indicated elsewhere, the channels of communication both horizontally and vertically need to be restructured. I am positive that the Chief Examiner does his work properly, the only problem lies in the dissemination of such educational information. The researcher will endeavour to recommend in Chapter 6 below some mechanisms that could be tried out in order to get all the velves of the communication channels open.

5.5.5 Oral interview with Matric Chief Examiner, Xitsonga

The next interview sought to sound the Matric Chief External Examiner on what could be done in the classroom in order to enhance the teaching of Xitsonga poetry. The interviewee had a dual capacity of chief Examiner as

well as Circuit Inspector.

- a) In response to a question on whether in his experience Xitsonga teachers used teaching aids to support their teaching of poetry, the Chief External Examiner was uncertain. This response implied two possible things viz (i) In his capacity as an Inspector of Education, the Chief Examiner was not particularly sensitive to what goes on in the classroom as regards lesson presentation and (ii) In his capacity as External Examiner he did not find time to acquaint himself with how the candidates he examined at STD 10 level were actually taught.
- b) The interviewee was then asked to suggest specific teaching aids he would recommend to senior secondary school teachers as useful teaching media. In response the Chief Examiner recommended the following teaching aids in order of importance: First on the list he recommended the use of prescribed book(s), second, chalkboard, third some charts, fourth, tape recorded poems, fifth video recorded poems and sixth and last relevant objects or models.

It would appear that the Chief Examiner's recommendations were based on an situational needs (e.g. not all the school are electrified). Some rural schools are characterized by lack of adequate classrooms, lack of electrification of classrooms etc. The use of prescribed books, chalkboard, and charts or models cover these limitations. Our teachers should be encouraged irrespective of the status of the community in which they are serving to engage a variety of teacher-made aids as often as possible in order to make their teaching effective regardless of the environment. Besides, they do not have to use the unavailability of electricity as a scape-goat; they could negotiate with their Head-Master for the use of generators and batteries in order to get their teaching aids maximally utilized.

- c) The next thing, the interviewee was required to comment on, was what he regarded as good technique(s) of introducing an interesting poetry lesson(s). The interviewee recommended mechanical reading of poems, introductory lecture, relevant questions, pupil questions, relevant music, summary of the previous lesson(s) and lastly, **interrogative questions and a cane** as good techniques of introducing an interesting poetry lesson(s). It is interesting to note that he placed interrogative questions and a cane as the least of them all. This type of a technique has no place in modern methodology. **We do not interrogate the pupils but challenge them** to engage their mental faculties fruitfully. **We do not intimidate them but create a friendly and cordial atmosphere** that is conducive for effective teaching and learning.
- d) The interview further, sought to elicit specific comment on the aspect of modern poetry the interviewee would like Matric candidates to improve on. The External Examiner indicated that foremost, the Matric candidates need to improve on the mastery of the poet's use of implied language as opposed to literal meaning, the determination of the central message to us, to determine what the poem is all about, reasons for deliberate violation of word order and use of independent words by the poet, the ability of the poet to paint mind pictures in the minds of the readers, the mastery of rhyme and rhythm in the poem and the importance of background knowledge about the poet in order to appreciate some of the poems that need the poet's experiential background (The Xitsonga poetry teachers should be reminded that these poetry aspects complement each other, therefore there is no need to over-emphasize those they think are important at the expense of the others. In this regard the researcher agreed with the External Examiner fully).
- e) The last thing, the interview sought comment on was the specific type of teaching methods the interviewee thought senior secondary school poetry teachers should employ in order to teach this genre to best advantage. As was the case with the Subject Adviser, the Chief Examiner recommended a

combination of teaching methods to secondary school poetry teachers. The researcher cannot agree more with these Education Administrators on this issue. A combination of teaching methods in teaching has more advantages than engaging say one teaching method. As already indicated elsewhere in this study, it would be difficult for the teacher to know if his/her class moves with him/her step-by-step if say he/she engages say a narrative method only without the complement of for example, a question-and-answer method.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is three-fold, namely; to give an overview of all the chapters this research project has covered, to outline the main problems this research project has identified and some recommendations to their solutions (i.e. the main problems identified by this study in relation to the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry).

Further, the recommendations will focus on the following subheadings: Recommendations on secondary school pupils, Recommendations on Education Administrators who are directly involved with Xitsonga literature in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular (i.e. the Subject Adviser and the Chief Examiner), Recommendations on tertiary institutions, Recommendations on writers, publishers and selectors of Xitsonga literature, and Recommendations on Education Department: Language Services Divisions.

6.2 CONCLUSION SUMMARY OF SOME OF THE MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS

In summary this study may be rounded-off as follows:

Chapter 1 provided the rationale, scope value of the study together with the research instruments that were used to gather empirical data used as the kingpin of this research effort.

Chapter 2 contextualised the thrust of the study, i.e. poetry in a historical and universal perspective before focussing more pertinantly on Xitsonga poetry in South Africa.

Chapter 3 is more specific and describes the three poets viz Masebenza, Chauke and Magaisa in the context and relevance of a teaching-learning language situation, education in general and the community at large.

Chapter 4 describes in some detail how the research data were collected, possible limitations to this research exercise together with counter-measures taken to ensure scientific reliability, validity and objectivity in the collection, description, analysis and interpretation of the research data used.

Chapter 5 covers the field-work per se. It describes the manner in which the research sample used and the physical environments in which the research sample are domiciled. The chapter also covers the analysis and interpretation of the data processed. In addition, the chapter provides the following major problem areas-cum-findings and their magnitude as they occur among the different groups comprising the target research sample.

6.3 IDENTIFIED MAIN PROBLEMS IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF XITSONGA POETRY IN MHALA, A REGION OF MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

6.3.1 Secondary school pupil-respondents'

- 62,79% of the senior secondary school pupil-respondents across the target research areas failed to obtain at least a 40% pass in applying the poetry aspects in Xitsonga verse. Their individual performance ranged from 05% - 39%. Only 37,23% of those pupil-respondents across the target research areas succeeded in applying the poetry aspects in Xitsonga verse. Their individual performance ranged from 40 - 65%. What exacerbates the problem is the fact that all the pupil-respondents across the target research areas are L1 speakers whose $\frac{2}{3}$ majority reside in culturally rich environment (i.e. rural and typically-rural areas).
- 100% of the pupil-respondents across the target areas were the victims of selective learning of poetry aspects as opposed to holistic learning. Further, this study also revealed that the pupils were not to blame entirely since the problem appeared to be a top-to-bottom one.

- The interviews with the pupil-respondents across the target areas revealed that 62% of them had a negative attitude towards learning Xitsonga in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular.
- 34% of the male-respondents across the target areas were positive about the future of Xitsonga poetry as opposed to 66% of their female counter-parts across the target areas who were positive.

6.3.2 Secondary school teacher-respondents'

- 33,33% of the senior secondary school teacher-respondents across the target areas did not have adequate secondary school professional qualifications. Though they might be doing a sterling job under the circumstances, nonetheless, they were methodologically misqualified and in consequence, obviously misplaced and perhaps also under-utilised in terms of placement.
- 66,99% of the senior secondary school teachers across the target areas had a deep-seated tendency of teaching the poetry aspects and their application in verse selectively as against the holistic approach. 26,34% of those teachers across the target areas COULD NOT teach certain basic poetry aspects at all. About 6,67% of them across the target areas were uncertain about teaching certain poetry aspects.
- Under utilisation of teaching aids or teaching media by 93,33% of the teacher-interviewees across the target areas was found to be cause for concern in the teaching of Xitsonga poetry.
- The shocking engagement of an average of 1,60 teaching techniques of introducing poetry lessons by the secondary school poetry teachers across the target areas was described as highly disconcerting.

- The utilisation of only one teaching method by 41,17% of the teacher-interviewees across the target research areas and the uncertainty of 5,88% of their counter-parts across the target areas about the specific teaching methods they engaged in teaching poetry was found to be equally disconcerting.
- The rigid, dogmatic and fixed pattern of teaching poetry by 74,47% of the teacher-interviewees across the target research areas was disturbing and called for urgent corrective measures.
- The none-utilisation of the Chief Examiner's Annual Report on the final matric candidates' performance by 70,60% of the teacher-interviewees across the target research areas was a shocking discovery that called for urgent attention by all stake-holders.
- The none-attendance of 68,75% of the teacher-interviewees across the target areas to the in-service training courses on literature in general and Xitsonga poetry teaching in particular shows poor planning in the domain of Xitsonga teaching.

6.3.3 Subject Adviser's

The following were the main research finding about the Xitsonga Advisory service:

- The professional qualification of the Subject Adviser in respect of guiding the secondary school teachers to advantage was found to be inadequate.
- The Subject Adviser's experience in order to be an effective adviser to matric L1 teachers at secondary school level was limited and below expectation.
- The attitude of the Subject Adviser towards poetry teaching and learning

beyond standard 8 since he was of the opinion that Xitsonga poetry should be taught up to and including standard 8 only rather than up to the terminal classes of the secondary school.

- The Subject Adviser's selective approach as opposed to the holistic one in guiding the secondary school teachers on teaching poetry to advantage was found to be counter-productive and ill-advised. As already indicated elsewhere in this study, this problem appears to be mainly a top-to-bottom one.
- The problem of the inability of the secondary school teachers to teach the figures of sound, syntax and vocabulary in poetry and background knowledge about the poet could be traced back to the limitations of the Subject Adviser himself.
- In the opinion of the Subject Adviser, the secondary school teachers found all three types of poetry, viz Traditional, Transitional and Modern poetry difficult to teach. This finding stressed the need for concerted effort in INSET for these teachers.
- In the view of the Subject Adviser, Xitsonga poetry teachers did not utilise teaching aids effectively in their lesson presentation. This could be an indictment on the current teacher-training programmes for L1 teachers, or the lack of back-up expertise at Advisory service level.
- The opinion of the Subject Adviser that the senior secondary poetry teachers under his areas of jurisdiction taught analysis in a dogmatic, fixed and rigid manner to the disadvantage of the pupils they were trying to help was a serious revelation which should engage the attention of all concerned at both pre- and in-service training of L1 teachers. In view of the provisions of curriculum 2005, this finding is particularly important as it suggested that

education reforms enshrined in it are long over-due.

- The total failure of the Subject Adviser to organize poetry up-date courses for senior secondary school teachers under his supervision was found to be a serious limiting factor in the successful teaching of L1 poetry.
- It was a serious revelation that the Subject Adviser and the secondary school teachers under his areas of jurisdiction did not have access to the Chief Examiner's Annual Report on final matric candidates' performance in Xitsonga poetry. This represents a serious lack of co-ordination and consultation between the teachers on the ground, and the Department of Education - a limitation that calls for urgent corrective measures.

6.3.4 Chief Examiner's

The following were the main findings in respect of the Chief Examiner in Xitsonga L1 standard 10 External Examinations.

- The study revealed a professional inadequacy on the part of the Chief External Examiner for Xitsonga L1 STD 10 external examination in that no firm measures were in place to guide and service the secondary school teachers especially the markers.
- The indication of the Chief Examiner that the Matric candidates experienced some problems in all the three types of poetry, viz, Traditional, Transitional and Modern poetry, suggests a limitation along a broad front in the teaching of a whole range of poetry in Xitsong classrooms.
- The Chief Examiner tended to favour the vertical approach to teaching poetry as opposed to the horizontal one. As already indicated elsewhere in this study, this further accentuates that this is a top-to-bottom problem that needs

a top-to-bottom solution.

- That the Chief Examiner's Annual Report did not reach all the teachers of Xitsonga L1 was found to be a serious limiting factors since much and valuable experience was denied the learner, the teacher and the community at large.
- Perhaps one of the most disconcerting finding was the shocking reality of the 1994 Xitsonga L1 matric candidates' 50% average performance as given by the Chief Examiner.
- The uncertainty of the Chief Examiner in his dual capacity as Chief Examiner and Circuit Inspector as to whether the secondary school teachers utilized teaching aids to support their teaching of poetry can at best be described as disturbing or at worst as professional incompetency.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS

- a. The fact that 62,97% of the senior secondary school pupils across the target areas failed to obtain a minimum pass in applying analysis in the poems they had chosen calls for special strategies on the part of the teachers and maximum commitment on the part of the pupils. One of the best ways of ensuring that each an every pupil gets the teacher's attention is dividing the pupils into smaller discussion groups under his/her facilitation and supervision. The onus rests on both the teacher's and the learners' shoulders to see to it that each and every group activity is a creative and enriching experience. As facilitator of group discussions, the teacher may put forward some questions especially to the less active participants. In order to integrate language-learning skills into the group work, the teacher may for example, give group A the task of writing down the theme of the poem after they shall have discussed among themselves, group B could be given the task of writing down the subject matter, groups C, D, E, F and G could be given the task of analysing stanzas 1, 2, 3,

4 and 5 respectively, and group h could be given the task of writing down the poet's attitude to the reader and the moral lesson gleaned from the poem. The teacher can then direct tactfully planned facilitating or enabling questions to the weaker or less active pupils to ascertain their progress in the learning area outcomes of the day. To round off his/her lesson, the teacher can encourage pupil-questions on the lesson as well as class exercises. (See also Lindhard, N *et al*, 1987: 15). In addition to assessing learning outcomes through learner-questions and answers, the teacher as facilitator of the learning experience may encourage exchange of written outcomes from the different groups in order to get further inputs now from the class as a learning community.

- b. The fact that 100% of the pupil-respondents across the target areas were victims of selective learning of poetry aspects as opposed to holistic learning could be remedied in two possible ways, viz, a short-term remedy and a long-term one. The short-term remedy requires the poetry teacher to teach the pupils in such a way that a wide scope of poetry is covered rather than sticking to the syllabi and Exam Papers only. The long-term remedy requires the compilers of the syllabi (i.e. Education Departments) to widen the scope of poetry teaching and learning so that the test and exam questions could be less monotonous and predictable. The latter has contributed a lot to the pitfall of selective teaching and learning of literature in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular. For example, the pattern of poetry questions for matric candidates has hardly changed for over a decade (1985-1995). Since this problem has been a norm to almost all the stake holders in Education, research studies of this nature could serve to arm the In-service personnel in order to assist the Xitsonga poetry teachers with specific problems like the ones that this study has identified. Alternatively continual assessment of learner performance could complement the one-off Matriculation External Examination. Continual assessment will enable the teacher to prepare more reliable profiles of his class's progress through language learning areas on a regular basis and so guide teaching strategies to better advantage. The learner will also benefit in that she will get continual and immediate feed-back on her day-to-day learning experience.

- c. The fact that 62% of the pupil-interviewees across the target areas indicated that they had a negative attitude towards learning Xitsonga L1 in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular could be remedied in the following possible ways: The negative attitude of most of the Xitsonga teachers towards Xitsonga literature need to be corrected as a matter of urgency at tertiary and in-service training levels. The researcher takes the position that there is no way in which the IN-SERVICE PERSONNEL can operate independently without liaising with the relevant tertiary institutions in order to shape the teachers on negative attitude, language myths, wrong perception and pitfalls in the teaching of African Languages in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular etc. The majority of the interviewed pupils (about 72% of the total male respondents) who had a negative attitude towards learning poetry indicated that they found most of the themes of the poems less challenging and unrealistic to what they termed “**the challenges of the dispensation of democracy in the New South Africa**”. Although the researcher found their former argument (poetry themes less challenging) debatable, but he could nonetheless not agree more with them on their latter argument (i.e. Poetry themes being unrealistic to the challenges of the dispensation of democracy in the New South Africa). Our Xitsonga poetry anthologies and other genres for that matter, tend to over-work (i.e. repeat) certain themes to such an extent that they become monotonous and less challenging to the pupils. Some of the themes that are repeated time and again in poetry are for example, the following: Poverty, Pride, women, Youth, Old age, marriage, dishonesty, witchcraft, humility, humanity, adultery and love. This problem could be solved if the Vatsonga writers and the Publishing companies or Publishers could agree on fresh or new themes that need to be written on and so avoid the ones that have already been thoroughly exhausted (i.e. those that have been written on over and over again). The researcher has no problem if both parties could initiate short meetings, but he would be more happy if the Publishers could initiate such meetings with some proposed themes for discussion as part of the items on the Agenda. Although the researcher takes exception to the instructive form of invitation adopted by certain publishing companies in recent times which extends to the series authors rather than first discussing with the latter, but in

the same breath he wishes to commend them for their initiative at innovation and change. For example, the following themes have been suggested as relevant to the challenges of the day: **“Perspective on multiracial schools, love and marriage across racial lines, Exile and repatriation, Apartheid; a look back, Political Freedom in South Africa in the eyes of an African, Sexual harassment and/or discrimination at the work place, the South African “Dream”, Perspective on the daily experience of farm labourers”** etc. It is against this background that the male interviewees’ concerns need to be attended to as a matter of urgency. This will most probably go a long way in transforming the negative attitude of these learners towards learning African literature in general and Xitsonga poetry in particular. Alternatively, new language curricula could be **“multilingual”** i.e. a Xitsonga teacher could draw freely from other languages in the country to enrich his/her Xitsonga lesson linguistically, culturally, and socially. Such an addition will be consistent with the policy of multilingualism which is enshrined in the country’s new democratic constitution. The addition will not **“kill”** any of the existing official languages offered in our schools, but will make them more **“tolerant”** to each other.

- d. The fact that the interview with the pupils across the target areas revealed that 34% of the male pupils as against 66% of their female counter-parts were positive about the future of Xitsonga poetry, suggests that the majority of the female section of our community sees Xitsonga L1 being positioned on the right road to compete well with, say, English L1 and Afrikaans L1 now and in the future. The majority (i.e. about 66%) of their male counter-parts across the target areas took the position that they did not see Xitsonga L1 being positioned well to compete with say English L1 now or in the future due to the former’s limitations in many respects. They further dismissed the issue of the gradual development of African languages as a myth and an exercise that would never take off the ground due to the financial constraints and lack of commitment on the part of Government on their development (i.e. African Languages) compared for example to science, commerce and technological studies. Although the researcher partly agreed with the latter argument, he disagreed with them on the question of the possibility of African Languages’ Development as a myth

and an impossible exercise. It would appear that these pupils lacked patriotism, cultural identity and the will to work hard. Our curricula should introduce lessons on patriotism and culture from primary to tertiary levels. Our schools should impress upon our pupils that cultural identity is an essential stepping stone towards national identity. All stake holders in Education should exhibit the will to work hard on the development of the African Languages. If a language like Afrikaans took 344 years to develop from Dutch to “**Kombuis taal**” to be what it is today (i.e. official language in its own right), African Languages can also be developed to a level worthy of the official status the new democratic constitution has assigned them. Of course, this cannot be done over-night, it will take real hard work and dedication, a lot of time, some money, and perseverance on the part of all stake holders, and a clearly defined vision on the part of the newly elected state language policy structures. The researcher strongly recommends that Government should prove its commitment to the development of the disadvantaged languages by adequately financing the PSALB at all levels (i.e. Nationally and Provincially) as well as providing them with Languages experts support services.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

- a. The researcher strongly supports the view that each and every teacher should be “**called**” (i.e. should have a strong and irresistible burning desire to didactically assist the secondary school pupils to acquire knowledge) before he/she can venture into the actual act of teaching, but on the same breath takes the position that such teachers (the “**called ones**”) should not just undergo academic training only but also professional training and be placed according to the level of their professional training. The fact that 33,33% of the senior secondary school teacher-respondents across the target areas did not have the adequate professional qualifications was a professional blunder on the part of the Education Ministry. Though they might be doing a sterling job under the circumstances, nonetheless, they needed to have the necessary relevant professional credentials in order to carry out their didactic act properly. The

Education Ministry need to have a clear policy on such teachers who wish to continue teaching at secondary school level with inadequate professional qualifications. The researcher is of the opinion/recommends that a bye-law be passed and gazetted by the Education Ministry to the effect that **“in the event of a teacher who performs his/her professional duty without the relevant qualification should be allowed to upgrade himself/herself within the maximum period of three years. Failing which, the Department will have no alternative but to redeploy such a teacher at a school where his/her professional services could be of benefit to the community”**. Institutions of higher learning like UNISA and VISTA for example, do offer junior and secondary school professional up-grade courses for in-service teachers by correspondence or distance education.

- b. This study has proved throughout beyond doubt that there is a deep-seated tendency among the teachers of Xitsonga poetry of selectively teaching the poetry aspects as if they are an end in themselves. 66,99% of these teachers across the target areas who opted for such a defective approach to teaching are denying the pupils to be as broad-minded as possible in their learning of this exciting and informative genre. The holistic approach to teaching and learning poetry is not advantageous to the achievement of the short-term goals (i.e. *empowering the pupils with the luxury of answering poetry questions in whatever complex form*) only, but also advantageous to their empowerment beyond senior secondary school poetry studies. Our goal as teachers should not to be syllabus- and exam- driven only but to guide the pupils in such a way that they remain literary critics and independent thinkers beyond the classroom. It is quite evident that 26,34% of the teachers across the target areas who COULD NOT teach certain basic poetry aspects at all most probably went through the hands of ill-qualified lecturers and those who confined their teaching to the syllabi and previous Examination Papers. This type of a pitfall was evident in the 1996 October/November, STD 10, Xitsonga L1 National Exam, Paper II. The average performance of the candidates in that Paper was adversely affected by this pitfall - The Examiner wanted the candidates to show the *morphemes* of *underlined words* in the passage provided, and unfortunately, almost 90% of them could not do so because

their teachers who were themselves victims of selective teaching had not taught them that “**swiaki swa marito**” and “**timofi**” (i.e. “**Swiaki swa marito**” is a synonym of morphemes in Xitsonga) are synonyms. To them the concept “**timofimi**” (morphemes) was a strange animal and consequently they failed dismally to answer the question.

- c. The under-utilization of teaching aids/media by 93,33% of the teacher-interviewees across the target areas calls for the Education Faculties at our tertiary institutions to carefully revise their modules on teaching media. The researcher still reiterates that this important module needs the attention of a full-time expert for the student-teachers to appreciate its importance in teaching in general and literature in particular. It is no exaggeration that 90% of our products irrespective of the institutions at which they were trained can hardly utilize a chalk-board to advantage, let alone most of the electronic teaching media. The seriousness of this problem cannot be over-emphasized. Our institutions need to WAKE UP before it is too late (i.e. before curriculum 2005 overtakes us).
- d. It was also disheartening to note that in practice, the teacher-interviewees across the target areas engaged only 1,60 techniques on the average, of introducing their poetry lessons. As already alluded to elsewhere in this study, a variety of relevant techniques at the beginning of poetry lessons contribute tremendously towards the maintenance of class motivation throughout the lesson. The teacher could be rest assured of a maximum achievement of his/her teaching aims if the latter suggestion is practised.
- e. The 41,17% of the teacher-interviewees across the target areas whom out of sheer ignorance and lack of teaching experience engaged only one teaching method in their presentation of poetry lesson could be assisted in this manner: Effective lesson presentation requires a combination of teaching methods; in one lesson, for example, you may need to narrate/explain/lecture; your class may need to ask questions related to the lesson or you may need also to ask them questions on the lesson to ascertain their maximum participation and understanding. They may need to be divided into

smaller groups to handle certain sub-topics on their own under your facilitation and supervision. It is quite clear that our lesson example involved more than two teaching methods (in fact about four teaching methods were engaged in this examples, viz, narrative method, question-and-answer method, self activity method and discussion method). Our student-teachers should be made to understand that engaging one teaching method in a lesson is not an end in itself but a means to an end. These teaching methods are interrelated and interdependent in practice. Although our teacher-trainees must be aware of the different streams in Language methodology in order to be complete and rounded professional teachers, it is clear that in the future they need to put emphasis on group-work, working in threes and pair-work. Learner-centred teaching and learning can best be achieved through these strategies.

- f. The majority, 74,47% of the teacher-interviewees across the target areas who followed a rigid, dogmatic and fixed pattern of teaching poetry at secondary school level could be assisted in this manner: They should be reminded that language is dynamic, and so is the teaching of Xitsonga poetry. The pupils should be advised to supplement their knowledge on literary criticism by reading poetry study guides where possible and relevant poetry books as much as they can. The teachers should make it clear to the class that whatever pattern he/she may be following in literary criticism is just a stepping stone towards the boundless literary knowledge that is available and that the onus rests on the shoulders of the learners to access this knowledge and on the basis of such recovered knowledge, generate or create further or new knowledge. It is important to stress, however, that rigidity, inflexibility and dogmaticism in teaching and learning associated with the past must now give way to flexibility and freedom in the classroom so that learners can enjoy learning while bringing their own views and creativities to bear on their own education. Teachers must be facilitators of learning rather than dogmatic custodians of knowledge.

- g. The fact that 70,60% of the teacher-interviewees across the target areas DID NOT know about the existence of the Chief Examiner's Annual Report on final matric candidates' performance, need to be rectified in two possible ways: The in-service

training personnel and Xitsonga Subject Advisers need to demand these valuable Reports from their circuit offices for dissemination to the secondary school teachers under their areas of jurisdiction. If the latter does not work, they may directly apply for these documents from their Provincial Education Departments.

- h. The none-attendance of 68,75% of the teacher-interviewees across the target areas of in-service training on literature in general and Xitsonga poetry teaching in particular could be solved in this manner: At the areas where this research project was conducted, there was no visible in-service training centre nor in-service personnel. The only personnel who seldomly conducted upgrade courses were the Subject Advisers, who could not be located by the researcher at these areas. Our Provincial Education Departments need to establish fully-fledged in-service training centres with full-time staff at all strategic areas. Annual Programmes or schedules for the following year should be sent to each school during the last quarter of the proceeding academic year. This will help teachers to know the specific dates on which they will be expected to report for in-service lessons at the centre. Where it is not logistically possible to remove teachers from their schools for purposes of in-service or upgrade courses, school-based in-service training could be mounted where INSET staff plan itineraries to different schools with set targets. Perhaps even curriculum 2005 may find school-based INSET logistically more viable than fully-fledged in-service training where teachers are removed from their posts for a set period of time.

6.6 RECOMMEND IN RESPECT OF THE SUBJECT ADVISER

- a. It is most unfortunate and regrettable that the Xitsonga Subject Adviser who is entrusted with an enormous responsibility of guiding the secondary school teachers had a PTC professional qualification. It would appear that the Recruitment and Placement sections of our Education Departments only consider a candidate's academic qualification for a job. The researcher strongly recommends candidates who are both academically and professionally qualified for jobs such as that of a Subject Adviser. This Administrator would render an efficient service if he were

assigned to guide the primary school teachers.

- b. If the saying “**You cannot buy experience**” could be applied in the context of the one year experience of the Subject Adviser in his advisory task to guide secondary school poetry teacher in particular, one would say that he is likely not to be of much assistance to the secondary school teachers’ advisory needs. The researcher strongly recommends that experience should be the critical factor in selecting Subject Advisers across the board. A candidate’s CV should include at least five year experience of active lecturing at tertiary level, publication of both academic and methodology articles with accredited or non-accredited journals, at least he or she should be a holder of an M.Ed/MA/M Litt/M Phil degree in Language Learning and Language Methodology or other Language and Methodology related Master degrees, should have some experience in the reading of papers on Language Learning and Language Methodology at conferences, seminars or language courses and should have exhibited some managerial skills in his/her capacity as a lecturer at tertiary level. These will go a long way in alleviating the problem of employing Personnel who do not know whether they are *coming* or *going*.
- c. The fact that the Subject Adviser was of the opinion that poetry teaching and learning should not be carried out beyond Standard 8 is an indicator that he had problems with guiding the secondary school teachers to advantage on this genre. The researcher strongly recommends that Officers such as this should be encouraged to up-grade themselves academically and methodologically with one of our South African institutions for better service.
- d. The fact that the Subject Adviser, just like the pupil- and teacher-respondents settled for the selective approach as opposed to holistic approach in guiding the secondary school teachers on teaching poetry to advantage, calls for the revision of the entire poetry syllabi since it appears to be a top-to-bottom problem. The Provincial Education Ministry should convene a conference for all stake holders to discuss the disadvantages of the selective approach as well as the advantages of the holistic

approach. The researcher strongly recommends that the envisaged New African Languages syllabi should be designed in such a way that the selective approach gets discarded.

- e. On the problem of the inability of the secondary school teachers to teach the figures of sound, syntax and vocabulary and background about the poet altogether, as indicated by the Subject Adviser, the researcher recommends that our tertiary institutions, the Subject Advisers and the In-service training centres or Personnel need to work together closely (rather than blaming one another) in order to fully equip the teachers especially on their literary limitations so that they could be of better service to the community.
- f. On the opinion of the Subject Adviser that the secondary school teachers found all three types of poetry viz, Traditional, Transitional and Modern poetry difficult to teach, the researcher attributes this to defective and inadequate academic and professional training of our student-teachers. There has been a mass exodus of academics of high note to better government paying posts since the Honourable State President Nelson Mandela's Government of National Unity came into power. Most of the tertiary institutions were left with no option but to replace the departed experts with apparently inexperienced and less qualified lecturers. The researcher recommends that the productivity of these academics be compensated by management at the institutions rather than releasing them to join Government where unfortunately most of them are under utilized, bored, committing glaring blunders day in and day out, and lastly on the more serious note, left to die quietly in their offices.
- g. The recommendations on the opinion of the Subject Adviser on rigid, dogmatic and fixed pattern the poetry teachers followed in teaching, the failure of the teachers to utilize teaching aids effectively and their failure to utilize teaching methods effectively, have already been given under "**Recommendations on Secondary School Teachers**" above.

- h. On the issue of the total failure of the Subject Adviser to organize a single session of poetry up-date course for the teachers under his supervision, the researcher strongly recommends some motivational incentives on the part of the Provincial Education Ministry for officers such as these. The incentives could be in a form of an extra over-time payment for covering certain sub-regions per quarter. The researcher bears with the two Subject Advisers since their constituency stretches from Messina (Northern Province) to Hazyview (Mpumalanga).

- i. The fact that the Subject Adviser like the secondary school teachers, do not have access to the Chief Examiner's Annual Reports on final matric candidates' performance in Xitsonga, calls for a re-look at the effectiveness of all the channels for important official information dissemination. I would also strongly recommend to the Subject Adviser that if conventional channels are defective, he needs to use other routes to the information. One such effective alternative route is to directly correspond with the National Education Ministry for better service. (The researcher and his Promoter had to resort to the latter for better and speedy service).

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF THE CHIEF EXAMINER

- a. Recommendations on the Administrators' professional qualifications, Matric candidates' problems in performing well in the three types of poetry, and the selective approach to teaching and learning of poetry were fully given under "**Recommendations in respect of Secondary School Teachers**" and under "**Recommendations in respect of the Subject Adviser**" above. Therefore there is no need to reiterate them here.

- b. Since the Chief Examiner's Annual Reports are important in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry, I would recommend that they be disseminated through the electronic media, preferably through the radio so that it can reach as many listeners as possible.

- c. Since the average performance of the 1994 Xitsonga L1 matric candidates was 50% according to the Chief Examiner's assessment, the researcher recommends that all L1 teachers be empowered at in-service training level about the importance of: (i) the status of the African Languages as "**official languages**" according to the New Constitution of the Country, (ii) the need to improve them up to the level of pursuing any field at any level, (iii) encouraging these teachers to engage self-activity methods and group work as often as possible in their language presentation.
- d. On the issue of the uncertainty of the Chief Examiner in his dual capacity as Xitsonga L1 Chief Literature Examiner for the final matric candidates and Circuit Inspector, as to whether the secondary school teachers utilized teaching aids to support poetry teaching, the researcher has this to say: It would appear that the officer was so engrossed with the administrative part of his work that he did not find time to keep any records of the performance of Xitsonga poetry teachers in his circuit. It would be that he had totally suspended panel inspection in his circuit and devoted his time to office work. The researcher strongly recommends the resuscitation of constructive quarterly visits to schools by the inspectorate in order to guide the secondary school teachers on methodological matters etc. The inspectorate need to create a cordial and friendly atmosphere between their office and the teachers at large. They should behave like didactic guiders rather than fault-finders.

6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

- a. The question of the limitation on the part of many secondary school teachers to teach poetry to advantage has throughout this research project surfaced. The negative attitude of mostly the male teachers across the target research areas appeared to be the main cause of the problem. Screening mechanisms need to be put in place at first year level so that prospective teachers with a negative attitude towards African languages could be encouraged to follow other streams. Prospective first year African languages students could, for example, be required to write a selection test in an essay form of about two pages on one of the following topics:

- The future of African languages in our schools
- The practicality of eleven official languages in South Africa
- The parity of African languages with English or Afrikaans.

The student's essays will most probably guide the selection committee on the suitable African languages material.

6.9 RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WRITERS, SELECTORS AND PUBLISHERS OF XITSONGA LITERATURE

- a. There is a need of varying the themes of the genres that are written, published and prescribed for the secondary school teachers. On the discussion about the cause of the negative attitude of about 72% of the male-respondents towards learning Xitsonga poetry elsewhere in this study, it was indicated that these pupils found the themes of the poems less challenging and unrealistic to what they termed "**the challenges of the dispensation of democracy in the New South Africa**". It was also recommended that poetry themes such as, for example, "**Political Freedom in South Africa in the eyes of an African**", "**The South African Dream**", "**Apartheid: a look back**" need to be exploited.

6.10 RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT : LANGUAGE SERVICES DIVISIONS

- a. The Department needs to attend to the problems of the channels of disseminating literature information as a matter of urgency.
- b. Over and above the language practitioners' academic and professional qualifications, the Departments need to see to it that they also have the love of such a language at heart. Because of this negative attitude towards African languages by one of the language practitioners, the researcher had not received the questionnaire such an

officer was humbly requested to complete (i.e. since 1995 May to 1996 October) by the time this study was completed.

PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire on:

THE TEACHING OF XITSONGA POETRY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN MHALA, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE WITH REFERENCE TO A SAMPLE OF POEMS FROM THE ANTHOLOGIES OF MASEBENZA, B.J., CHAUKE, S.P. AND MAGAISA, J.M..

PART I

1. Instructions:

- 1.1 Do not write your name on the questionnaire.
- 1.2 The information provided will be treated confidentially and will be used for research purposes only.
- 1.3 Be as objective and as sincere as possible.
- 1.4 Your responses should be as direct but as brief and or concise as possible.
- 1.5 For additional information not catered for in the questionnaire, kindly utilize the comments and others column.

2. Particulars

- 2.1 Location of School: [Semi-urban] [rural] [typically-rural] Please tick ✓
- 2.2 Name of circuit:
- 2.3 Standard.
- 2.4 Sex:
- 2.5 Age:

Principal's signature

School stamp

PART II

1. Do you think the prescription of poetry for the Senior Secondary School learners is necessary?

- * Yes []
- * No []
- * Uncertain []

If your answer is “Yes” please proceed to question 3, but if it is “No” or “Uncertain”, then please answer question 2 before you proceed to question 3:

2. Why should poetry not be prescribed? Please tick your answers:

- * Poetry is too difficult to be comprehended []
- * Poetry is an unnecessary additional work for the pupils. []
- * Poetry is irrelevant to the pedagogical needs of the pupils. []
- * Poetry is out of tune with modern life []
- * There are more important section of the Xitsonga syllabus to be learnt than poetry []
- * Poetry is boring []
- * Pupils find it difficult to answer questions on poetry in tests and examinations []
- * Only those who are born poets should learn it []
- * Some comments: _____

3. At what standard should poetry be prescribed? Please tick your answer(s):

- * Standard 8 []
- * Standard 9 []

- * Standard 10 []
- * Uncertain []

4. What criteria should be used in the selection of a Xitsonga poetry anthology for the Senior Secondary School pupils? List 1-8 in order of importance.

- * The selection should be enjoyable. []
- * The selection should include modern poetry. []
- * The selection should be within the pupils' world of experience only []
- * The selection should be of good quality. []
- * The length of the poem should be taken into account. []
- * The selection should widen the pupils' world of experience. []
- * The selection should mirror the Xitsonga cultural heritage. []
- * The selection should include poems that could be easily sung by the pupils. []
- * Some comments _____ []

5. Which aspects of poetry do you find easiest to understand and appreciate? Rank 1-9 in order of preference i.e. "best able to" to "least able to".

- * Imagery. []
- * Figurative language e.g, metaphor, personification etc. []
- * Sound e.g. rhythm, rhyme etc. []
- * Subject matter. []
- * Theme. []

- * Analysis (Nxopanxopo) []
- * Vocabulary and syntax. []
- * Background knowledge about the poet []
- * Some comments _____

6. As a Senior Secondary learner, how do you rate your interest in modern poetry?

- * Exceptionally high. []
- * High. []
- * Average. []
- * Below average. []
- * Low []
- * Very low []

If possible, please state some reasons: _____

7. What type of poetry do you find difficult to comprehend in Xitsonga?

- * Traditional poetry []
- * Transitional poetry []
- * Modern poetry []

* All three []

* None at all []

If possible, please state reasons why you find the type of poetry difficult to comprehend: _____

PART III

8. Choose a poem you understand most from the attached three poems:
- a. “*Rimenyo*”, from *Chochela-mandleni* by Masebenza, B.J.
 - b. “*Rivandla xa vamasithulelele*”, from *Lakatsani tintiho Vatsonga* by Chauke, S.P.
 - c. “*Xirilo xa N'wana wa Afrika*”, from *Mihloti* by Magaisa, J.M.

Analyze the poem of your choice the way your poetry teacher(s) has\have taught you. Your analysis should be about a page.

a. **RIMENYO**

*A hi ku se hi tshamisekile,
 A hi sungula ku hlambanyisa
 Maxangu ya tolo, hi tsakile:
 "Swona mi ka mi swi vula?"*

*Kwala' vurhongo byi nadzihaka ...
 Kwala milorho yi taka,
 Ha ha famba hi pfluxela maxaka,
 Ho pfuxiwa hi xibububu.*

*I rimenyo.
 Hambu ri huma kwihi ...
 Hambu ri rhume hi mani ...
 Hambu hi to swi yini ...*

*Leswi eswakudyeni ri nghenile,
 Vurhongo a ha ha byi muhi,
 Hinkwako-kwako ri netile,
 Hi ta tsutsumela kwihi?*

*Va hi byele va ku: "Bya hlola."
 Hi dyile naxo.
 Kumbe swa'ntswa hi byi nyizela:
 Xin'wana-kaji lexi.*

b. **XIVANDLA XA VAMASITHULELE**

*I xitikwani xa mabofu, timbheveve na va madzinga-ndleve.
Kona ko dzumba ku wisiwe hi minhlana,,
Mibedwa ya kona yi dzumba yi kombe tinhloko tlhelo ri ri rin'we.
Kona ko twala risimu ra xinyenyana ntsena.
Ku vhaka kona hi loko na wena u ya tlhoma wa wena ntsonga kona.*

*I xivandla xa nkateko lowu khapaka khapi!
Laha vamaikelwana va nga kokelaniki milomo ni tinhompfu,
Nhlevo ni rivengo kun'we ni mavondzo a swi ngheni kona.
Hi lexi na mina ndzi rilelaka xona hi masiku.*

*I muti, wu andlalanile, futhi wu anamile.
Byi akile byiyisa kona u nga xisiwi,
Wena wa ha rivata hi leswi na leswiya.
Muti wa xivundza xo tlula na xivundza,
Vangana, maxaka ni varhandzani vo ka va nga hlamulani,
Kasi loko va nga se rhurhela kona a va dzahisana fole dadi!
Hi ri maxaka ma kumanile,
Kambe a ra ha pfurhi tani hi tolo ni tolweni.
Valala va hlangene,
Kambe byasi bya ha mila.*

*Nhlayo ya vaaki va kona ya kukumuka katsongo-katsongo.,
Siku hi siku, vhiki hi vhiki,,
Leswo na wena u nga ya aka kona mindzuku wa swi
 Khumbhula ke?
Vuchavelo hi byo byebyo,
Kumbe u tiva byin'wana hi tsutsumela kona ke?
We murhandziwa hi ta ya hlangana kona-vu.*

*I muti muni wo pfumala hambu mpfikulo wa ricece ke?
 I vanhu muni vo tsandzeka hambu ku tiputa ke?
 Ka titimela hambu ka hisa va lo rhwee!
 Kasi hina loko ku titimela i nandzu,
 Ku hisa ka ha ri wun'wana!*

*Ku rhurhela kona ekaya a wa ha vhaki manana.
 Hambu wo va u rivele swin'wana swa nkoka.
 U ta lerisa mani ku ya swi teka hikuva u na manyunyu,
 A wu ndzawuti munhu futhi a wu pfuxelani na munhu.
 Mpfhuka xa kona u nga fundza marhama,
 Hambu lava khunguvanyaka va pfa va vuyisa moya.
 Wena ke?*

*Hambu mo ka mi nga hi kumbuki,
 Mi nga tikarhati hi ku hi tsundzuka.
 Hi le xiporweni xin'we na hina,
 Ma hamba hi ta ya manyukutana kwaleyo hinkwerhu ka hina.
 Rini hambu rini hi nga mi kandziya,
 Hi ta kombana swin'wana na swin'wana swa misava.*

c. **XIRILO XA N'WANA WA AFRIKA**

*Vutivhi byi ndzi chele rivengo,
 Rivengo leri pfindlusaka ntengo wa timbilu,
 Onge ndzi nga sombholota xikhomankarhi,
 Ndzi vumbuludza tihora ta malembe,
 Ndzi vuyisela dyambu exithukwini xa rona,
 Ndzi omisa ni malwandle lama vangeke vatluti,
 Kumbe ndzi pfluxa Chaka, Muhlava ... tihosi,
 Ndzi hingakanya Afrika lontshwa wa ntima,
 Onge ndzi nga vuyetela hinkwaso swirhengele,
 Ndzi vumba Afrika lontshwa wa ntima,
 Ndzi rhidela makhumbi ya yena hi xirhidelo xa nsimbi,
 Ndzi phomela matshaku yakwe hi phomo ya ntima,
 Ina ...
 onge ndzi nga sombholota voko leri fambisaka nkarhi,
 Ndzi vanga Edeni lonene wo pfumala xikhutu,
 Ndzi pfukula tihosi va-Chaka, Nghunghunyana ... Muzila.*

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire on:

THE TEACHING OF XITSONGA POETRY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN MHALA, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE WITH REFERENCE TO A SAMPLE OF POEMS FROM THE ANTHOLOGIES OF MASEBENZA, B.J., CHAUKE, S.P. AND MAGAISA, J.M..

Dear Colleague

I am engaged in an MEd empirical research project focussing mainly on "The teaching of literary criticism in Xitsonga poetry to secondary school learners in the Mhala Region of Mpumalanga Province.

The primary aim of this study is to isolate, define and describe the main obstacles encountered by both teacher and pupil in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry. Your views and suggestions are very important and will most certainly contribute to the reshaping and restructuring of our teacher training methodology programme.

Would you therefore, kindly assist me in this effort by completing and returning the attached questionnaire at your very earliest convenience.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation and assistance.

M J Mona
Researcher

Department of Language Methodology
University of the North
Private Bag x1106
SOVENGA
0727
Phone: 0152- 268 2395
Cell: 082 200 5246
Fax: 0152 268 2869

PART 1

1. **Instructions:**

- 1.1 Do not write your name on the questionnaire.
- 1.2 The information provided will be treated confidentially and will be used for research purposes only.
- 1.3 Be as objective and as sincere as possible.
- 1.4 Your response should be as direct, as brief and as concise as possible.
- 1.5 For additional information not catered for in the questionnaire, kindly utilize the comments and others column.

2. **Particulars**

- 2.1 Location of School: [Semi-urban] [rural] [typically-rural] Please tick ✓
- 2.2 Name of circuit:
- 2.3 Standard of poetry class you teach:
- 2.4 Sex:
- 2.5 Age:

Principal's signature

School stamp

PART II

1. What is your highest academic qualification?

- * Standard 10 []
- * Under graduate student (e.g. BA I) []
- * BA []
- * BA Honours []
- * MA; MED etc. []
- * D Phil, DED Etc []
- * Others: Please Specify _____

2. What is your highest professional qualification?

- * LPTC\HPTC []
- * PTD []
- * Diploma Paed []
- * UED []
- * HED []
- * BA Paed []
- * Others. Please specify _____

3. What are your Method subjects? For example: MTSO 400 and MENG 400?

- * _____ and _____ []

4. For how long have you been teaching poetry? For example: 3 years

* _____ []

5. Do you think the prescription of poetry for the Senior Secondary learners is necessary?

* No []

* Yes []

* Uncertain []

If your answer is "Yes" please proceed to the next question, but if it is "No" or "Uncertain", then please answer these questions below before you proceed to question 8:

* Poetry is too difficult to teach []

* Poetry is an unnecessary additional work for the pupils []

* Poetry is irrelevant to the pedagogical needs of the pupils []

* Poetry is out of tune with modern life []

* There are more important sections of the Xitsonga syllabus to be taught than poetry []

* Pupils find it difficult to answer questions on poetry in tests and examinations []

* Only those who are born poets should teach it. []

* Some comments: _____

6. At what standard should poetry be prescribed? Please tick your answer(s):

- * Standard 8 []
- * Standard 9 []
- * Standard 10 []
- * Uncertain []
- * At none of the above standards []

7. What criteria, in order of importance (number from most important to least important) should be used in selecting a Xitsonga poetry anthology for the Senior Secondary School pupils?

- * The selection should be enjoyable []
- * The selection should include modern poetry []
- * The selection should be within the pupils' world of experience []
- * The selection should widen the pupils' world of experience []
- * The selection should be of good quality []
- * The length of the poem should be taken into account []
- * The selection should mirror the Xitsonga cultural heritage []
- * The selection should include poems that could be easily sung by the pupil []
- * Some comments: _____

8. Which aspects of poetry are you best able to teach? Please rank in order of ability from 1 (best able) to 9 (least able). Give the same number to the aspects you can teach equally well, and mark with a cross those you cannot teach at all.

- * Figurative language []
- * Figurative of sound []
- * Subject matter []

- * Theme []
- * Detailed analysis []
- * Imagery []
- * Background knowledge about the poet []
- * Vocabulary and syntax []
- * Some comments or others: _____

9. As a Senior secondary teacher, how do you rate your interest in poetry?

- * Exceptionally high []
- * High []
- * Average []
- * Below Average []
- * Low []
- * Very low []

- * If possible, please state some reasons for your response _____

10. Which poetry do you find most difficult to teach?

- * Traditional poetry []
- * Transitional poetry []
- * Modern poetry []
- * All three []
- * None of the three []

* If your answer is not "none", please state some reasons for your choice: _____

SUBJECT ADVISER QUESTIONNAIRE**QUESTIONNAIRE ON:**

THE TEACHING OF XITSONGA POETRY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN MHALA, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE WITH REFERENCE TO A SAMPLE OF POEMS FROM THE ANTHOLOGIES OF MASEBENZA B.J., CHAUKE, S.P. AND MAGAISA, J.M..

Dear Prof/Dr/Rev/Sir/Madam

I am engaged in an MEd Empirical Research Project reflecting on “The teaching of literary criticism in Xitsonga poetry to secondary school learners in the Mhala Region of Mpumalanga Province”.

The primary aim of this study is to isolate, define and describe the main obstacles encountered by both teacher and pupil in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga poetry. Your views and suggestions are very important and will most certainly be used in reshaping and restructuring our Teacher Education (training) Methodology Programme.

Would you therefore, kindly assist me in this effort by completing and returning the attached questionnaire as urgently as it is administratively possible.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation and assistance.

M.J. MONA: **Department of Language Methodology**
Researcher **University of the North**
 Private Bag X1106
 SOVENGA
 0727

Phone: (0152) -2682395 Cell: 0822005246 Fax: 0152-2682869

PART 1

1. INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1.1 Do not write your name on the questionnaire.
- 1.2 The information provided will be treated as highly confidential and will be used strictly for research purposes only.
- 1.3 Be as objective and as sincere as possible.
- 1.4 Your response should be as direct, as brief and as concise as possible.
- 1.5 For additional information not catered for in the questionnaire, kindly make use of the comments or others column.

2. PARTICULARS:

- 2.1 Location of schools in your circuit: [semi-urban] [rural] [typically-rural] Please tick.
- 2.2 Name of circuits for which you are responsible:
.....
.....
.....
.....
- 2.3 Standards covered in your work:
.....
.....
.....

2.4 Sex:.....

2.5 Age:.....

Senior Officer's signature

.....

Office Stamp

.....

PART 2

1. What is your highest academic qualification?

- BA []
- BA Honours []
- MA, M Litt, M.ED []
- Ph D,D Litt, D.ED []
- Others. Please specify:
- If Masters or Doctrate graduate, please indicate title of
dissertation or thesis:
-
-
-
-

2. What is your highest professional qualification?

- LPTC/HPTC []
- JSTC []
- Diploma Paed []
- UED []
- HED []
- BA Paed/BA Ed []
- Others. Please specify
-
-

**3. For how long have you been a Xitsonga Subject Adviser? For Example:
12 years.**

-

4. At what senior secondary level should poetry be prescribed?

Please tick your answer(s):

- Standard 8 []
- Standard 9 []
- Standard 10 []
- Uncertain []

5. What criteria in order of importance from 1 (most important) to 8 (least important), should be used in selecting a Xitsonga poetry anthology for Senior secondary school pupils?

- The selection should be enjoyable []
- The selection should include modern poetry []
- The selection should be within the pupils' world of experience. []
- The selection should be of good quality []
- The length of the poem should be taken into account. []
- The selection should mirror the Xitsonga cultural heritage. []
- The selection should include poems that could be easily sung by the pupils []
- Some comments:

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6. Which aspects of Modern poetry do you emphasise? Please tick your answer in order of importance:

- * Figurative language []
- Figures of sound []
- Subject matter []
- Theme []
- Detailed analysis []
- Imagery []
- Syntax and vocabulary []
- Background knowledge about the poet []
- some comments or other poetic devices you emphasize among
Your teachers:
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-
-

7. Which aspects of Modern poetry are senior Secondary School teachers best able to teach? Please rank them in order of ability from 1 (best able) to 8 (least able). Give the same number to aspects you feel they can teach equally well, and mark with a cross those they cannot teach at all:

- Figurative language []
- Figures of sound []
- Subject matter []
- Theme []
- Detailed analysis []
- Imagery []
- Syntax and vocabulary []
- Background knowledge about the life of the poet []
- Some comments or other poetic devices:
-

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8. As a Subject Adviser, how do you rate the Senior secondary school teachers' interest in poetry?

- Exceptionally high []
- High []
- Average []
- Below average []
- Low []
- Very low []

• If possible, please state some reasons for your response:

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.....
.....
.....

9. Which poetry do senior Secondary teachers find most difficult to teach?

- Traditional poetry []
- * Transitional poetry []
- Modern poetry []
- All three []
- None at all []

- Kindly state some reasons for finding either traditional poetry, or transitional poetry or modern poetry nor all three difficult to teach:

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MATRIC LITERATURE CHIEF EXTERNAL EXAMINER QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire on:

THE TEACHING OF XITSONGA POETRY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN MHALA, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE WITH REFERENCE TO A SAMPLE OF POEMS FROM THE ANTHOLOGIES OF MASEBENZA, B.J., CHAUKE, S.P. AND MAGAISA, J.M..

Dear Prof / Dr /Rev / Sir / Madam

I am engaged in an empirical research project reflecting mainly on “The teaching of literary criticism in Xitsonga poetry to secondary school learners in Mhala Region of Mpumalanga Province.”

The primary aim of this study is to isolate, define and describe the main obstacles encountered by both teacher and pupil in the teaching and learning of Xitsonga Modern poetry. Your views and suggestions are very important and will most certainly contribute to the reshaping and restructuring of our teacher education (training) methodology programme.

Would you therefore, kindly assist me in this effort by completing and returning the attached questionnaire as urgently as it is administratively possible.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation and assistance.

M. J. Mona : **Department of Language Methodology**
Researcher **University of The North**
Private Bag x1106
Sovenga
0727

Phone :0152 - 2682395

Cell. :0822005246

Fax :0152 - 2682869

PART I

1. Instructions:

- 1.1. Do not write your name on the questionnaire.
- 1.2. The information provided will be treated as confidential and will strictly be used for research purposes.
- 1.3. Be as objective and as sincere as possible.
- 1.4. Your response should be as direct, as brief and as concise as possible.
- 1.5. For additional information not catered for in the questionnaire, kindly utilize the comments or others column.

2. General information:

- 2.1. Sex :
- 2.2. Age :

Senior Officer's signature

Official stamp

PART II

1. What is your highest academic qualification?

*BA in _____ (Major) and _____ (Major) []

*BA Honours in _____ []

*MA/ M Litt/ Med []

*Ph D/ D Phil/ D litt/ Ded []

*Others. Please specify _____

*If Masters or Doctrate graduate, please state title of Dissertation or Thesis: _____

2. What is your highest professional qualification?

*LPTC/ HPTC []

*JSTC []

*Diploma paed []

*UED/ HED []

*BA Paed/ BA Ed []

*Others. Please specify _____

3. For how long have you been a Literature Chief Examiner?

* _____ []

4.

In your experience as Chief Examiner, which poetry do matric candidates find difficulty with?

*Traditional poetry []

*Transitional poetry []

*Modern poetry []

*All three []

*None of the three. []

*Kindly state some reasons for finding either traditional poetry or transitional poetry, or modern poetry nor all three difficult. _____

5. Which aspects of modern poetry do you suggest should be emphasized? Please rank them in order of importance:

*Figurative language []

*Figures of sound []

*Subject matter []

*Theme []

*Detailed analysis []

*Imagery []

*Background knowledge about the poet (s) []

*Syntax and vocabulary

[]

*Some comments or other poetic devices _____

6. How do you plough back to the community your experience as Chief Examiner?

*Through radio

[]

*Through television

[]

*Through News Papers

[]

*Through markers

[]

*Through official structures. Please specify _____

*Not applicable

*Others. Please specify _____

7. What is the average percentage performance of the 1994 final matric candidates in poetry?

*A	80 - 100%	[]
*B	70 - 79%	[]
*C	60 - 69%	[]
*D	50 - 59%	[]
*E	45 - 49%	[]
*EE	40 - 44%	[]
*F	33 - 39%	[]
*Uncertain		[]

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¹ This includes materials that guided, influenced and informed the researcher's thinking and perspective on the research topic in general.

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