

Linguistic Co-existence: Disinterring Diglossic Cases among the Vatsonga

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ABSTRACT This paper draws on sociolinguistic fieldwork among speakers of Xitsonga in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. Previous research has shown that Ferguson is the first to introduce the concept of diglossia and was later supported by Fishman. In Limpopo Province Xitsonga shares a linguistic and cultural space with both Tshivenda and Northern Sotho. The study seeks to explain why a particular language is preferred instead of another given certain circumstances. The study is qualitative in nature and investigates diglossia in selected Vatsonga communities. The data was collected using both the observation and interview techniques. The paper shows the implications of diglossia in terms of language development especially regarding a language that is relegated to a subordinate status. The results of this study shows that the prevalence of diglossia among Vatsonga was apparent even prior to the arrival of European settlers in the region.