

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Early Literacy Development: An Analysis of IsiXhosa and IsiZulu Traditional Children's Folktales and Songs

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ABSTRACT This paper provides an analysis of IsiXhosa and IsiZulu folktales and traditional children's songs in order to highlight the relationship between Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and early literacy development in young children. Through the lens of the cognitive and socio-cultural theories, it explores the kind of knowledge embedded in the IsiXhosa and IsiZulu folktales and traditional children's songs, and the value and relevance of such knowledge in supporting early literacy development. It argues that oral literacy in indigenous languages has always existed, but became dormant and invisible as a result of assimilation and acculturation into the Western norms. The paper concludes with an acknowledgement that folktales and traditional children's songs are a rich and perennial reservoir through which young learners can acquire not only literacy skills, but also cognitive, linguistic and social skills that can help them to become active citizens in the world and the workplace.