

Challenges to the Usage of a Hyphen in Compound Nouns in Southern Ndebele

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Abstract- The problem challenging isiNdebele as a new written language is the manner in which compounds are formed. The major challenge is found in compound nouns that are formed from three to four different parts of speech. Such compound nouns are written differently, there are a lot of inconsistencies in as far as the writing of these compound nouns is concerned. Some are hyphenated and some are not hyphenated. The question is whether to write them with or without a hyphen, if they should be written with a hyphen, and where should one put a hyphen?

Compounding involves the joining together of two independent words to form a new word. Cluver (1989:274) states that compounding is “by far the most productive word-forming process in the Germanic languages”. A combination of two or more elements or parts. *Linguistically compounding means* “A word that consists either of two or more elements that are independent words”.

According to the revised orthography and spelling rule (2005 and 2008), the hyphen in isiNdebele is used amongst other things to separate compound nouns signifying linguistic concepts. Language is never static, it is dynamic. The new inventions and new terms that are adopted in isiNdebele affects compounding. There is a rapidly development of new terms coined on daily basis and there is also an influx of new terms that isiNdebele is experiencing which also affects compounding. Language standardization is definitely part of language management. Hudson as cited by Van Huyssteen (2003:26) sees standardization as a process of intervention by society in the normal development of language. As such isiNdebele lexicographers are faced with a challenge in becoming the gate keepers and taking final decisions when dealing with the lemmatization of compounds, hence the inconsistencies.

The aim of this article is to try to minimize the inconsistencies that are found in compound nouns formed by more than three parts of speech and to come up with acceptable strategies in the use of a hyphen when writing compounds. Finally this paper will contribute towards solving these problems by offering practical approach within the context of the written standard language. This will also benefit lexicographers as they will be consistent when defining lemmas with hyphens.

Keywords: *COMPOUNDING, LEXICOGRAPHY, CORPUS, PARAPHRASE, ORTHOGRAPHY, COINAGE, LEXICOGRAPHERS, HYPHEN, LEMMATIZATION, STRATEGY, STANDARDIZATION, DICTIONARY, ISINDEBELE LANGUAGE*

I. Introduction

IsiNdebele referred to in this paper is a South African Ndebele and not the Zimbabwean Ndebele. IsiNdebele is one of the 11 official languages of the Republic of South Africa. The paper investigates the way in which compound nouns are formed in isiNdebele. Compounding is another productive method of word formation in which one word or term is formed from two or more words or terms. Such combinations conform to the existing patterns of derivation, Van Huyssteen (2003:110). In isiNdebele language, there are inconsistencies in the formation of these compound nouns because components of such components may belong to different word categories and as a result this put Lexicographers in a predicament. Lexicographers are faced with the biggest challenge in as far as the compound nouns are written in isiNdebele. IsiNdebele as an officially written language that is hardly 30 years old and is going through a metabolic process of constant change. The changes in the development of this language affect also the word stock, i.e. the formation of the coined words.

The new influx of coined words in isiNdebele comes mostly from natural science, mathematical, technological, HIV and Aids terms derived from the foreign languages, especially Greek, Latin, English and Afrikaans.

II. Historical Background of isiNdebele

IsiNdebele affectionately known as isikhethu, i.e. (Our Language) by its speakers, and also referred to as Southern Ndebele, is linguistically classified as one of the Zunda Nguni languages spoken by the Southern Ndebele of the Republic of South Africa. According to the 2009 census, isiNdebele is spoken by approximately 703,906 Ndebele speaking communities in the nine provinces of the

Republic of South Africa, predominantly by people residing in Mpumalanga, Gauteng, Limpopo and North West provinces. Historical, Ndebele people trace their origins from KwaZulu Natal. IsiNdebele comprises of mainly the two dialects, i.e. Nzunza and Manala, Mashiyane (2002:8). On the 1st of January 1985 isiNdebele became the official language of tuition in all primary schools of the region, Taljaard (1993:229). To date isiNdebele is taught in many schools in Mpumalanga province. It was introduced at the tertiary institution in 1997. Currently it is taught in two tertiary institutions i.e. University of Pretoria and university of Venda.

III. Compound nouns

According to the Dictionary of word origins 'compound' comes from Latin word 'compōnere' meaning to put together. Zwicky in Musehane (2007) define a compound as:

'A word that is composed entirely of small words. The difference between a compound as a phrase must be determined separately for each language; if no formal characteristics can be discussed for distinguishing between them, then the language has no compounds'.

Van Huyssteen (2003:218) view the method of compounding, the formation of one word out of two or more words, as the one that produces some of the most original purist coinage.

Musehane (2007:237) is also of the opinion that languages frequently have ways of creating a new lexical item by putting together two freestanding stems or words. These new items are called compounds.

Compounds enter isiNdebele lexicon through coinage or transliteration. Coinage of these terms is possible when they are adapted to fit the lexical system of isiNdebele.

However, in this paper the focus is not on coining and adaptation but it is on the inconsistencies that are found in compound words or nouns.

The aim of this article is to try to minimize the inconsistencies that are found in compound nouns formed by two or more parts of speech and come up with an acceptable strategy in the use of hyphen when writing compounds in isiNdebele. The paper will contribute towards solving these problems by offering practical approach within the context of the written standard language. Recommended solutions on the inclusion or usage of a hyphen in compound words or nouns will be offered. Above

all, this paper will assist lexicographers in being consistent in their entries of compounds

IV. The usage of a hyphen in isiNdebele orthography and spelling rules

According to the orthography and spelling rules (2005 and 2008) the hyphen in isiNdebele is used for practical purposes as follows:-

- to separate two vowels coming together e.g. u-Ennie 'Ennie'
- to join concords to numerals e.g. abali- 10 '10 of them'
- is used with an enclitic-ke e.g. letha-ke 'please bring'
- to separate the class prefix from abbreviations and foreign words
- e.g. i-F.N.B 'F.N.B'
- to separate compound nouns signifying linguistic concepts e.g. amabizo-vama 'common nouns'

The challenge with these spelling rules is that there are indigenous words that are formed out of two words but are not hyphenated and yet linguistic concepts with two words are hyphenated.

IV. Types of compound nouns in isiNdebele

IsiNdebele has the following types of compound nouns.

a. Noun + noun

When forming this noun types, the vowel of the prefix of the second noun is discarded. See the examples below:-

Umnini + (u)muzi > mnimuzi
'owner of the house'

Inomboro + (u)mutjho > inomboromutjho
'number line'

b. Noun + absolute pronoun

When forming this noun types, the stem of the absolute pronoun is discarded. Compare the following examples below:

- Umnini + yona > umniniyo
'its owner'

- Umnini + bona > umninibo
'their owner'

c. Noun + demonstrative pronoun

Most of these nouns are found in class 1(a). They are formed by affixing the pre-prefix -u of class 1 (a) in a noun. Compare the following examples below:

Izifo + zoke > uzifozoke 'all illness curer'

IsiNdebele just like other languages has compound nouns which are formed by various parts of speech, i.e. noun + noun; noun + verb; noun + adverb etc, Jiyane (1994). These types of compound nouns are formed like in other Nguni languages such as Zulu, Xhosa and Siswati. Compare the examples below:

- Umninimuzi 'house owner'
umnini + umuzi

possesive + noun
- UMandlekosi 'Mr king's strength'
amandla + wekosi

noun + possessive
- UDLawulale 'one who eat and sleep'
-dla + -lala

verb+ verb

d. Compounds signifying linguistic concepts

These compounds are also formed by various parts of speech, i.e. noun + noun; noun + verb; verb + verb; noun + enumerative etc.

(2)

- Undebe-mbili 'bilabial'
indebe + ezimbili

noun + adjective
- Undebe-zinyo 'dentilabial'
Indebe + izinyo > undebezinyo
'dentilabial'

noun + noun
- Ikulumo-pikiswano 'debate'

ikulumo + ipikiswano

noun + noun

- Ikulumo-pendulwano 'dialogue'
ikulumo + ipendulwano

noun + noun

As observed in the examples (1 & 2) above, the indigenous words are formed out of two parts of speech and they are not hyphenated whereas the compounds denoting linguistic concepts which are also formed of two parts of speech are hyphenated. When isiNdebele borrow or adapt foreign words into isiNdebele, they are adapted to fit and suit the lexicon structure of isiNdebele. In this case it is confusing to the lexicographer because both compounds are formed of the same number of parts of speech.

e. Other inconsistencies in compounds formed from other fields

The following is the case in isiNdebele with the compound words that does not signify linguistic concepts. See the hyphen usage in these compounds:-

i. The first two elements are not separated with a hyphen, compare the following examples:

(3)

- Ilungamdlhegi 'alternate member'
Ilunga + umdlhegi

noun + noun
- Ithungelelwano hlanganiso 'intranet'
thungelelana + hlanganisa

verb + verb
- Isikhombisolwazi 'reference'
khombisa + ilwazi

verb + noun

ii. The first two elements are separated with a hyphen, compare the examples below:

(4)

- Isivikela-malwele 'antibody'
vikela + amalwele

verb + noun
- Irhemiso-kambiso 'mainstreaming'
rhemisa + ikambiso

verb + noun

- Isijamiso-sikhathi ‘*time frame*’

jamisa + isikhathi

verb + noun

iii. The first element is separated with a hyphen but not the second and third elements. See the examples below:-

(5)

- Ithinta-liswanoliqha
thinta + lisana + iliqha
verb + verb + noun
- Umbiko-mthethokambiso ‘white paper’
umbiko + umthetho + ikambiso
noun + noun + noun
- Isibonisi-sidlalisimdumo ‘video cassette recorder’
bonisa + isidlalisi + umdumo
verb + noun + noun

iv. The third elements are separated with a hyphen, but not the first and second:

(6)

- Umbusosiqhema-nye ‘*one - party state*’
umbuso + isiqhema + sinye
noun + noun + enumerative

v. All three elements are separated with hyphens:

(7)

- Pepenisa-umtlolo-fihlo ‘*decode*’
pepenisa + umtlolo + ifihlo
verb + noun + noun
- Ikomba-mphande-mitato ‘*directory*’
khomba + iimphande + imitato
verb + noun + noun
- Irherho-mabona-kude ‘*television*’
irherho + bona + kude
noun + verb + adverb

V. Recommendations

Inconsistencies of putting a hyphen in some compound words and leaving out the hyphen in other compound words could be solved by making sure that the words or parts of speech that are used

in the formulation of the words are fully understood in meaning before putting a hyphen, irrespective of the length. For an example in ‘ithintaliswano-liqha’ the formation is incorrect it should be ‘ithintaliswano + iliqha’ which is a noun + a noun and not as it is in the above example.

Based on the above discussions, it is recommended that:-

(8)

- All the linguistic concepts and other terms that are built of two parts of speech should be written without a hyphen. Compare the following examples:
 - Isihlathululimezwi ‘*dictionary*’
hlathulula + amezwi
verb + verb
 - Imihlobosithomo ‘*variants*’
imihlobo + isithomo
noun + noun
 - Amabizorhunyezo ‘*diminutive nouns*’
amabizo + rhunyeza
noun + verb
 - Inomborolingana ‘*uneven number*’
(*Maths*)
inomboro + lingana
noun + adjective
 - Ikhahonimonoksayidi ‘*carbon monoxide*’
(*Natural Science*)
ikhahoni + imonoksayidi
noun + noun
 - Isivikelamalwele ‘*antibody*’ (*HIV & Aids*)
vikela + amalwele
verb + noun
 - All the compound words build of three parts of speech should have two hyphens. See the examples below:-
- (9)
- Umbuso-siqhema-nye ‘*one - party state*’
umbuso + isiqhema + sinye
noun + noun + enumerative
 - Umbiko-mthetho-kambiso ‘*white paper*’
umbiko + umthetho + ikambiso
noun + noun + noun

- Isibonisi-sidlalisi-mdumo ‘*video cassette recorder*’
bonisa + isidlalisi + umdumo

verb + noun + noun



VI. Conclusion

From the above discussion this paper has shown how compound nouns can pose a challenge to a lexicographer, especially where he has not yet decided whether he is a gate keeper of his language or not. This paper has also shown the inconsistencies in the writing system of compound words in isiNdebele. On the other hand the paper has illustrated that some lexicographic principles such as descriptiveness can be a challenge in a language where its history of recognition is still at its infancy. At the end the paper came up with possible recommendations that can be followed to combat these inconsistencies.

Miss Katjie Sponono Mahlangu acquired her Master’s Degree at the University of Pretoria in 2007. She is currently busy with her Doctoral Studies. She was a teacher at Mbalenhle High School in Mpumalanga (Republic of South Africa) since 1986 until 1989. In the year 1990, she was a teacher and Deputy Principal at Khanyisa Primary school in Mpumalanga (Republic of South Africa). In 2003 she was appointed as the Editor in Chief and the Executive Director of isiNdebele Dictionary. She has been a part-time isiNdebele Lecture at the University of Pretoria since 2010 to- date.

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