

**AN ARTISTIC ENCULTURATION OF XHOSA CHILDREN IN LANGUAGE
AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS THROUGH
IINTSOMI AND GAMES**

**By
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An Artistic Enculturation of Xhosa Children in Language and Critical Thinking Skills Through lintsomi and Games:

I declare that the above dissertation Title is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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FEBRUARY 2025

DATE

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the two incredible women, my aunt Nomahobe Lillian Fana and my grandmother Ntsimazana Celia Mlobeli, who taught me iintsomi and made sure I embraced who I am, and to my two daughters, who supported me through this journey.

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ABSTRACT

Through games and traditional storytelling (*iintsomi*), this study explores how Xhosa children are enculturated in language development and critical thinking skills. The study investigates the ways in which these cultural activities support the social, linguistic and cognitive development of young children in the Xhosa community, drawing on the concepts of constructivism and sociocultural theory. The study focuses on how games and *iintsomi* (oral narrative) promote critical engagement, active participation and cultural identity. The research project explores how storytelling or folklore and games can be utilised to transfer cultural information and foster problem-solving abilities and collaborative learning by reflecting on one's own experiences through autoethnography, lived experiences through phenomenology and delving deep into existing knowledge through desk research. Qualitative interpretive research design is used in this study and it explores how *iintsomi* and traditional children's games function as indigenous pedagogical tools that foster language acquisition, cultural identity and critical thinking among Xhosa children. This is done by creating works of art that graphically represent the social background of *iintsomi*, the way oral traditions were communicated, and how traditional games were played. This study argues that these customs preserve Xhosas' cultural history while offering a rich, contextual learning environment that fosters socialisation, critical thinking and language acquisition. In order to promote holistic development, especially in post-colonial contexts, the study's conclusion highlights the significance of incorporating indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices within modern educational frameworks. For future research, the effects of *iintsomi* and traditional games on other facets of child development, such as moral reasoning, emotional intelligence and problem-solving, can be investigated. The study is practice-led and based, and it culminated in an exhibition of artworks portraying the visual interpretation of the Xhosa cultural set-up and selected folklore.

KEYWORDS:

iintsomi; Folklore; Games; Indigenous Knowledge; Enculturation; Language; Constructivism; Sociocultural Theory

ISISHWANKATHELO

Olu phandolwazi luphonononga indlela abantwana bamaXhosa abakhuliswa ngayo kuphuhliso lolwimi nakwizakhono zokucinga banzi, ngokusebenzisa imidlalo nokubalisa amabali emveli (iintsomi). Olu phandolwazi luphanda iindlela le misebenzi yenkcubeko exhasa ngayo uphuhliso lwentlalo, ulwimi nolwengqiqo kubantwana abancinci kuluntu lwamaXhosa, kutsalwa kwisigama sokudalwa kolwazi nokuqonda ngokwamava okuphila/ezentlalo kunye nengcingane yentlalontle yoluntu. Olu phandolwazi lujolise kwindlela imidlalo kunye neentsomi (amabali abaliswa ngomlomo) ekhuthaza ngayo ukucingisisa banzi, ukuthatha inxaxheba ngokukhuthelayo kunye nokuzazi ngokwenkcubeko. Le projekthi yophandolwazi iphonononga indlela yokubaliswa kwamabali okanye iintsomi nemidlalo enokusetyenziswa ukudlulisela ulwazi lwenkcubeko nokukhuthaza izakhono zokusombulula iingxaki kunye nokufunda ngentsebenziswano ngokubonakalisa amava omntu ngokusebenzisa indlela yophandolwazi apho abaphandilwazi basebenzisa amava abo ukuze baqonde imicimbi yezenkcubeko, yezentlalo, okanye yobuqu (*iautoethnography*), amava okuphila ngokusebenzisa amava oluntu kwezentlalo kunye nokuphonononga nzulu kulwazi olukhoyo ngophandolwazi olulandelayo. Kolu phandolwazi kusetyenziswa uyilo lophandolwazi lophandontyilazwi lokutolika idatha kwaye luphonononga indlela iintsomi kunye nemidlalo yemveli yabantwana esebenza ngayo nanjengezixhobo zokufundisa zemveli ezikhuthaza ukufundwa kolwimi, ukuzazi ngokwenkcubeko nokucinga ngokubanzi kubantwana bamaXhosa. Oku kwenziwa ngokuyila imisebenzi yobugcisa emele ngokwemizobo imvelaphi yezentlalo yeentsomi, indlela izithethe zomlomo ezazisaziswa ngayo, kunye nendlela edlalwa ngayo imidlalo yemveli. Olu phandolwazi lubonisa ukuba ezi zithethe zigcina imbali yenkcubeko yamaXhosa lo gama zibonelela ngendawo yokufunda etyebileyo, enemeko ekhuthaza ukuhlalisana kwabantu, ukucinga banzi kunye nokufunda ulwimi. Ukuze kukhuthazwe uphuhliso olupheleleyo, ngakumbi kwiimeko zasemva kobukoloniyali, uqukumbeo lolu phandolwazi lugxininisa ukubaluleka kokubandakanya iinkqubo zolwazi lwemveli kunye neenkqubo zenkcubeko kwiziseko zemfundo yanamhlanje. Uphandolwazi lwexesha elizayo, lunokuphanda iziphumo zeentsomi nemidlalo yemveli

kwezinye iinkalo zophuhliso lwabantwana, ezifana nokuqqa ngokuziphatha, ukuthatha ingqalelo kweemvakalelo zakho nezabanye kunye nokusombulula iingxaki. Olu phandolwazi lukhokelwa kwaye lusekelwe kumsebenzi wezandla, lwaze lwafikelela kumboniso wemisebenzi yobugcisa ebonisa ukuchazwa kokubonwayo kwenkqubo yenkcubeko yamaXhosa kunye neentsomi ezikhethiweyo.

AMAGAMA ANGUNDOQO:

Iintsomi; Imidlalo; Ulwazi lweMveli; Imfundiso yenkcubeko; Ulwimi; Ukudalwa kolwazi nokuqonda ngokwamava okuphila/ezentlalo; Ingcingane yeNkcubeko yeNtlalo

KAKARETŠO

Ka dipapadi le go anega dikanegelo tša setšo (*iintsomi*), nyakišišo ye e sekaseka ka moo bana ba Mathosa ba rutwago setšo ka gona ka tlabolong ya polelo le mabokgoni a naganišišo ya tsinkelo. Nyakišišo e nyakišiša ditsela tše ka tšona mediro ye ya setšo e thekgago tlabollo ya leago, ya polelo le ya temogo ya bana ba bannyane setšhabeng sa Mathosa, go tšea dikgopolo tša Kagokwešišo le teori ya setšo sa leago. Nyakišišo e šeditše godimo ga ka moo dipapadi le *iintsomi* (kanegelo ya molomo) di tšwetšago pele go poledišano ka tsinkelo, go tšea karolo ka mafolofolo le boitšhupo bja setšo. Protšeke ya nyakišišo e sekaseka ka moo go anega dikanegelo goba dikanegelo tša setšo le dipapadi go ka šomišwago go fetišetša tshedimošo ya setšo le go oketša bokgoni bja go rarolla mathata le go ithuta ka tšhomišano ka go naganišiša ka maitemogelo a motho ka noši ka othoetenokrafi, maitemogelo ao a phetšwego ka fenomenolotši le go tsenelela ka gare ga tsebo ye e lego gona ka nyakišišo ya tafoleng. Tlhamo ya nyakišišo ya tlhathollo ya khwalithethifi e šomišitšwe mo nyakišišong ye gomme e sekaseka ka moo *iintsomi* le dipapadi tša setšo tša bana di šomago bjalo ka didirišwa tša thuto ya setlogo tše di godišago go hwetša polelo, boitšhupo bja setšo le go nagana gabotse gare ga bana ba Mathosa. Se se dirwa ka go hlama mešomo ya bokgabo yeo e emelago ka dikerafo setlogo sa leago sa *iintsomi*, tsela yeo ditšo tša molomo di bego di fetišetšwa ka yona, le ka fao dipapadi tša setšo di bego di bapalwa ka gona. Nyakišišo ye e bolela gore ditlwaedi tše e boloka histori ya setšo sa Mathosa mola e fa tikologo ya go ithuta ye e humilego, ya diteng yeo e godišago go gwerana le batho, go nagana gabotse le go hwetša polelo. Gore go tšwetšwe pele tlabollo ye e feletšego, kudu maamong a ka morago ga bokoloniale, phetho ya nyakišišo ye e laetša bohlokwa bja go akaretša ditshepedišo tša tsebo ya setlogo le mekgwa ya setšo ka gare ga ditlhako tša thuto tša sebjalebja. Go dinyakišišo tša ka moso, ditlamorago tša *iintsomi* le dipapadi tša setšo go dikarolo tše dingwe tša kgolo ya ngwana, go swana le go bea mabaka ka boitshwaro, bohlale bja maikutlo le go rarolla mathata, di ka nyakišišwa. Nyakišišo ye e etetšwe pele ke mokgwa e bile e theilwe, gomme e ile ya feleletša ka pontšho ya ditiro tša

bokgabo tšeo di tšweletšago tlhathollo ya pono ya peakanyo ya setšo sa Xhosa le ditšo tše di kgethilwego.

MANTŠU A BOHLOKWA:

lintsomi; Dikanegelo tša setšo; Dipapadi; Tsebo ya Setlogo; Setšofatšo; Polelo; Kagokwešišo; Teori ya Setšo sa Leago

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

This study investigates and presents how Xhosa children's enculturation is shaped by games and *iintsomi* (folktales) towards language and critical thinking skills development. *Intsomi* is the singular form while *iintsomi* signifies the plural form of the word. Traditional folktales (*iintsomi*), are important in many African societies because they transfer cultural values, morality, and wisdom from one generation to the next. My native language, isiXhosa, has a rich vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and grammatical structure that I was exposed to growing up through my grandmother's storytelling, which helped shape who I am now. The fact that these tales are being passed down through the generations by *Oomakhulu* (grandmothers) made it clear to me how important women are to Xhosa children's cultural upbringing. This study aims to shed light on how games and *iintsomi* contribute to socialisation, cognitive development, vocabulary learning, and the creation of cultural identities. Its main objective is to look at how much Xhosa children's enculturation has benefited from traditional children's games and *iintsomi* in terms of language and critical skills development. The interwoven processes of language development and cultural enculturation shape children's identities and experiences within their communities.

Net talk¹ has impacted both the written and spoken isiXhosa language because of exposure to and familiarity with a variety of slang on various social media platforms. An early artificial neural network model is referred to as "net talk" (Sejnowski, 1987:145). These days, it is primarily used colloquially to refer to the language and communication patterns seen online, such as acronyms, emojis, GIFs, shortened words, hashtags, code-switching, and memes. These diverse forms of social media slang encompass not only those connected to the internet, television, and unfiltered movies but also other forms of social connection that children encounter while growing up and learning, like travelling and attending different kinds of gatherings. This implies that since the majority of these encounters are inevitable and shape the experiences of

¹ According to Crytal (2006:10), net talk is a digital dialect that embodies originality, humor, and conciseness in online communication.

Generation Z², educating them about appropriate language usage, politeness and speaking manners ought to be a cornerstone of Xhosa children's cultural upbringing.

Xhosa youngsters learning a language and assimilating into a culture are greatly impacted by contemporary entertainment media like games and traditional oral storytelling, or *iintsomi*. Due to their immersive and engaging qualities, games present special chances for language engagement and learning. In addition, *iintsomi* act as conduits for linguistic diversity and cultural legacy because they are traditional stories that have been passed down through the ages. When combined, these two media greatly enhance Xhosa children's linguistic, cognitive, imagination, and sociocultural growth while strengthening their ties to their language and cultural identity. Nkosi (2017:67) asserts that early exposure to *iintsomi* improves children's language development, including their capacity for comprehension, narrative expression, and vocabulary acquisition.

Understanding the mutually beneficial interaction between traditional storytelling and the modern gaming culture allows us to better understand the dynamic process that allows language to flourish and change within the rich fabric of Xhosa society. This study's theoretical foundation is centred on constructivism and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Constructivism provides complex and multiple layers of meaning on how children actively construct knowledge through social interaction, while Sociocultural theory provides important insights into how games and *iintsomi* affect language and critical thinking development. The study culminates in an exhibition entitled "*Chosi: Kwathi ke Kaloku Ngantsomi*". The exhibition presents visual narratives portraying various messages through metaphors, [link to the catalogue (<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:EU:afb10454-34c7-4ac3-b7bf-f41730a4f5e0>)].

² Generation Z is referred to the demographic cohort born roughly between 1997 and 2012 which is characterized by growing up in fully digital world and having been exposed to digital technologies from early childhood (Prensky, 2001:3).

By examining the works of Nokugcina Elsie Mhlophe (also known as Gcina Mhlophe), Credo Mutwa, and Nompucuko Zakaza, this study aims to further our knowledge of the effects of Xhosa storytelling traditions, cultural expressions, and the function of arts in supporting language development. Through telling stories and writing books, these three artists have played a significant role in maintaining and advancing South Africa's rich oral traditions, especially those of isiZulu and/or isiXhosa culture. Each of them has authored multiple works on *iintsomi* and/or mythology and made a substantial contribution to African literature.

Popular South African storyteller, writer, and actor Gcina Mhlophe has devoted her professional life to conserving and disseminating traditional African tales, particularly those originating from the Xhosa culture. Her narrative strategies have an artistic impact on this research. In addition to being a well-known prophetic visionary, Credo Mutwa was a cultural envoy who promoted the honouring and respecting of indigenous knowledge systems. Self-publishing author Nompucuko Zakaza has written several isiXhosa novels and made significant contributions to the advancement of reading and skills through programmes such as Lisahluma Skills Development Services³ and Nalibali Reading for Enjoyment Campaigns⁴. Zakaza conducted research on the use of *iintsomi* in educating pregnant women about health issues; titled "*Mazibuyel'ekhaya iintsomi zesiXhosa: Noplani Gxavu and Nongenile Masithathu Zenani*,"

I have read the folktales penned by these three authors, and as part of my artistic practice, I have created sculpture installations and visual anime that visually retell some of the well-known Xhosa stories. My artistic practice has been impacted by Credo Mutwa's life-size sculptures and the way Gcina Mhlophe and Nompucuko Zakaza narrate their stories. Mutwa created his stories using a variety of media, including painting, sculpture, and symbols.

³ Lisahluma Skills Development Services established in 2013.

⁴ Nalibali Reading for Enjoyment Campaigns established in 2012

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter One provides an overview of the study and introduces the research's rationale, aim and objectives, as well as limitations and the significance of the study. Chapter Two presents a comprehensive review of the literature and the theoretical frameworks in support of the study's aim and objectives. Chapter Three presents the artistic influences and how they were incorporated into this study's practical component.

Chapter four presents a discursive interpretation of folklore and children's games and their significance in the development of language and critical thinking skills through enculturation. It discusses a selection of folklore and traditional games and how they function as a medium of transmitting social norms, values, identity or enculturation and language acquisition. This chapter also integrates various aspects which coherently frame this study's argument by referring to other relevant sources and artists to validate the significance of this research. The discursive interpretation of folklore and games provides a lens through which enculturation is understood as a dynamic and participatory process. Finally, Chapter Five articulates the conclusion and recommendations emerging from the study's dissertation and practical works.

1.1 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Continuous technological innovation has become the norm in this millennium generation, impacting all facets of existence. Helmersen (2000:101) argues that although technological advancements like artificial intelligence and the fourth industrial revolution, which are made possible by electronic devices, have many positive effects on society. However, there seems to be a problem with moral and ethical degradation that goes hand in hand with these developments.

Mobile phones, tablets, and television remote controls have now evolved to become the most accessible toys for newborns and children in general. This is a result of their easy and tactile accessibility since every modern home relies on them, and they occupy every space within a home. The children get even more enthralled with these devices as they age and begin comprehending

words and motions. These days, our children's everyday lives would be impossible without these devices. Since they have evolved from technology to social tools, they are also the most widely used electronic communication methods (Giser 2004:49).

These devices harm our children's peer connections and language development, even though they can be used for good things like managing and organising social networking. Numerous studies have been done on cell phones, and the results indicate that using cell phones can be harmful and sometimes disrupt children's cognitive development (Ling & Helmersen 2000:103). A current and relevant case is the Australian law that was approved by the Senate banning children under the age of 16 from using social media with effect from the end of 2025 (www.people.com). According to Ling and Helmersen (2000:103), mobile phones serve a different function than the goal and vision of education. Giser (2004:52) also asserts that mobile phones, in particular, have the ability to undercut the authority of education authorities over students.

Having been a primary school teacher, I can attest to some of the negative effects that cell phones and other technology devices have on children's behaviour and language development. Most pupils in modern schools use 'net-talk' to communicate with their peers and complete their coursework, especially when learning languages (Ling & Helmersen 2000:105). These pupils are young people approaching preadolescence, a time of growth, change and peer pressure. Communication is essential to a person's identity during this time (Ling & Helmersen 2000:105).

According to Crystal (2011:17), language spelling and grammar rules have been impacted by the casual character of online communication, which is defined by quick typing and character limits, such as standard Twitter's 280-character restriction if you are not a Twitter Blue subscriber. Consequently, the norm is the acceptability of emojis, non-standard spelling, grammatical errors, irregular punctuation in online speech, and the use of acronyms. The language development of youngsters is impacted by this vernacular (Crystal 2011:19).

Language serves as a vehicle for cultural legacy as well as a means of communication in Xhosa culture. With its abundance of Xhosa songs and Xhosa expressions (such as idioms, proverbs, cliches, etc.), storytelling, or *iintsomi*, has proven a valuable method of teaching youngsters language, critical thinking and imagination, among many other things. *lintsomi*, are significant cultural relics that have been verbally transmitted down the ages.

Folktales are referred to in Made and Breakfast (2023:142) as one type of indigenous knowledge (IK). They went on to say that indigenous knowledge plays a significant role in society and in rearing children and is typically passed down verbally, through imitation, or through demonstration (Made and Breakfast 2023:142). Indigenous knowledge is defined by Bruchac (2014:3814) as unique understandings derived from cultural experiences that direct interactions between humans and non-human species within particular ecosystems.

Thus, preserving and passing on Xhosa culture to future generations requires an understanding of the role *iintsomi* play in language development. It also clarifies the ways in which children's interactions with *iintsomi* influence their cognitive and linguistic capacities, information that may be used to further theories related to language learning and cognitive development. Mathebula and Dlamini (2018:217) discovered that children's emotional intelligence, empathy, and critical thinking skills are all enhanced when they engage in storytelling activities. In addition, *iintsomi* support the preservation of cultural legacy and identity. According to Mthembu (2019:348), children who interact with *iintsomi* are more likely to have a feeling of pride and belonging in their cultural background, which benefits language development and competence.

1.2 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

In addition to our understanding of the intricate interactions between language, culture, and cognitive development when raising Xhosa children, through the production of artworks that graphically depict the social background of *lintsomi*, the ways in which oral traditions were transmitted, and the ways in which traditional games were played, this study aims to explore the role of games

and traditional storytelling (*iintsomi*) as enculturation tools to support and enhance language development and critical thinking skills. Its objectives are to examine how *iintsomi* might be used to engage children and improve their language skills and critical thinking while fostering cultural values. To investigate how games and *iintsomi* contribute to the language learning and enculturation of Xhosa children. To evaluate the body of research and written materials on African oral traditions and traditional teaching methods. To use *iintsomi* and traditional games as a learning and enculturation tool while reflecting autoethnographically on individual experiences and cultural participation. To use a phenomenological lens to examine the lived experiences and meanings connected to play and storytelling. To emphasize indigenous ways of knowledge creation and transfer in order to aid in the decolonization of education.

This provides us with a profound understanding of the mechanisms through which the language is learned, valued, and used within the Xhosa community in the holistic development of children. The review of the literature looks at how *iintsomi* and traditional children's games function as tools for language development, critical thinking and cultural enculturation among Xhosa children. It also presented how Xhosa children's enculturation process manifests itself through *iintsomi* and games.

The study's argument is framed within Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and constructivism. Vygotsky (1978:97) highlights the significance of social interaction and cultural context for cognitive growth and learning. His sociocultural theory implies that language and culture are entwined and influence how the mind functions (Vygotsky, 1978:97). The primary aim of this study is to examine how *iintsomi* moulds Xhosa children's language and critical thinking skills development as they become more accustomed to their culture. It also looks at the ways that storytelling fosters linguistic variety, community involvement, cultural identity creation, and cultural appreciation. Comparing the experiences of Xhosa children with those of children from diverse cultural backgrounds allows us to look at cross-cultural variability. The most crucial objective is to give suggestions on how to use games and *iintsomi* to help

Xhosa children's language, critical thinking development and cultural preservation for educators, legislators, and community leaders.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to investigate how social interaction and cultural settings affect children's cognitive and language development, the study makes use of constructivism and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. According to Vygotsky (1978:76) learning takes place in the zone of proximal development (ZPD), where children may complete tasks under the supervision of an adult with greater experience. In this case, children interact with stories in a ZPD created by *iintsomi* sessions, and they are accompanied by adults who offer assistance and direction. Children eventually increase the scope of their linguistic abilities and comprehension of the cultural ideas ingrained in *iintsomi* through this cooperative contact.

According to Vygotsky, cultural practices and artefacts—which are called *iintsomi*—act as mediators of cognitive development, as noted by Rogoff (1990:193). Within Xhosa communities, *iintsomi* serve as cultural instruments for language and cultural knowledge transmission. Children gain linguistic skills as well as cultural values, customs, and narrative norms through exposure to *iintsomi*. Additionally, Vygotsky (1962:231) noted that children frequently use private speech as a way to control their thoughts and behaviour. Children may use private speech in this setting as they internalise language patterns and story conventions by recounting or interpreting *iintsomi*. Children build and/or solidify their comprehension of language and storytelling through this self-directed verbalisation.

One of the fundamental ideas of sociocultural theory is scaffolding, which describes the assistance that peers or adults offer to promote learning within the ZPD. Adults scaffold children's language development during *iintsomi* sessions by modifying their language level, offering clarifications, and promoting discourse. Children acquire new vocabulary, grammatical structures, and cultural quirks ingrained in *iintsomi* through this scaffolding process (Wood *et al.* 1976:89).

The dynamic relationship between social contact, cultural setting, and cognitive development has been investigated by including constructivism and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in this study. In order to investigate how Xhosa children acquire language within their cultural contexts, this method has strongly emphasised the value of self-directed discovery, collaborative learning, and cultural mediation.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

"Desk research" is the research methodology employed in this study. This desk research entails a thorough analysis of academic literature, reports, and articles about the effects of *iintsomi* on language and critical thinking skills development. Academic databases, including JSTOR, Google Scholar, ERIC, Academia, and Semantic Scholar, were used for the searches, and keywords like "children," "language development," "folktales," and "*iintsomi*" were used. The literature analysed for this desk research highlights the various ways that *iintsomi* helps Xhosa children develop their language skills. *Iintsomi* stories foster pride, critical thinking, emotional literacy, and language skills, in addition to many other benefits (Nkosi 2017:69). Consequently, the investigation of language and critical thinking development, enculturation and socialisation of children form the subject matter of this study.

The desk research method used for this study entailed obtaining and compiling already published data from secondary sources. According to Brown *et al.* (2019:212), desk research strengthens the overall validity and depth of the study by offering background information and a theoretical framework which supports primary research methodologies. This approach can be used in quantitative as well as qualitative research methods.

Desk research is frequently utilised in qualitative research to provide context for the study's theoretical framework, background information, and/or literature review. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005:14), a qualitative research approach enables the investigator to scrutinise, comprehend, and derive a conclusion from the participants' reactions to a topic being discussed in a

typical environment. Rule and John (2011:28) note that in order to understand beliefs and behaviours as they occur in the actual world, qualitative researchers are interested in seeing social interactions as they are in their natural context. Qualitative research focuses on the individuals' actual practices (Bell 2006:117). According to Creswell (2009:60), interpretive naturalistic approaches to the topic of discussion are at the heart of various strategies used in qualitative research.

Collecting numerical data from pre-existing databases, reports, or surveys in order to support statistical analyses and/or produce quantitative findings is known as desk research in quantitative research (Thompson *et al* 2021:182). In their discussion of the value of synthesis in desk research, Thompson *et al* (2021:182) stress the necessity for researchers to critically assess and analyse data from a variety of sources in order to spot important trends and insights. Rose and Johnson (2020:94) talk about how crucial it is to make sure that desk research findings are valid and reliable by critically assessing the dependability of sources and cross-referencing data from several sources.

By honouring cultural customs and beliefs, this study has considered cultural sensitivity. It has followed the moral principles and directives set out by the review board of the University of South Africa (UNISA). It has been carried out with honesty, integrity, and transparency, and the veracity and accuracy of the results are under my responsibility.

1.5 THE SIGNIFICANCE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Traditional or Indigenous games and *iintsomi* are rich in language, cultural values, and worldview. This study explores their role on Xhosa children, highlighting the importance of indigenous knowledge systems in language learning and cultural transmission. According to Onyima (2003:124), tangible and intangible cultural heritage is essential to any country's historical, economic, tourism, aesthetic, educational, and research value.

The gap in incorporating traditional methods of knowledge transmission into current educational discourse, particularly with relation to the development of

critical thinking and language in early life, is created by the separation of cultural knowledge from formal education (Freire,1970:15). The majority of current study on indigenous storytelling is generic or pan-African, frequently ignoring the unique narrative structures, performative components, and symbolism of isiXhosa games and folklore. Few studies look at African oral traditions and indigenous games as formal educational systems that help children develop their social, linguistic, and cognitive abilities, despite the fact that they are acknowledged as cultural heritage (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986:156).

Games and *iintsomi* are useful and engaging resources that help children naturally develop their linguistic abilities, among other things. In contrast to formal schooling techniques, this study shows how these ancient behaviours offer linguistic input, vocabulary, idioms, idiophones, and other dramatical patterns that may be more beneficial to the children's language development or complimentary to children's language development. According to Mvanyashe (2019:38), AmaXhosa idioms and proverbs are means of cultural preservation and historical narrative since they capture historical events, cultural values, and social conventions. She goes on to argue that proverbs and idioms help improve linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness and are useful in educational settings for teaching about historical and cultural events (Mvanyashe 2019:38).

In order to highlight the resources for Xhosa cultural socialisation and the development of children's values, morals, ethics, and identities, this study has concentrated on *iintsomi* and children's games. Lapsley and Stey (2008:30) quote Theodore Roosevelt (1901–1909:[sp]), who once said, "To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society". Lapsley and Stey (2008:34) continue saying that moral education is a necessary condition for social control and is an indispensable means of self-realisation and identity. Children gain a deeper knowledge of cultural norms, values, morals, roles, and collective memories through enculturation and *iintsomi* and traditional games, which support cultural identity formation and community cohesion, are essential.

This study offers educators, legislators, and curriculum designers valuable insights regarding the significance of incorporating indigenous knowledge and practices into language education initiatives. As a result, educational frameworks can adapt to Xhosa children's linguistic and cultural backgrounds and become more inclusive and culturally appropriate. Memory, logic, and problem-solving are cognitively significant abilities that are commonly used in indigenous knowledge systems. These effects demonstrate how cultural practices foster social and cognitive skills in a way that is rooted in children's culture, which in turn helps them reach a wider developmental milestone.

The study is limited by the fact that desk research may not have access to original data and instead depends on pre-existing information from sources, including reports, databases, and published literature. Not all information is correct or current, and the quality of sources varies. In addition, since this study technique integrates information from multiple sources, it is difficult to apply findings to a particular demographic or setting. Therefore, its reliance on pre-existing data, which might not cover and address certain research topics, and the fact that the data does not provide fresh primary insights are the study's drawbacks when it comes to desk research. Thus, this approach might not cover recent developments or new problems, and certain topics might not have enough information, which could lead to gaps in the data that is now available.

In order to comprehend the interaction between individual experience and larger cultural contexts, this study has also explored autoethnography, which entails thorough self-reflection and reflexivity (Adams & Hermann 2020:5). Due to its emphasis on subjective insights over empirical validation and the fact that its conclusions frequently mirror the experiences of a single person, this self-centred approach may create bias. Some of its drawbacks are that the phenomenological approach used as data collection depends on the researcher's experiences and that her biases and viewpoints may affect how the descriptions are interpreted. Its emphasis on comprehending individual

experiences makes extrapolating results to broader populations extremely difficult. The interpretation were all supported by literature and reflections.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study makes the case that *iintsomi*, or storytelling, influence children's language development. Traditional African people used *iintsomi* as a mode of communication to make sense of their surroundings and explain occurrences as a form of teaching and learning. Some academics have even dubbed this type of storytelling (*iintsomi*) as forming the important foundation for the transmission of indigenous knowledge (IK). According to Eck (2006:43), effective storytelling has a greater effect on fostering a feeling of community in the classroom than conventional teaching techniques. Both constructivism and Vygotsky's (1978:94) sociocultural theory are used in this research to explain how teaching and learning are facilitated through the enculturation of Xhosa children.

A useful foundation for comprehending how games and *iintsomi* affect language development is provided by sociocultural theory, which emphasises the importance of social contact, cultural context, and even cooperative or collaborative learning in promoting language competency and fluency. Children who play games and participate in *iintsomi* not only improve their language abilities but also gain a better grasp of their cultural background and the various contexts in which the isiXhosa language is understood and used.

2.1 DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

A key component of children's cognitive development is the acquisition of language and critical thinking abilities. Numerous elements, including parental involvement, the sociocultural milieu, and educational practices, have an impact on this entire process. Language is mostly acquired by children through interactions with their parents, other family members, and caretakers. The quantity and quality of language exposure have a substantial impact on the development of language abilities, vocabulary, and general cognitive function (Hart and Risley 1995:157). This entire experience begins during pregnancy as well as after the child is born. Early language exposure is essential for the

development and learning of language. According to DeCasper and Fifer (1980:76) the foetus is exposed to speech patterns and noises during the prenatal stage of development. Thus, this is essential to postnatal development even though it is not acquiring a language in the conventional sense.

Around the twenty-fifth week of pregnancy, the foetus can respond to outside sounds, and by the third trimester, it can hear and distinguish a variety of sounds, including the voices of its mother and outside speech (DeCasper and Fifer 1980:72). They receive more auditory impulses from their mother's speech than from other external sounds since it is clearly transferred through the body and amniotic fluids (Lecanuet *et al.* 1993:243). DeCasper and Fifer's (1980:1174) research shows that newborns are able to distinguish and recognise their mother's speech, suggesting that exposure to language during pregnancy has a long-lasting effect on language development and language acquisition. According to DeCasper and Fifer's (1980:1170) study, babies can discriminate between several languages based on rhythmic patterns they hear in utero and prefer the sound of their mother's voice. According to a study by Partanen *et al.* (2013:15145), neonates exposed to particular noises in the womb exhibited brain responses that suggested early memory formation.

Kuhl *et al.* (1997:684) discovered that speaking parentese (a way of speaking that parents use, to communicate with their babies) to newborns during discussions increases their phonetic acquisition and helps them develop language skills even before they can speak. Parents can promote greater language learning and development in their children by talking to them often, using a variety of terminology, and modelling descriptive language. Stronger language abilities and better language development are associated with parents who pay attention to and respond to their children's vocalisations. A youngster should be able to take the lead in discussions, building on what they have said and having back-and-forth exchanges of ideas, thanks to this response. Children learn and use language more efficiently when they are exposed to a wide variety of words and complicated phrases (Hoff 2006:58).

Children are also exposed to new language, sentence structures, and concepts through storytelling activities with parents and extended family members, such as grandparents. Children can improve their understanding and listening skills by having stories read aloud to them. According to a National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) study (2000:215), preschoolers' participation in shared reading is a powerful indicator of their future performance in reading. Children's ability to anticipate narrative outcomes through oral storytelling improves their critical thinking abilities. Children's imaginations and creativity are stimulated by storytelling, particularly *iintsomi*, which benefits their cognitive development. The ability to visualise the stories being given aids in the learning of abstract ideas.

According to Nisbett (2003:167), cultural practices and attitudes that place a premium on discussions, debates, and questions also have an impact on the development of critical thinking. Piaget's (1952:51) theory of cognitive development delineates the developmental phases at which children acquire the ability to think critically. According to Piaget (1952:59), children's cognitive development follows a comprehensive framework divided into four separate stages, each of which is distinguished by a unique manner of thinking and learning. These phases include the Sensorimotor (birth to two years old), Preoperational (two to seven years old), Concrete (seven to eleven years old), and Formal (eleven and older) phases. He asserts that during adolescence, children go from thinking in concrete terms to thinking more abstractly and logically. Ignorance of social and cultural influences Piaget concentrated more on the individual's cognitive development. Still, Vygotsky and other later theorists emphasised the impact of social interaction and cultural background on linguistic and cognitive development.

According to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1978:73), language and social contact are the means by which higher-order cognitive skills are acquired. It became evident that learning is viewed as a collaborative process in which cognitive development is fostered by interaction with peers and adults. Children's cognitive skills are enhanced through shared information and diverse perspectives when they engage in social events such as group

discussions and problem-solving activities. According to Vygotsky (1978:29), language serves as a bridge between internal psychological processes and external social interactions, serving as a fundamental instrument for cognitive growth. Children use their inner voice, which becomes their inner speech as they mature, to plan and/or guide their behaviours. This type of private communication is important for cognitive development (Bodrova & Leong 2007:40).

2.2 ENCULTURATION AND SOCIALISATION

Socialisation, a complex process that includes passing down traditions, rituals, and values from generation to generation, has long been the standard in Xhosa culture (Parsons 1951:112). Because they are active in raising children, extended families, such as grandparents, uncles, and aunts, are very important in Xhosa culture. The adage "it takes a village to raise a child" is their way of life. Living in communal settings is typical among Xhosa groups, who uphold the ideal of "Ubuntu", which is derived from the proverb "Umntu ngumntu ngabantu", which means "I am because of others". In order to preserve a rich and distinct cultural identity, traditional ceremonies, ancestral rituals, marriage rituals, initiation rites, storytelling, and family structure are essential components of Xhosa socialisation.

In addition to the home and the community, socialisation also occurs in various establishments, including peer groups, schools, religious institutions, and the media. This includes the continuous process of learning the behaviours, attitudes, and skills necessary to contribute to society in an efficient manner (Berger & Luckmann 1966:71). According to Maccoby (2008:31), socialisation is the process by which people take on the norms and values of society that are necessary for social interaction. According to Parsons (1951:112), socialisation prepares children to fulfil their social function by teaching them the duties, norms, and expectations connected with their social positions.

Potts (2015:107) highlights two socialisation processes: primary socialisation, in which a child internalises the world of their significant others as the only world, and ends with secondary socialisation, in which a child socialises

through self-interaction. He goes on to explain that assessing a person's primary and secondary socialisation is critical since the latter may have led to a change in values that the former helped establish (Potts, 2015:107). According to Hage and Powers (1992:43), games helped children socialise during the industrial age since they provided a restricted number of scenarios to deal with. Today's children, however, require more creative and contemporary ways to engage with people (Potts 2015:65).

The way socialisation is viewed has changed between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s as a result of peer pressure, the dynamics of the educational system, and cultural media consumption. The opinions, behaviours, and identities of Generation Z are greatly influenced by their peers during their socialisation process. Peer influence and contacts are thus facilitated by social media in particular (Boyd 2014:14). The media content that Generation Z consumes comes from a variety of sources, including social media, streaming services, and user-generated content platforms, all of which have an impact on their worldview, values, and cultural preferences. Technology integration, individualised learning strategies, and a focus on digital literacy are features of their educational experiences that also shape their educational beliefs and goals (Prensky 2001:4).

In order to maintain social norms and cultural practices over generations and foster stability and coherence within society, socialisation and enculturation go hand in hand (Khairiah & Silvanetri 2022:5). By giving people a sense of identity, competence, and/or belonging in their cultural and social surroundings, they both improve psychological health. They are also necessary for the creation and upkeep of social order because they control behaviour on an individual basis and promote collaboration, coordination, and conformity among members of the community. Socialisation and enculturation are the two basic processes by which children pick up and internalise the customs, values, beliefs, and behaviours of their culture and/or society (Bronfenbrenner 1979:62).

The entire complex of culture, which is passed down to people through education or learning, consists of knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, habits, and all other talents (Khairiah & Silvianetri 2022:7). Enculturation is fundamentally about this learning. Enculturation is the process by which people pick up and assimilate the cultural traits of a community, such as its language, traditions, practices, norms, and values. Through interaction, education, imitation, and observation of one's cultural surroundings, enculturation takes place. That starts in early childhood and lasts the entirety of a person's life (Bronfenbrenner 1979:63).

Enculturation, according to Siti & Holis (2020:318), is the process of trying to keep a group of people and their culture alive. As a result, the procedure is a cultural artefact that is conserved in the collective activities of the community and passed down from generation to generation. Enculturation is defined by Yoon *et al.* (2020:342) as the preservation of one's native culture and/or cultural socialisation to it. Kim (2008:131) concurs that the degree to which people adhere to their heritage culture is referred to as enculturation. Enculturation is a social process in which people learn about and modify their beliefs and behavioural patterns to fit into a specific culture. It has an impact on social change in society (Michaelson *et al.* 2021:10). According to Irman *et al.* (2020:127), people who are cultured tend to have more powerful and respectable personalities than those who are not.

Family is important to enculturation since it is the primary source of socialisation for learning about and getting to know one's culture, just like it is in socialisation. Since it originates from their own family, this pre-formed system of norms and culture is acquired from an early age (Maswar *et al.* 2022:40). As they spend their early years with their parents, siblings, and extended relatives, children first encounter and learn about their culture from their family. They are exposed to their families' norms, values, and behavioural patterns. Maswar *et al.* (2022:49) continue saying that, as children get older and begin to participate in social activities such as educational and religious institutions, ceremonies, and/or rituals, they are exposed to society and absorb its rules, values, and patterns of behaviour. Children also start to mimic

different behaviours that they see in society. At this age, children begin forming friendship groups with their peers, which is a crucial part of the enculturation process.

The impact of peer groups on the socialisation and development of youth is contingent upon the rate at which cultural shifts occur. Maswar *et al.* (2022:38) articulate three sorts of cultures. These are post-figurative, configurative, and prefigurative and have varying degrees of peer group effect on socialisation. They go on to say that post-figurative societies are those in which cultural shifts occur gradually, with parents holding onto the knowledge they need to raise their kids to be capable and successful adults. Configurative cultures are those in which socialisation amongst peers occurs more frequently, yet parents still pass on cultural values and interact with their children. Prefigurative cultures are ones in which social change occurs so quickly that parents are educated by their offspring and must rely on them to identify societal issues and provide solutions because they are unable to impart this information to the following generation (Maswar *et al.* 2022:38).

Generation Z's social interaction, communication style, and cultural tastes have been shaped by growing up in a digital age where social media and technology are widely accessible (Twenge 2017:30). The internet, travel, and globalisation have exposed Generation Z to a wide range of cultures and viewpoints, which has increased their tolerance, openness, and awareness of other civilisations. As a result of changing cultural norms, they frequently display progressive views on social issues like environmental sustainability, racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, and gender equality (Howe & Strauss 2000: 134). Since the majority of parents are finding it difficult to keep up with their children's use of the internet and artificial intelligence (AI) (Twenge 2017:45), I firmly believe that Generation Z is at the forefront of prefigurative cultural norms.

Educational institutions are also essential to children's enculturation as a means of change and information acquisition. Suradi (2016:165) attests to the fact that norms are taught in official educational settings in addition to the home

and community. The goal of the educational system is to teach and uphold cultural values while also helping children become more socially sensitive. In order to uphold and perpetuate cultural values, some schools have even implemented value-driven education programs. Religious institutions are a crucial component of enculturation since parents utilise religion and religious ceremonies to instil in their children the language and values of their culture (Maswar *et al.* 2022:37).

2.3 ENCULTURATION AMONG XHOSA PEOPLE

One of the major communities native to South Africa is the Nguni ethnic group. The Xhosa population forms part of the four tribal groups of the Ngunis and is primarily found in the Eastern Cape and Western Cape provinces. AmaBomvana, AmaMpondomise, AmaThembu, AmaXesibe, and AmaMpondo are a few of the larger tribes, and smaller tribes include AmaBhaca, AmaFingo, AmaNtlangwini, and AmaNgwevu forming the different sub-tribes within the amaXhosa group. Their centuries-old history, customs, and interactions with different ethnic groups have produced the amaXhosa rich and varied cultural and linguistic landscape. Interactions with colonial powers, disputes with nearby ethnic groups, and the fight against apartheid have all influenced the amaXhosa complicated history (Peires 1989:14).

The Xhosa people are traditionally arranged into extended family units, placing a high value on kinship and community ties. The family is the fundamental socialisation unit since it instils values, respect, and societal standards in children through parents and other family members. Caregiving duties are divided among extended family members in many Xhosa households, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Children acquire knowledge about social standards, collaboration, and the value of family relationships through everyday interactions and activities. Additionally, other children interact with other children through games, songs, folklore stories, and convictions, all of which aid in the language development of the children.

Children are frequently taught practical skills by grandparents and other family members, such as how to prepare traditional foods, do crafts and farming, and

incorporate cultural knowledge into daily chores. According to Mpako (1999:4), when she was a young Xhosa girl, she learned how to sew, knit, crochet, and make outfits for her dolls from elderly people. She goes on to say that the Xhosa children were enculturated through these artefacts during the doll-making and playing process, which helped them develop their creative and intellectual abilities like constructive thinking, imagination, self-expression, self-identity, initiative, perceptual abilities, intuition, and sympathetic understanding (Mpako 1999:6).

In Xhosa society, respect for elders, group decision-making, and reciprocity are highly regarded values. Elders are respected for their wisdom and are in charge of preserving oral traditions. An isiXhosa proverb states that “inyathi ubuzwa kwabaphambili”, meaning “wisdom is learned from the elders” (Soga 1931:97). Proverbs, rites, and storytelling such as *iintsomi* are all part of the rich oral heritage of the Xhosa people, and they are all crucial for upholding traditional values and beliefs as well as for imparting moral teachings and community history. It is the responsibility of elders and family members to offer direction, encouragement, and instructions, making sure that protocol is adhered to during rituals. Xhosa spirituality is centred on traditional rituals like ancestral devotion and the “ulwaluko and intonjane” initiation ceremonies (Kentridge 1989:38).

Spoken by the Xhosa people, isiXhosa is one of the eleven official languages of South Africa and is a member of the Nguni ethnic group of Bantu languages. It can be distinguished from other Bantu languages by its distinctive “c, x, and q” click consonants. Millions of people speak isiXhosa, with variations in dialects and regional accents (Mesthrie *et al.* 2000:63). Speaking isiXhosa fosters a sense of cultural identity and pride among Xhosa people. Proverbs (*izaci*) and colloquial idioms (*amaqhalo*) abound in isiXhosa, conveying social standards, cultural wisdom, and moral precepts. One proverb that captures the significance of honouring and learning from elders is “inyathi ubuzwa kwabaphambili,” as explained above (Soga 1931:74).

According to Levinson (2000:246), the Xhosa people are well-known for their colourful arts, which include weaving, woodcarving, beading, and pottery. These creative expressions often reflect cultural motifs, symbols, and story ideas. The beadwork's patterns, colours, and designs can reveal information about the identification, social standing, and marital status of someone. Children who learn beading develop a sense of pride and an awareness of their cultural background. During rituals and ancestral worship, several artistic forms—such as carvings, pottery, and woven items—are employed to maintain spiritual ties, speak with ancestors, and uphold traditional ideas and customs (Soga 1931:26).

Xhosa cultural expressions also include poems, music, and dance, which feature traditional instruments such as drums, rattles, and string instruments (uhadi and umrhubhe). IsiXhosa music and dances (umxhentso) are performed at various ceremonies, events, and festivals to tell tales, commemorate significant occasions, and impart cultural values. *limbongi* (praise poets) are stewards of history, cultural values, and social standards, and they have a crucial role to play in passing these things on to the next generation, claims Mtuze (2004:88). *limbongi* are the living archives that ensure that the Xhosa people's oral history is accurately passed down and maintained. They can recite poems, clan names, stories of heroism, and other information. Additionally, they enforce a sophisticated use of the isiXhosa language, which enhances children's linguistic abilities and fosters a greater appreciation of their mother tongue (Opland 1983:62). *limbongi* (composers of poets or praise singers) frequently speak out against social and political injustices through their poetry, pushing for social change and instilling the value of civic involvement and responsible leadership in the next generation.

People acquire a framework for comprehending their social and cultural surroundings through enculturation. This paradigm can act as a starting point for critical consciousness, which is the desire to confront repressive structures and the understanding of social injustices (Fiere 1970:26). Colonialists had brainwashed the Xhosa people into adopting Western cultural norms by using acculturation as parrhesia and/or benevolent propaganda. One instance of

acculturation being employed as parrhesia and/or benevolent propaganda is about the Xhosa prophet uNongqawuse. The colonialists knew fully well that the Xhosa people would listen to and follow the instructions delivered by Nongqawuse, thinking it was from the ancestors. Hence, they used her abilities to manipulate the situation in their favour. Parrhesia is the act of speaking out bravely to tell the truth, frequently at cost; it also entails a dedication to honesty and openness, even when doing so puts oneself in danger or faces negative social consequences (Rogoff 2003:92). Jowett (2012:16) defines benevolent propaganda as the subtle, unintentional use of positive messaging, rewards, or enticing scenarios to change people's attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours.

The Indigenous knowledge (IK) of the Xhosa people was suppressed by colonisation, despite the fact that they had unique methods of teaching children and conserving their past through the use of these oral tales, or *iintsomi*. The Xhosa people were severely impacted by colonisation, which destroyed their social structures, economy, language, and land. According to Peires (1981:86), Xhosa people's social structures, cultural customs, and traditional ways of life were all altered by colonial practices. He goes on to suggest that the imposition of Western education, religion, and governance caused the erosion of IK systems and cultural practices.

2.4 THE ROLE OF *IINTSOMI* AND CHILDREN'S GAMES AMONG XHOSA TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES

Wanderi (2011:102) reflects that people's way of life is depicted in the elements of their culture, such as arts and crafts, games, music and dance, folklore and language, social etiquette, customs and mannerisms. Most African traditional communities have always embraced and lived in a socially structured environment where the value of "ubuntu" is uplifted and lived by. For instance, when Xhosa people have a celebration gathering, everybody in the village is welcome, and they can come without an invitation, especially if the ceremony has been announced by the chief of the village. These social gatherings are the way of life in Xhosa traditional communities to the extent that there is also a saying that says, "It takes a village to raise a child", meaning

that the whole community has a role to play in raising children of that community. Indigenous knowledge (IK) is passed on to the next generation through these social gatherings. This IK is usually passed through stories like *iintsomi*, praise singing, dance, music and games played by children.

Games are played more often during social gatherings in Xhosa communities, and stories are told for entertainment and educating the young. According to Wanderi (2011:[sp]), when a community appreciates and uplifts its own culture, it gives some form of unity where its cultural beliefs and practices bind its members together. Many traditional games usually involve teamwork and coordination, which promotes problem-solving skills, cooperation and the ability to interact harmoniously within the community. In some instances, men would sit and play games like “*uMlabalaba*” (an African traditional board game), teaching young men how to play the game. This game is more like chess, and needs strategic abilities, spatial reasoning, prediction, and critical thinking as players have to think about how they will make a move and whether that move affects the winning or losing of the game. Besides the development of social skills, this game develops critical thinking, intellectual growth and strategic planning skills.

Some of these traditional games require mentorship and interaction from older children and adults, which results in learning social values held by the community. These games help children understand seasonal games that may require the use of certain materials which can be found in a certain season, like sticks, seeds, plants and more. Games like “*ukuqula*” (the sticks fight game) reinforce the connections with cultural roots as they are tied to rituals, celebrations, seasonal practices and community gatherings. Games like a doll house and doll making were more seasonal as girls used corncobs to make dolls during harvest season; then, the elders would help them sew clothes for their dolls using rags and corncobs’ leaves and covers. Besides all that, creativity is developed through playing with and making the dolls. Mpako (1999:4) highlights that the process of doll making and figurative clay sculptures is a learning experience for Xhosa children, developing their creative abilities, mental growth and enculturation into their communities. She

continues by saying that art in African cultures is a communal activity that carries more meaning when the artefacts are in use and stresses that art is a method of transmitting cultural traditions (Mpako 1999:7).

Unique traditional games are intricately embedded in the communities' culture all over Africa, passing valuable cultural elements which served as important media for the acquisition of factual information, intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, attitudes and motor skills (Wanderi 2011:102). Children are groomed to be responsible members of the community with community responsibilities and family responsibilities through playing traditional games. As girls make dolls, boys would make clay sculptural figures of cattle, sheep, horses and other animals. They would make them as much as they aspire to have when they grow up, and they must be responsible for trading, or I can call it a buttering system, as they would exchange what they can do best with what they don't have. Through that, communication skills are developed, and their creativity is unleashed. When playing house, both boys and girls learn their family responsibilities by role-playing members of the family, such as their mother or father, uncle, etc. With all these games, children grow up knowing the important role they must play in the community and grow up to be responsible adults.

Wandari (2011:108) mentioned that folklore is one of the cultural elements that African traditional communities live by. Storytelling as an indigenous knowledge system (IKS) serves as a primary means of language acquisition including vocabulary, sentence structure and oral storytelling techniques (Ntuli & Swanepoel 1993). All these are developed through listening to *iintsomi*, which also emphasises rhythm, repetition and imagery, encouraging children to internalise language in a natural and engaging way. Mtuze (1990:19) highlights that this became a very powerful education vehicle for imparting moral lessons containing messages about virtues such as respect, honesty, courage and community cooperation. *Iintsomi* are usually told in the evenings while waiting for supper to get ready, and this was a way of keeping children indoors or a way of bringing them back home early. This helped children to

learn about the consequences of actions and the value of moral integrity among the Xhosa society.

Folklores such as “Leopard’s Gift” (intsomi 5 in the animation) by Gcina Mhlope (2003:35) are deeply rooted in Xhosa/Zulu cultures and history, preserving knowledge about spirituality/ traditional healing, ancestors and community customs. These kinds of folklore help children connect with Xhosa heritage, learning stories and beliefs that form the foundation of Xhosa identity. Some of these folklores reflect magic and fantastical elements, which develop children’s imaginative abilities, problem-solving skills and thinking creatively. According to Cope (1968:8) *iintsomi* reflect the Xhosa worldview, traditions and cosmology, allowing children to internalise communal beliefs.

2.4.1 The concept of storytelling

Stories or parables from the Bible, true stories, untrue stories, and many more were taught to us as children. One of the first methods of human communication, knowledge transfer, and connection development has always been storytelling. This is an art form that aims to entertain, educate, preserve culture, and impart moral values. There are various forms of storytelling, which can be divided into four categories: written⁵, digital⁶, visual⁷, and oral⁸ storytelling. Storytelling, according to Gcina Mhlophe (2005:1), is a potent, culturally based mode of communication that builds linguistic and cognitive abilities, affects identity, and crosses generations.

It is believed that storytelling is a multifaceted cultural activity that has both artistic and pedagogical functions. Children’s language, cognitive, and cultural heritage are shaped through this innovative and interactive method of enculturation (Finnegan, 2012:181). Smith et al (2017:4) claim that storytelling may even be an evolutionary process that is ingrained in our DNA and helped

⁵ Written storytelling is found in books, poems and letters.

⁶ Digital storytelling is a modern context that combines multimedia elements like audio, video and text.

⁷ Visual storytelling is referred to visual art, film, comic, dance and photography.

⁸ Oral storytelling is a traditional face-t-face performance like telling *iintsomi*.

sustain our ancestors. Listeners start to relate what they hear to their own lived experiences when stories are used to transmit both information and personal experiences (Downs, 2014:131).

According to Zaro (1995:2), stories are regarded as an excellent tool for teaching children their native tongue and are a well-established component of curricula in many nations. Storytellers describe their lives to those who are less familiar with them but yet know something about them, and this exchange between the storyteller and the audience builds a bond (McThenia, 1990:67). Additionally, storytelling may be a powerful tool for community engagement, especially when it comes to environmental challenges. These stories whether told visually or orally have been essential in supplying valuable data for creating strategies to address environmental problems and enhance human health (Bayer & Hettinger, 2019:2).

2.5 DECONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION WITHIN XHOSA SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND ISIXHOSA LANGUAGE

The perception of Xhosa traditions and knowledge is still impacted by colonisation, contemporary preconceptions, and biases. According to Mudimbe (1988:51), Western academics created and undervalued African knowledge systems, and early anthropologists frequently exoticised Xhosa culture, portraying it as the "other" to the logical, contemporary West. Bank (2011:69) asserts that despite initiatives to preserve and honour indigenous cultures, Xhosa customs are still stigmatised or seen as less relevant or modern in today's South Africa. The stigmatisation of Xhosa cultural practices resulted from the propagation of the belief by Western colonialists or the apartheid government that Western culture was superior to African cultures (Said 1978:147).

Said (1978:149) continues by saying that the apartheid regulations, which institutionalised racial segregation and discrimination, allowed colonialism to persist. Xhosa people, like other black South Africans, were alienated from their cultural history by missionaries and Western-style education. Indigenous wisdom was frequently neglected in favour of the curriculum's Western history,

values, and knowledge systems. A major problem has arisen from this dismantling of Xhosa customs and knowledge, especially during and even after colonialism, where most modern societies are shunning away from their African traditional practices, some of which are fundamental to their cultural identity heritage.

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida propagated the critical method known as Deconstruction in the 1960s. It challenges the notion of a single, definitive interpretation by exposing the texts' inconsistencies, complexities, and instabilities. According to Derrida (1930–2004:246), there is a direct connection between the systematic suppression and repression of literature and history metaphysics, reveals Kakoliris (2017:97). Oral traditions, stories (*iintsomi*), rites, and historical narratives held by the Xhosa people are treated as texts by textuality, which have been captured, interpreted, and transformed by colonial and post-colonial influences. The educational institutions of the colonial and apartheid eras suppressed Indigenous Knowledge (IK) by marginalising Xhosa traditions and the isiXhosa language in favour of Western knowledge and languages, namely Afrikaans and English (Heugh 2000:55).

The binary oppositions imposed by colonial powers saw contemporary practices as superior to traditional ones and white people as more privileged than black people. According to Green & Makhubu (1984:73), colonial officials and modern sceptics have written off traditional healers (*amagqirha*) and their methods as nothing more than superstition or witchcraft. As a result, missionaries misinterpreted and depicted Xhosa customs and indigenous beliefs as archaic and superstitious, viewing them as barriers to the spread of Christianity (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991:80).

By actively engaging with text, ideas, and cultural artefacts, this study seeks to expand on the understanding obtained through deconstruction and create new frameworks or interpretations. In addition, it aims to use *iintsomi* to reconstruct societal institutions and redress social inequalities brought about by colonial systems. In order to preserve its legacy, Xhosa cultural practices and IK systems can be recreated using the same Western educational

framework, which includes media and the internet. Contemporary themes and topics can be incorporated into modern *iintsomi* adaptations, bringing them in line with the social and political landscape of today, which is recognisable to Generation Z. Narrating *iintsomi* using anime and digital Quick Response (QR codes) accommodates the culture of Gen Z. This modification should allow *iintsomi* continues to be a dynamic custom that changes in tandem with the Xhosa community (Gunner & Gwala 1991:64).

According to Brameld (1950:152), reconstruction philosophy is the process of rebuilding society via social, political, and educational initiatives. It promotes structural reforms while highlighting the significance of social justice and equity. Xhosa communities can reaffirm their cultural history and establish a connection to their pre-colonial past by reciting or telling *iintsomi* or using sculptures to reconstruct the African way of life like Credo Mutwa's Kwakhanya Lendaba Cultural Village. IK, cultural values, and historical narratives that provide people with a sense of identity and continuity are preserved and transmitted through *iintsomi* (Scheub 1975:73). Reconstruction would help Xhosa communities heal from past trauma, recover their stories, and build resilience and a sense of community (Ashforth 1990:61). In spite of past and present difficulties brought about by colonial legacies, Xhosa communities may fight cultural erasure, recover their history, and reassemble their identity by harnessing the power of *iintsomi*.

2.6 SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY

Lev Vygotsky (date) invented sociocultural theory, which places a strong emphasis on the role that interaction and cultural setting have in cognitive development. According to this view, children pick up information through their contacts with parents, friends, and leaders in the community—like teachers, priests, chiefs, and others—and through taking part in culturally significant activities. The sociocultural theory provides important insights into how games and *iintsomi* affect language development. When *iintsomi* are recounted, children get to interact with a more knowledgeable member of the community—a grandmother (*Umakhulu*)—who always tells the stories.

Given that *iintsomi* are firmly ingrained in cultural traditions and frequently transmitted orally from generation to generation, their use in language development is consistent with sociocultural theory. *Iintsomi* are cultural items that represent the Xhosa community's values, beliefs, and linguistic customs. Children who interact with *iintsomi* through story-telling acquire language skills as well as a deeper understanding of the cultural context in which the stories are set (Nkosi 2017:72).

According to this hypothesis, children's ideas and behaviours gradually change as a result of social interaction, and these changes can differ significantly between cultures (Woolfgang 1998:18). The moral precepts and cultural norms that these folktales impose on children often offer a significant lesson that children must consider.

For example, the “*iintsomi yoMvolufu noDyakalashé (a tale of Wolf and Jackal)*” that narrates:

Kwathi ke kaloku ngantsomi. Kwakukho uDyakalashé noMvolufu. Ngenye imini uDyakalashé wacela uMvolufu ukuba amkhaphe aye ebukhweni bakhe. Bavuka ngentseni kuba indlela yayizakuba nde. Endleleni baziva bediniwe kwaye belambile. uDyakalashé wacebisa ukuba bangene kwifama eyayikufutshane ukuze babambe nokuba yigusha enye bayitye ukuze bakwazi ukuqhubeka nohambalwabo. uMvolufu wayengacingi ukuba licebo elihle eli kodwa kwaphela evuma kuba wayeziva elambile. Bagqibela sele bengena kwisikrotyana esincinane kulefama, bephehluzelisa iigusha ezazivalelwe. Bada babamba yanye bayitya. uDyakalashé wayemana eyozijonga ukuba usakwazi na ukuphuma kwesisikrotyana nanjengokuba besitya nezisu zabo zibazikhulu kukuhlutha. Ebethi xa ehamba athi uyakujonga ukuba akukho mntu uzayo na nozokubabhaqa. uMvolufu bekeshiyeka ezitika engakhathalelento. Ngelingeni beva kuxokozala kuvakala ukuba kukho abantu abezayo. Babaleka ke ukuya kwesasikrotyana bebengene ngaso bezama ukuphuma. uDyakalashé waphutshuluka msinya kwesosikrobo waza uMvolufu waxinga. Abantu basefama babaleqa baza bafumana uMvolufu exinge kwasosikrotyana baza bambetha. uDyakalashé akazange azame nokumnceda, qha wabaleka wamshiya apho egoduka kuba kwakungekho noluhambo lwasebukhweni, qha yayiliqhinga lokufuna uMvolufu amkhaphe ayakutya iigusha zasefama. Phela, phela ngantsomi.

Once upon a time, there was a wolf and a jackal. The jackal asked Wolf to accompany him to visit his in-laws and the Wolf agreed to travel with the Jackal. The following morning, they got up early in the morning because they had a long way to travel as the place was far away. During their travel they were hungry and exhausted from their lengthy stroll. The Jackal thought of a scheme. He advised that they go to a nearby farm to get some food, even if it's only one sheep, so they could eat in order to carry on with their journey. The Wolf was also hungry, even though he didn't think it was a smart idea, but he eventually consented. They ultimately succeeded entering the farm through a tiny gap in the fence and pursued their hunt. When they finally caught one sheep, they began to eat. Their stomachs were expanding as they ate, so the jackal would continually go to the tiny gap they used to enter through the fence to check whether his stomach was still able to go or squeeze through the little opening and when the wolf asked him where he has been? He would say, "I'm just making sure nobody is approaching, so we don't get caught". They heard a noise after a while that seemed to indicate that someone was approaching them. In an attempt to escape the property, they both ran to the narrow entrance. The Wolf was stuck, but the Jackal simply slithered through the opening. The wolf was caught and dealt with. Apparently, the trip to his in-laws was a ruse to convince the Wolf to accompany him to go and steal the sheep from the property, so the Jackal did not even attempt to assist the Wolf—instead, he merely fled. The end! (unpublished oral literature, translated by Zimasa Fana)

This folktale demonstrates how the Jackal deceives the Wolf by giving him falsehoods, and ultimately putting him in danger. This story educates children to follow their instincts and not let other people control or deceive them because doing so could get them into danger. Development, in the opinion of Vygotsky (1978:48), is dependent upon social interaction as well as the resources that culture offers to support an individual's worldview.

According to sociocultural theory, there are three ways that people might transmit their culture to one another. The first type of learning is called imitation, or trying to mimic or copy another person (Vygotsky 1978:47). Children can engage with *Umakhulu* (grandmother), the most known person, through *iintsomi*, which also gives them the chance to learn from and emulate *Umakhulu's* actions and words. The second type of learning is instructed

learning, in which children are expected to retain instructor directions and use them to exercise self-control (Vygotsky 1978:61). Certain stories require the audience to know when to sing and when to be silent. The narrator may tell them to sing along or recite a passage when a character in the story does something. The third method is collaborative learning, in which a group of peers tries to understand one another and cooperate to acquire a certain ability (Vygotsky 1978:59). Children typically gather around *Umakhulu* to listen to *iintsomi* and attempt to decipher any mysteries or problems that the stories may present.

According to this hypothesis, mental tools enhance our mental powers in the same way as physical tools enhance our physical abilities, allowing us to solve issues and come up with solutions in the contemporary world. The social and cognitive theories are combined in this theory. When children engage with a more knowledgeable person, they will pick up culturally specific ways of thinking and acting. This idea states that a child's beliefs and behaviour will continuously change as a result of social interaction (Vygotsky 1978:135).

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is defined as the gap between what a child can accomplish on their own and what they can accomplish with the help and support of a more experienced person like *umakhulu*, is a concept that Vygotsky (1978:15) emphasises. More seasoned players or storytellers can scaffold language learning in the context of games and *iintsomi* by providing opportunities for collaborative learning, support, and feedback. This will help children advance within their ZPD and build on their current knowledge and abilities.

A rich context for language learning and development can be found in traditional and digital games. In multiplayer games, players frequently work together to solve problems, negotiate, and communicate in order to accomplish shared objectives. This social interaction helps to develop language skills as players interact, communicate, and express themselves in the game environment (Gee 2003:20). Moreover, games frequently have

intricate storylines that demand players to understand and interpret a variety of language cues, such as dialogue, instructions, songs, and written text.

Songs that participants sing during traditional games and *iintsomi* are frequently integral to the gameplay. These songs boost motivation and engagement in language learning activities by evoking emotions and fostering a good learning environment (Vicari & Benevides-Varela 2020:744). Songs that arouse emotions include *iintsomi* of "*uDema noDemazana*", which is a very melancholic song sung by "*uDema*" upon returning home from hunting and pleading with his sister to magically unlock the cave.

"Demazana yho! Demazana kamama. Ndivulele ndingene, kwelilitye lintunja mbini."

"Demazana yho! My mother's Demazana. Let me in, in this cave with two holes."

(unpublished oral literature, translated by Zimasa Fana)

Koelsch (2014:176) emphasises that enhanced recall and retention of language material have been connected to emotional arousal. According to Trehub (2003:671), repetition helps people learn languages by reinforcing phonological patterns, grammar structures, and vocabulary. Like the game "*Iqanda*" (an egg), these songs feature recurring patterns in the melody, rhythm, and lyrics that help with memorising.

Umntwana 1: Inkukh' ibeki' qanda.

Umntwana 2: Intoni?

Umntwana 3: Iqanda.

Umntwana 4: Iqanda?

Umntwana 1: Iqanda.

Umntwana 2: Inkukh' ibeki' qanda

Child 1: A hen lays an egg.

Child 2: What?

Child 3: An egg.

Child 4: An egg?

Child 1: An egg.

Child 2: A hen lays an egg.

(unpublished oral literature, translated by Zimasa Fana)

Children are to pronounce these words quickly and often in this game; the first player to become confused and mix up the words loses. Reciting words such as these aloud helps children memorise and expand their vocabulary.

There are several games that make use of reciting and repeating words or someone's name or surname or animal's name that lead to discovering other imbedded meanings, such as the surname *Ndamase*, which implies something else when it is recited and repeated several times, such as in, "*ndamasendamasendamasendamase*". Repeating this surname as in this expression directly translates to mean "*testicles testicles testicles*". Thus, these word games sharpen children's creative abilities and curiosity and help develop their language skills and imaginations through social interaction.

Gee (2003:20) emphasised the benefits of games for language learning, contending that they offer players "semiotic domains" in which they can interact with verbal, visual, and spatial components, among other forms of meaning-making. Players gain multimodal literacy abilities in addition to language competency by actively engaging in various areas. According to Vygotsky (1978:[sp]), children create their own knowledge, and development and social context are inextricably linked. Learning can promote development, and language is essential to mental development.

2.7 CONSTRUCTIVISM

Constructivism is a learning philosophy that centres on understanding how individuals learn continuously. Tobin (1990:32) cited Von Glasersfeld's (1988:13) assertion that constructivism originated in the eighteenth century and has since persisted as an epistemology, albeit not as a dominant one. Constructivism, which provides a nuanced view of how children actively construct knowledge through social interaction and cultural context, is commonly referred to by Vygotsky (1978:85) as sociocultural theory.

Children actively build, create, or invent concepts or information with this method. When combined with the information that already exists, these newly generated concepts or ideas have enormous significance. The experiences and social interactions of the learners largely shape these concepts and knowledge. Children are not empty canisters, according to constructivists; they possess some prior knowledge gleaned from their personal experiences. Children create new information by drawing on what they already know or have learned. According to Vygotsky (1978:37), in constructivism, children are far more involved in the learning process than just coming up with new ideas; they also participate in conversations, explanations, bargaining, sharing, and evaluation.

There are several schools within constructivism theory; some focus on cognitive development, others on social development, and yet others on the function of content in education. Constructivism also provides a stark contrast on cognitive development and social development by emphasising the importance of allowing children to understand the material and then incorporate it into their prior knowledge. Thanks to this, they will be able to connect what they are learning to their surroundings (Carpenter 2003:29).

According to constructivist principles, children play a crucial role in their own education. Children create their own knowledge since they are "hands-on" or actively involved in their learning. In constructivism, learning happens best when children actively create their own knowledge instead of merely taking it all in. In other words, they do not have to sit there and take it all in. Instead of being spoon-fed, children explore the concepts, interpret them, and then create their own meaning in addition to what they already know. According to Carpenter (2003:30), "...rather than simply accepting the new information given, learners interpret what they see, hear, and do in relation to what they know", and is a straightforward explanation of constructivism. *lintsomi* and games both promote active engagement. In order to solve puzzles, make choices, sing songs, and interact with other children, players need to actively interact with the game environment. All of these activities need the use and development of language. In a similar vein, children actively create meaning

when they hear and take part in retellings of *iintsomi*, and they also relate language to relevant context and their own experiences.

According to Piaget (1952:64), children create their own knowledge in reaction to their experiences. Piaget thought that children pick up knowledge on their own, independent of the adults in their environment. Children are naturally motivated to do things. According to him, until a child eventually develops an adult perspective, they must continuously rebuild their own understanding via active reflection on the experiences and events in their lives. The citations and songs that are sung or recited during the games and/or *iintsomi* provide an intrinsic incentive. He highlighted how crucial it is to adjust to the needs of the environment (Piaget 1952:87). His hypothesis examined and explained how children develop at various stages of life.

Schemas are small mental images or associations that form when you hear or read a word or sentence. Piaget (1952:26) asserts that when stories are told to children, they form mental pictures of these people and situations and connect them to their own surroundings and life experiences. He continued to say that the child should adjust his or her schemata to take into account new circumstances. He refers to the mental processes that are in charge of the child's schemata reformation as assimilation and accommodation. According to the schematic hypothesis, prior knowledge can help in learning transfer. This idea postulates that information that is stored in the brain may occasionally change over time to align more closely with the knowledge, expectations, and beliefs of children (Piaget 1952:108).

The term "Cultural Tools" was first used by Vygotsky (1978:49). These include symbolic systems and cultural practices that support cognitive activity in addition to tangible artefacts. Children's interactions with their environment are mediated, and their cognitive processes are shaped by these cultural tools, which include language, writing systems, and mathematical notation. Additionally, he highlighted the significance of "signs" in the evolution of cognition, contending that symbolic representations allow people to cognitively represent and work with abstract notions, hence expanding their cognitive

capacities. For example, in the jackal's *iintsomi* articulated earlier, "uDyakal Ashe" (the jackal) symbolises or denotes sly, clever, and devious behaviour. Every time children hear the name "Dyakal Ashe", they instantly recognise the folktale character that the animal represents, and, in the case of a person referred to as *uDyakal Ashe*, this denotes the devious behaviour that person exhibits.

However, Woolfgang (1998:29) reflects Ausubel's (1963) theory which suggests that what the learner already know (prior knowledge) is the most important factor influencing learning. Like Piaget (1952:37), he also emphasised the value of past learning in contrast to behaviourists who view children as "empty vessels". Children connect new information to what they already understand. His meaningful learning is the idea that the person fully understands the knowledge they have acquired and is aware of the connections between each particular fact and other knowledge they have stored. This is what is currently referred to as relational understanding. According to constructivists, meaningful learning is introspective, constructive, and active.

The Discovery learning theory is another theory of learning that backs constructivism. According to Bruner's (1986:45) discovery learning theory, children actively participate in their own learning. In addition, he espouses that children learn by doing and experimenting to make sense of the world around them. This clarifies why constructivists claim that children actively participate in their own learning or education. In certain games, such as "*Piki, piki mabhelana*", players clench their fists and answer questions while being tapped by a single player who recites the phrases.

"Piki, piki Mabhelana. Sala, sala gentlemen. Utata wakho utshaya isigareti ezingaphi ngemini?"

"Pick, pick Mabhelana. Stay, stay gentlemen. How many cigarettes does your father smoke in one day?" (unpublished oral literature, translated by Zimasa Fana)

This game teaches children to understand the principles of this game first and then choose a number that will not end up where she/he is positioned in the circle. For example, if there are ten children in a circle, the one answering the question of how many cigarettes his/her father smokes per day gives ten as the answer. The questioner then counts from the next child after the one who answered, and in this example, counting to 10 will end up with the child who gave the number 10 as the answer, meaning that she/he will be out of the game. Thus, a child must be cautious when answering and give a number that, when counted, will not end on him/her. This implies that children should use their imaginations to figure out a number that, when counted, ends up on someone else. Similar to the example of reciting and repeating the surname Ndamase where a child who does not know the meaning of Ndamase when recited and repeated will continue until those who know the meaning begin to laugh until the meaning is revealed. Thus, interacting with other children, children discover new meanings.

Active social learning, which bases learning on what the learner already knows, is associated with the theories of Piaget (1952:51) and Vygotsky (1978:67), who both held that children learn via experience. He emphasised the significance of perceptual education. According to Bruner (1986:107), insightful learning is the process of learning through an abrupt cognitive shift that uses items that were readily available at the time and prior experiences to solve difficulties. He made the case that people's perceptions of objects or information change with time. This learning theory states that adults should help children come to their own conclusions about concepts. They ought to participate in a conversation. Simplifying, coming up with new ideas, and manipulating information are outcomes of good knowledge structure theories (Bruner 1986:26).

When children actively contribute to the creation of knowledge, they reflect on their (mental and physical) actions. Children find it easier to understand what has to be done when they reflect on what they have been doing. Children can learn from their failures and what works well for them by reflecting on their behaviours, which helps them create new knowledge. When children play

games, they can think back on what went wrong or right, and they can learn how the game is played, which helps them build knowledge. Due to the necessity of discussing new game techniques, these thoughts and conversations also help with language proficiency. According to Tobin (1990:30), children need to go back and reflect on their prior knowledge and experiences in order to make sense of what they have learnt and construct new knowledge.

The value of reflection and revision in the learning process is emphasised by Jonassen (1994:35). When playing games, participants frequently consider what they have learnt, evaluate their tactics, and adjust their strategy in response to feedback and results. As participants explain their ideas, assess their activities, and share them with others, this participatory process fosters language development and metacognitive abilities. Children must decide who will pull whom when they play the game "*umntu wethu*" (our person), which is more akin to "tug-of-war". They have to consider their delegate's strength in comparison to their opponent. Language skills are built, and reflection, assessment, and communication take place at that very moment.

Comparably, interacting with *iintsomi* promotes critical thinking and language abilities by provoking thought on moral lessons, cultural values, and linguistic components. According to Clements and Battista (1990:35), written work impedes children's ability to think freely, hence it is best to encourage them to think instead of having them just give an answer. This demonstrates the value of introspection and how it fosters critical thinking.

Constructivists also hold that group work is a better way for children to learn than sitting down and doing individual assignments. Children are compelled to communicate with one another when working in small groups because they actively participate in group conversations, clarifying, elaborating, and assessing the subject matter. Children find it simpler to connect what they are learning to their personal experiences when they engage in social contact (Bruner 1986:182). It is also the belief of constructivists that children should learn in groups or cooperatively.

Constructivism and Vygotsky's (1978:172) sociocultural theory both emphasise the significance of social interaction in cognitive development. He contends that learning is fundamentally social and that people pick up new skills through interacting with people who are more knowledgeable or experienced in a given field. These interactions, particularly in games, can take many different forms, such as group activities, peer conversations, and cooperative problem-solving. Similar social interaction occurs during the oral tradition of sharing *iintsomi* between the storyteller (*umakhulu*) and the audience, fostering a cooperative learning environment where language abilities are honed and polished.

According to Jonassen's (1994:37) perspective, learning is most successful when placed in an authentic environment relevant to the children's lives. *Iintsomi* and games offer real-world contexts for language development. Language is necessary to comprehend the rules, techniques, and advancement of games, which frequently immerse players in meaningful contexts through their quests, narratives, and obstacles. *Iintsomi*, which are based on shared experiences and cultural traditions, provide children with a genuine and culturally appropriate environment for language learning, enabling them to make connections between language and actual experiences. Games and *iintsomi*, which align with all these constructivist concepts, offer a rich, dynamic learning environment that fosters language and cognitive development via active participation, social contact, real-world situations, introspection, and critical thinking.

CHAPTER THREE: ARTISTIC INFLUENCE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the study's methodology applied in the creation of the emergent practical work, data collection, analysis and interpretation. It combines phenomenology, autoethnographic research, and desk/secondary research techniques. It also presents the artistic influence employed in the creation process of the practical work showcased in the exhibition, which formed part of this research. This study investigates how storytelling and games help Xhosa children strengthen their language skills and become more integrated into their culture.

Thus, the practical work in this study employed aspects first, from the sculptures of Credo Mutwa, one of the artists who produced life-size sculptures that portrayed the Zulu people's history and/or heritage. His well-known Kwakhanya Lendaba Cultural Village in Soweto has contributed significantly to cultural knowledge, particularly the understanding of Zulu traditions, beliefs, and practices. In addition, this cultural Village community imparts knowledge of African cosmology, customary healing techniques, and the cultural meaning of many symbols. Credo Mutwa, a sangoma (traditional healer), founded the community to disseminate and conserve African spirituality, culture, and customs.

The more than life-size sculpture of a hen in my exhibition representing *umakhulu* (grandmother) was influenced by Credo Mutwa's life-size sculpture of a woman holding children on her lap. *Umakhulu* is regarded as a revered character in Xhosa culture because she is important to the family unit and frequently acts as a matriarchal figure who offers direction, insight, and support to the younger generations (Kole 2009:130). *Umakhulu* has a responsibility to teach children through *iintsomi* since she is esteemed for her wisdom, life experiences, and oral history. I chose to represent the protective figure "*umakhulu*" in my installation as the mother hen since the Xhosa people are renowned for their observation of nature's tenacity for life lessons towards generational continuity. Mother Hen is known for her outstanding altruistic,

caring and protective nature of her chicks. Thus, the grandmother is revered for her forever giving nature and the protector of cultural heritage, hence the hybridised hen head and woman figure as the main installation in the exhibition entitled “*Chosi: Kwathi ke Kaloku Ngantsomi*”.

Two South African storytellers who are well-known for their contributions to the dissemination and preservation of traditional African tales were also the subject of this investigation. The storytelling methods of Nokugcina Elsie Mhlophe, also known as Gcina Mhlophe, and her dedication to maintaining oral traditions have influenced this study's understanding of the significance of *iintsomi* in the linguistic development and enculturation of Xhosa children. The stories, or *iintsomi*, of Gcina Mhlophe and Nompucuko Zakaza, are recited and recounted in visual animation in some of the practical work.

Through the creation of an audio recording of *iintsomi* and videos featuring children singing and engaging in native games, this study also delved into the concept of sounds and video. According to Vansina (1971:16), oral sources—such as myths, legends, and oral narratives—are important repositories of historical data that require careful examination and interpretation. Through the influence of the works of Gcina Mhlophe, Credo Mutwa and Nompucuko Zakaza my exhibition presented various narratives portraying *umakhulu* as an indigenous knowledge source as well as a visual representation of traditional folktales.

3.1 CREDO MUTWA'S WORK

Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa, a South African artist, author, cultural historian and a Zulu sangoma (traditional healer) has produced an extensive body of work in painting and sculptures reflecting on his life experiences. Podolecka (2018:134) describes Mutwa as one of the most controversial figures on South Africa's cultural firmament who claimed to be a true depositor of the ancient Zulu and South African wisdom and traditions. Mutwa was labelled as a controversial artist and thinker because his work challenged both Western academic norms and African traditionalist expectations in a way that provoked intense debate leaving many Western scholars to dismiss his work as

“unscientific” and fictional (Podolecka, 2018:136). His work remains a profound reflection of his life as a custodian of African traditions, a witness to colonialism’s effects and a seeker of spiritual truth. He has written a number of books, including “Indaba My Children” (1964), “Africa Is My Witness” (1966), “Songs of the Stars: The Lore of a Zulu Shaman” (1996), “Isilwane: The Animal” (1995), and “Zulu Shaman, Prophecies, and Mysteries” (2003). Mutwa has also written a play titled “uNosilimela” (1973) which reveals the severe suffering of a woman who abandoned her African traditions.

Credo Mutwa was deeply committed to preserving African knowledge, culture and history and created the Cultural Village in Soweto in 1974 (figure 3.1). This site features various traditional structures, sculptures and other artworks. It is dedicated to showcasing the Zulu people’s traditional cultural practices and beliefs.



Figure: 3.1: Credo Mutwa, 1974 – 1986, *Nkulu Nkulu, God Father the Chief Creation*, (cement sculpture), www.gettyimages.com

Sithole (2020:48) asserts that the sculptures in the Cultural Village often depict spiritual themes, figures from African mythology and historical events. Mutwa also recreated the past social events in a visual form which inspired my installation of “*umakhulu*” surrounded by grandchildren around the bonfire, narrating *iintsomi to them*. This installation depicts how *iintsomi* used to be told or the social setting of a traditional home.

Mutwa’s Cultural Village, in Figure 3.1, also has thatched rondavels, which represent the homesteads of South African tribes. These rondavels show how many tribes used to live, and they recreate the settings of African people so that the viewers can relive the past life. Rosenstone (2006:82) explains that people learn more or better when complex history is presented visually because visualisation can break down intricate historical contexts into more digestible formats. Reconstruction of past events also helps viewers relate to people from the past and understand the emotional and social context of historical events (White 1988:1193). These kinds of narratives make the past more real and impactful, highlighting the emotional weight of events, such as the struggles of social movements (Toplin 1996:102).

Credo Mutwa's sculptures are also on live display in KwaZulu-Natal's Sacred Tribal Gardens. His life-size sculptures, which serve as instructional instruments to teach tourists about African spirituality, history, and the value of nature in traditional African beliefs, are a powerful example of his artistic expression. The life-size hen in my installation, representing *Umakhulu*, the fount of African knowledge, has been influenced by Mutwa's life-size sculptures. According to Wango (2021:12), life-size statues can dominate an area and give it a sense of authority and importance. They can also strengthen the viewer's emotional reaction to the artwork. According to Mutwa (1964:[sp]), his life-size sculptures shown in Figure 3.2 are effective storytelling instruments that provide viewers with a more immediate and vivid understanding of the tale or concepts of the artwork. These sculptures bridge the gap between imagination and reality as they are relatable in scale.

Credo Mutwa was kicked out of the Cultural Village in 1994 due to the controversy surrounding him. He then relocated to the Eastern Cape and began working at Shamwari Game Reserve. One of Credo's many sculptures that demonstrates symbolism in his work is called Earth Mother. In Figure 3.3, the sculpture depicts symbols like birds, fish, and land creatures as represented by the three breasts; ancestors are represented by the skull; and nature and God are linked by the dolphin. In his artwork like "Modimo" which represents Christian trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), Mutwa has also produced a great deal of other cultural and religious icons.



Figure: 3.2: Credo Mutwa, 1974 – 1986, *African Moon Goddess*, (cement sculpture), www.gettyimages.com

In support of his claim, Riemer (1982:8) quotes Eliot expressing that symbolism permits more, thorough examination of the human experience by

expressing sentiments, emotions, states of mind, and souls that would otherwise remain inexpressible, Using symbols like birds, fish, skull and others in art conveys to the audience a message or point of view that is intended (MacBean 2013:52). The hen's head in my sculpture of "*umakhulu*" installation was inspired by the symbolism found in Mutwa's artwork. It is customary for hens to tend to their young, shielding them from harm with their wings. The hen's head in my work represents *Umakhulu* as one of her responsibilities in the Xhosa culture is to shield the young and to transmit indigenous knowledge, cultural values, and traditions to the next generation.



Figure: 3.3: Credo Mutwa, 1974 – 1986, *Earth Mother*, (cement sculpture), www.gettyimages.com

The goal of Credo Mutwa's work was to record African mythology, folklore, spiritual rituals, and traditional medicine. His compilation of African myths, stories, and legends, "*Indaba my Children*," published in 1964, is widely recognised as a major contribution to the preservation of indigenous

knowledge (IK) and African history. Being a "sangoma" (traditional healer), Mutwa has preached the value of appreciating and comprehending natural medicines, which are an essential component of indigenous knowledge systems. From a Western perspective, the word "indigenous" and the idea of indigenous knowledge (IK) have come to be associated with the wild, the primal, and the natural.

Indigenous Knowledge (IK), or the native ways of knowing, is a daily justification that benefits those who reside in a particular region and is practised by millions of indigenous people across Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Oceania (Semali & Kincheloe 2002:43). According to Whyte (2017:27), indigenous knowledge (IK) is a priceless reservoir of wisdom for Indigenous nation-building and resurrection.

Writing down indigenous knowledge (IK) modifies some of its basic characteristics because it is typically passed down orally, by imitation, and by example. indigenous knowledge (IK) comes in many forms in culture, including proverbs, traditional practices, folk melodies, folk plays, and *iintsomi* (Made & Breakfast 2023:3). The narrators of *iintsomi* in my work illustrate how Xhosa culture passes along indigenous knowledge (IK) from generation to generation.

3.2 GCINA MHLOPHE'S WORK

African Elderly women have played a vital role in passing cultural knowledge through *iintsomi* to the next generation. Nokugcina Elsie Mhlophe, mostly known as Gcina Mhlophe, has also testified to this and is one of the most prominent South African storytellers, actress, poet and playwright. Mhlophe was born in KwaZulu Natal and raised by her paternal grandmother until the age of eight. She then moved to the Eastern Cape with her mother until the age of seventeen, hence her fluency in both isiZulu and isiXhosa languages.

Mhlophe (2003:1) expresses how her grandmother inspired her in storytelling and that she was the first person to narrate *iintsomi* to her. Just like Mhlophe, in my childhood experience, I also listened to *iintsomi* told by my grandmother

Noluphatho Mlobeli and my aunt Nomahobe Fana. Oyewumi (1997:81) expresses that in African cultures, storytelling is not a way of entertaining and passing the time but a way of preserving heritage, and women often take the lead in passing down these stories and legends to the younger generation. This influenced the concept of showcasing how women played a role in the storytelling and enculturation of Xhosa children. The concept of a life-size Grandmother has also been inspired, in part, by this notion.

Bruchac (1991:124) further reflects that in Native American cultures, grandmothers are known to use stories to instil traditional wisdom in younger generations. Traditionally and within many societies, women have been seen as the custodians of culture and history with stories that pass down important knowledge, moral lessons and cultural values (Oyewumi 1997:13). Mhlophe (1994:10) expresses that women in South Africa use storytelling to empower the community, highlight social issues and preserve African identity. Gilbert & Guber (1979:53) also highlight that research shows that female authors often bring themes of justice, family dynamics and female empowerment in their work and reflect on their own experiences.



Figure 3.4: Gcina Mhlophe, 1986, *Have You Seen Zandile?* (stage performance)

www.youtube.com

Mhlophe does not only show the important role of women in storytelling, but her work also portrays strong women like, in her folklore, where a female

Tortoise was able to overpower a giant creature that was feared by many other animals. Also, in her play titled “Have you seen Zandile” (Figure 3.4), where she portrayed the resilience and the strength of women against the backdrop of the apartheid era in South Africa. Learning the importance of the role women play in storytelling has inspired my work. I asked only women to narrate stories featured in my exhibition, which can be accessed through QR codes or links so that the viewers can listen to how these women narrate the stories in their own voices. Rowe (1979:237) has highlighted that in folklore and myths, strong women characters are always featured and contradict the stereotypical roles assigned to women in society.

Gcina Mhlophe’s background in acting and theatre is evident in her storytelling, as she often uses expressive gestures, facial expressions, physical movements, songs, chants, rhythmic speech, and proverbs. Mhlophe (1994:31) explains that her theatrical approach helps her to bridge the gap between traditional oral storytelling and modern stage performance, creating a unique hybrid that appeals to contemporary audiences.

Attracting and reaching the contemporary audience is what I also wanted to achieve with the stop-frame animation and the QR codes and links with games played by children and *iintsomi* narrated by real women, as this bridges the gap between oral traditions and the contemporary audiences, Generation Z, for instance. Scheub (1996:69) believes that the singing, repetition and call-and-response style Mhlophe employs in her art draws the audience into the performance and creates a communal storytelling experience. Thus, I use audio of children singing, chanting, and clapping in my work.

Although Gcina Mhlophe in Figure 3.5 has incorporated modern or contemporary ways in her storytelling, she still ascribes to the traditional type of telling in order to connect the past to the present. Scheub (1992:34) explains it well when she says that storytellers who have moved the tradition into new areas always do that with contexts inherited that remain constant through the centuries. One of the contemporary elements that Mhlophe has incorporated in her work is the use of different languages.



Figure 3.5: Gcina Mhlophe, 2014, at her Stage Performance, www.alamyimages.com

Mhlophe makes use of her fluency in English, isiXhosa, and isiZulu in her performances by weaving these languages into her narratives, which has established uniqueness in her delivery style. The English subtitles in the stop-frame animation and the English translation in the QR codes have been influenced by Mhlophe's language delivery style. This use of multiple languages in storytelling highlights the diversity of South Africa's linguistic landscape and helps preserve indigenous languages like isiXhosa and cultural identities (Finnegan 2012:13).

Mhlophe has authored several books, primarily focusing on children's books with African folklore, poetry and short stories. These books include: *Stories of Africa* (2003), *The Snake with Seven Heads* (2008), *Queen of the Tortoises* (2008), *Have You Seen Zandile?* (1994), *Our Story Magic* (2006), *Love Child* (2002) and *The Singing Chameleon* (1992). In her children's book *Stories of Africa* (2003) Figure 3.6, Mhlophe has beautiful bright illustrations of the folklore being told. She has used different artists to illustrate each story.

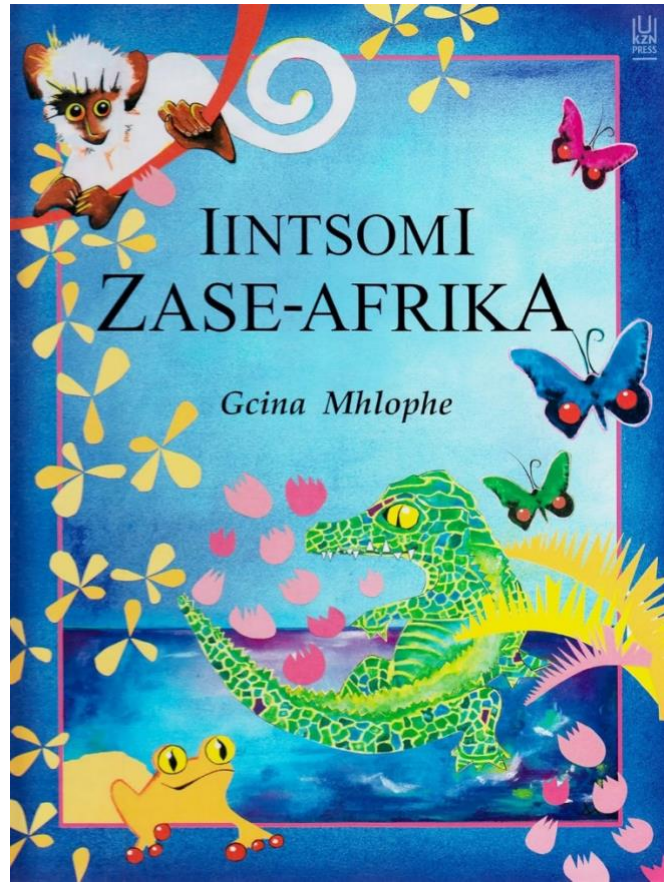


Figure: 3.6: Gcina Mhlophe, 2003, *Iintsomi Zase-Afrika*, (Children's Book), www.alamyimages.com

These illustrations have influenced my work in a way that I illustrated the stories from the QR codes, which were told by elderly women and painted in watercolours. These illustrations were my visual interpretation of the folklore narrated to attract young viewers and to take viewers back to their childhood experiences. Nodelman (1988:138) suggests that illustrations inspire young readers to create their own stories and artworks, thereby promoting creativity and love for storytelling.

Providing an additional medium, like illustrations through which stories can be shared, helps keep oral traditions alive (Finnegan 2012:106). These illustrations can have elements like animals, colours and patterns to enhance the story's message or moral, offering a more immersive cultural experience (Warner 1994:48). Hallett & Karasek (2002:23) express that the global appeal of illustrated folklore speeds cultural exchange, allowing stories from one culture to be restored by people from different backgrounds by presenting

universal themes in an accessible visual format. Mhlophe (2003:1) states that any of the stories can be retold in different ways to enable people of different ages and cultures to find what they need from it. She continues to say that we should keep passing on the magic of Africa, and for that, she has established the Mhlophe Storytelling Academy. This organisation focuses on promoting and preserving African storytelling traditions. Mhlophe works to keep the art of oral storytelling alive and has worked with several storytellers, including Zakaza, who is my third influential artist.

3.3 NOMPUCUKO ZAKAZA'S WORK

Nompucuko Zakaza is one of the celebrated South African storytellers, poets and scholars based in the Eastern Cape. Her contributions highlight the significance of language in preserving cultural heritage and addressing the contemporary African experience, as her work is primarily in isiXhosa. She also advocates for the importance of indigenous language literature in education and culture. As an art teacher myself, I do relate very much to her work of promoting the isiXhosa language in education through a variety of children's art and cultural activities. My whole practical work concept is intended to promote and preserve *iintsomi zesiXhosa* and games through visual art. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986:7) states that language is a key carrier of culture. This means that maintaining isiXhosa in the educational system can help Generation Z connect their heritage and pride, fostering a sense of belonging.

Promoting literacy in isiXhosa is one of our South African Constitutional mandates that recognises indigenous languages as fundamental in an inclusive educational system (Alexander 2003:45). Zakaza's has conducted a study on *iintsomi* titled: *Mazibuyel'ekhaya iintsomi zesiXhosa: Noplani Gxavu and Nongenile Masithathu Zenani*. Her passion for lifelong arts, cultural education and literacy development has seen her contribution to prominent institutions like Gcinamasiko Arts Heritage Trust⁹, Nelson Mandela University, University of Johannesburg (CIIMDA, Funda Ujabule and Funda Centre¹⁰),

⁹ Gcinamasiko Arts Heritage Trust established in 2012

¹⁰ CIIMDA, Funda Ujabule and Funda Centre established in 2010

Nal'ibali Reading for Enjoyment Campaign and many more (Lever and Nal'ibali 2020:1). She is also a founder of Lisahluma Skills Development Services (Figure 3.7), which deals with youth, women, and children's skills development.



Figure 3.7: Nompucuko Zakaza, 2020, at *Lisahluma Skills Development Service Centre*, www.heyschools.co.za

Zakaza has been awarded by the Department of Arts and Culture in recognition of her work as a trainer, storyteller and researcher promoting storytelling as a tool for social transformation, literacy and community development. In her interview with Lever (2020:22), she mentions that when we ignore oral storytelling as part of our history, we miss out on intercultural face-to-face communication, and we deprive ourselves of discovering important stories for nation-building. Portelli (1991:64) emphasised that oral history can be an act of social change, as it acknowledges the historical significance of community stories and challenges dominating history narratives.

One of Dr. Zakaza's recent books titled "*Mazibuyel'ekhaya iintsomi zesiXhosa*" retells some of *iintsomi zesiXhosa* that have been forgotten, which were written by the late AC Jordan. This is an initiative to celebrate and preserve these

stories for future generations. This has inspired the stories that were told by the elderly women in my work. These narratives were told by their grandmothers to them, some of which we have even forgotten about. Many of these stories are at risk of being lost due to globalisation and language shifts, making it crucial to bring them to new generations. Traditional stories are invaluable for cultural continuity, embodying the language and symbols that define a community's heritage (Finnegan 2012:13).



Figure 3.8: Nompucuko Zakaza, 2023, at *Nal'ibali* campaign performance, www.facebook.com

Zakaza has published several folklore and poetry books as well, including “*Zenithi Tsiyo-o toy o-o*” and “*Amabali oonobumba bakaBubele*”, which come with audio. This also had a great influence on QR code and link narrations, which came with audio and translation of their illustration. Audio in books and exhibitions helps viewers and readers who have learning barriers like dyslexia and/or visually impaired. It also allows everyone access to the content or information.

Rogowsky *et al.* (2016:19) reflect that comprehension levels for audiobooks are more comparable to traditional reading, making them very easy to access and an effective alternative or supplement to reading. The audio of Zakaza narrating two of her folklores and children singing and chanting with her in my practical work also aspires to reach all audiences or viewers with all different

abilities or learning barriers. Figure 3.8 shows how Zakaza works as she likes to be amongst children, telling them stories, singing and chanting or reciting her poems.

3.4 CONCEPTUALISATION AND CREATION PROCESS OF THE EMERGENT ARTWORKS

The conceptualisation and production processes of my artworks for the exhibition were closely tied to my research on "An Artistic Enculturation of Xhosa Children in Language and Critical Thinking Skills through *iintsomi* and games" and my artistic influences, Credo Mutwa, Gcina Mhlophe, and Nompucuko Zakaza. These pieces of art seek to honour and interpret the cultural legacy for a modern audience while also showcasing the depth of traditional children's games and *iintsomi*.

By revisiting my own childhood memories and experiences, I have examined *iintsomi*, as an Indigenous Knowledge (IK) that has been used to help Xhosa children acquire the isiXhosa language, get more used to their culture, and develop their critical thinking skills. I studied Credo Mutwa's work in great detail during this process, getting ideas from his personal experiences that he used to produce his artwork.

Credo Vusamazulu Mutwa's profound knowledge of African mythology, folklore, and cultural history influenced the conception of my exhibition. Mutwa is a well-known South African author, storyteller, and traditional healer. In order to relate folklore to the cosmology of the greater African traditions, he included spiritual legendary components into his story. Mutwa has emphasised oral traditions and indigenous knowledge. He has also included chanting, dance, and music in his stories to provide more sensory elements. This is in line with my research's objective which is to investigate how these oral traditions impact enculturation, critical thinking, and the learning of indigenous languages (isiXhosa).

Mutwa's stories, which were based on his own experiences, often dealt with colonialism, the loss and/or modification of cultural customs, and the

complexities of African identity. Being a fervent supporter of conserving African culture and heritage, Mutwa founded the Cultural Village, which recreates traditional Zulu ceremonies and rituals. Reliving historical events has had a greater influence on my work because I wanted to preserve and uphold the Xhosa cultural legacy by attempting to reproduce the social setting in which *iintsomi* were being told.

Credo Mutwa's artwork, which is on exhibit in his Cultural Village in Soweto, depicts actual incidents. Like Mutwa, I aim to replicate these lived events as historical and cultural records or as memory containers. I had an idea for an exhibit that would replicate actual occurrences in order to establish a tangible connection to the past. By doing this, I want to help Generation Z (Gen Z) understand the importance of *iintsomi* and how they affect Xhosa children's enculturation and language acquisition.

The goal of the piece was to replicate a conventional storytelling environment. Kwon (2002:124) asserts that the installation promotes visceral contact with the space by inviting viewers to move inside and around the sculpture or building. According to Cole (2012:8), viewers are drawn more into the lived experience portrayed by these artworks because they integrate sensory elements beyond sight and touch. A traditional Xhosa storytelling (*iintsomi*) session is typically held around the fire in the evenings while people wait for dinner to be served or after dinner. The artwork aims to recreate the warm, communal atmosphere of this gathering. Furthermore, this aims to fully immerse viewers or guests in the heart of this ancient tradition, where stories, values, and knowledge have been passed down through the years.

Grandmothers (*oomakhulu*), who are the repository of wisdom and knowledge, told these tales. I constructed a life-size figure of *Umakhulu* and made a ceramic sculpture of a hen's head, which symbolises *Umakhulu* because she is the family's protector. A hen constantly protects her young under her wings when there is a risk of danger or cold weather. Three-D printed/produced hands and feet provide a more realistic and detailed feel to the viewers. The wire used to construct arms and legs that form part of the installation brought

back memories of the wire cars my cousin and I used to build as children. Some of these hands and feet were hidden beneath *Umakhulu's* clothing, resembling chicks hiding beneath a hen's wings, and they symbolised children listening to *Umakhulu* telling *intsomi*.

The installation's focal point is a symbolic fire pit with a black pot, referencing the tradition of sharing stories around a fire in the past. The flickering LED lights under the pot represent the fire. The hearth is encircled by woven grass mats and a circular arrangement of hardwood logs to provide a classic, earthy, and grounded feel.

I have read a lot of the folktales of Gcina Mhlophe, a well-known female storyteller who has shown how crucial women are to keeping *iintsomi* alive for future generations. Mhlophe is a South African poet, playwright, author, director, and storyteller who is renowned for her work in preserving and advancing African oral traditions. This served as the inspiration for the tales that the elderly women narrated for my artwork.

Mhlophe is skilled at telling gripping stories, and her engagement with social concerns and issues is evident in her work, which is relevant to the theme of my study. Mhlophe is a prolific author of children's books, plays, and poetry that either tackle social and cultural concerns or are based on traditional African folklore. Mhlophe is renowned for her energetic stage presence, bringing tales to life with a blend of dance, music, and theatrical gestures. This led me to go to the rural areas and ask real elderly women to tell stories and record them. I have also attended some of Zakaza's storytelling sessions to observe, and she allowed me to record her voice, narrating stories and singing with children.

The elderly women¹¹ were recorded, reciting *iintsomi* in their native isiXhosa language. Then, their isiXhosa narratives were converted into QR codes, links, and English translations. The QR codes and links can be opened or scanned

¹¹ Anonymous elderly women interviewed in 2024.

to obtain the audio. As I was reading Mhlophe and Nompucuko Zakaza's folklore, I realised that each story has a beautiful illustration that shows visuals of what the story is about. That is how the idea of watercolour paintings came about. For each story, I have painted my own interpretation of the stories (*iintsomi*). With this series of narratives, I have created a wire sculpture of a hen with three chicks and the hawk coming down to grab a chick from one of the stories that were told by elderly women and can also be accessed through the QR codes or links. The first-person narratives shared by these women, which were handed down to them by their grandmothers, offer a more personal connection to the subject matter while lending credibility and authenticity.

Mhlophe strongly supports literacy and the revival of African storytelling customs. She also founded the Gcinamasiko Arts and Heritage Trust, which works to preserve oral history and storytelling. In addition, Mhlophe has been developing other storytellers who collaborate closely with her, such as Zakaza, another significant artist in this practical endeavour that I find influential.

Zakaza is a storyteller and short tale writer who has worked with *Nal'ibali* and Mhlophe. She has published some short stories and, most recently, a new book in which she retells A.C. Jordan's folklore in the book titled "*Mazibuyel'ekhaya iintsomi zesiXhosa*". As part of her PhD research, she has worked with elderly women to inform pregnant women about health risks by telling them stories or *iintsomi*. Zakaza has also founded *Lisahluma* Skills Development Services in Kei Road - Emthonjeni in the Eastern Cape to promote literacy and preservation of isiXhosa folklore and heritage.

Besides reading stories authored by these two phenomenal women, I have attended and observed Zakaza's storytelling performances. I have observed the artistry of her storytelling performances and the way she engages with her audience. I was granted the privilege to record her performance, narrating two of her stories, singing and chanting with children. That audio recording was played during the exhibition. These two amazing women have had a significant impact on my stop-frame animation. Using six of Mhlophe's folklore stories, I have created animated videos as a form of my visual interpretation of

the stories. Mpako's voice, my supervisor, was used to narrate the stories in isiXhosa, and the animation included English subtitles, making the stories accessible to the modern generation.

The characters in this Stop-Frame animation were created to tell the story through relevant imaginary characters and movement, bringing the stories to life. The gestures establish personal ties that have the power to stir viewers' emotions. McCloud (1993:15) refutes the claim that animation frequently appeals to universal emotions, fostering a stronger emotional bond between viewers. Because these stories contain teachings that demonstrate morality, bravery, and ethics and are connected to broader cultural traditions and current challenges, they place a strong emphasis on education.

This method of experimenting with or investigating modern art is the blending of art and technology, the unique fusion of current technology and classical art, which appeals directly to Generation Z and is another method to enter their digital world. By bridging the gap between traditional methods of passing down indigenous knowledge, this art piece makes it more approachable to a contemporary audience.

Zaka's engagement with children in her performance by singing and chanting brought back my childhood memories of playing indigenous games like "*mampuca*", "*mamcheli*", and others that taught me different things. I then observed children playing different games and participating in the games to try to understand the enculturation and/or education that comes with these games. Three of the games were created to form part of the creative work for the exhibition, drawing colourful structures and outlines for the games to attract viewer's attention so that they could participate in the games. I also created videos of children playing the games so that the viewers were able to not only recognise the set-up but to also see how the games were played. These videos can be accessed via links or QR codes.

In this interactive display, I wanted viewers to be able to engage in deep, hands-on interaction with the exhibition content. This would also encourage

viewers to interact with the exhibition in more meaningful and dynamic ways. Playing the games on display during the exhibition allowed visitors to experience how *iintsomi* and indigenous games foster social engagement. This provided additional cultural understanding of the Xhosa society's history, traditions, and values. Playing these games is one way to learn about Xhosa heritage because they are a manifestation of Xhosa's cultural identity.

3.5 DESKTOP RESEARCH

The desk research method—also called secondary data—is used in this study and is widely acknowledged as equivalent to a literature review. Desk research is the process of obtaining and examining secondary data or already-published material, according to Jackson (1994:107). The goal of using desk research in this study is to locate and compile prior studies, reports, and publicly available documents to determine what is currently known about the effects of games and storytelling (*iintsomi*) on Xhosa children's language development, critical thinking, and enculturation.

Desk research is assembling, compiling, and synthesising data and information from previous research projects using a variety of sources, such as studies, reports, academic papers, statistical databases, and other publications. According to Hague and Morgan (2004:219), desk research is an essential step in the research process since it helps identify research gaps and generate hypotheses by providing a critical awareness of the body of existing knowledge. This study has employed various information sources, including books, articles, Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, and academic papers, to analyse, synthesise, and derive significant findings and conclusions regarding the ways in which games and *iintsomi* can impact language development, critical thinking, and enculturation.

Jackson (1994:77) emphasises that in order to ensure that the conclusions reached are solid and useful, researchers should collect and evaluate secondary data. Desk research has provided a wider perspective of this study on the enculturation of Xhosa children and the rebuilding of isiXhosa language. Desk research, according to Ghauri and Gronhaug (2010:108), is necessary

to comprehend the background and context of a research subject, which can aid in formulating a more focused research question for primary research.

Desk research has inherent limits, despite the fact that it has allowed for a larger perspective on this topic by integrating varied opinions and findings from multiple studies and multiple data sources. Some of the data were a little out of date, and some did not fully correspond with the specific goals of this study because it relied on secondary data rather than primary data. Jackson (1994:241) recommends that in order to guarantee the validity and trustworthiness of the data, researchers should critically assess the data and develop precise standards for choosing information sources. Saunders *et al.* (2019:45) stress the significance of locating trustworthy sources and rigorously assessing the information gathered via desk research.

This study's desk research, secondary data collection, and literature evaluation have helped to contextualise it within the body of current information on language development, enculturation, games, and *iintsomi*. Examining Vygotsky's (1986:191) research provided a lot of insights into how social interaction affects language learning.. This data has made the cultural significance of *iintsomi* in Xhosa traditions clearer and brought attention to the effects that *iintsomi* and other traditional games have on Xhosa children's language development and enculturation. According to statistics, *iintsomi* is a type of indigenous knowledge that is transmitted from one generation to the next. Because those imparting this knowledge have lived and are reflecting on their experiences, the phenomenological research approach has been explored.

In this study, secondary material was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is versatile and appropriate for synthesizing vast volumes of qualitative data, and it assists the researcher in identifying and organizing recurrent patterns or themes across the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:87). For familiarization, read and reread isiXhosa storytelling and gaming literature, field notes, and folktales. Labeling repetitive concepts, such as moral instructions and language patterns, produced the first codes. Similar codes

were grouped together, such as "oral traditions as tools of transmitting knowledge" or "embodied knowledge through play," among others. Themes were examined to make sure they matched the purpose, goals, and inquiry of the study. Additionally, the themes were connected to the literature and research objectives.

3.6 PHENOMENOLOGY RESEARCH METHOD

This study has shed more light on the complex web of feelings, ideas, and experiences that meld our experiences by delving into the phenomenological research method. This has resulted in a better understanding of socialisation, enculturation, games, *iintsomi*, and language acquisition. This research methodology's strength is its dedication to capturing the depth and richness of our lives by exploring the fundamental aspects of what it is to be human. The intricacies and subtleties of our indigenous knowledge (IK) were revealed by this research methodology, illuminating the role that games and *iintsomi* play in language acquisition and enculturation.

Philosophy is the source of phenomenology, which offers a framework for research methodology. German philosopher Edmond Husserl (1859–1938:209) created phenomenology as an investigative philosophy because he thought that not all human experiences could be studied by experimental scientific research. He was motivated to create a strict science that looked to the lived experience for truth (Mapp 2008:55). According to van Manen (2007:43) Phenomenology is a project of sober thought on the lived experiences of human sober existence, propelled by interest. Mapp (2008:187) emphasises that the aim of phenomenological inquiry is to provide a complete description of a lived experience. According to Todres and Holloway (2004:4), people who have witnessed phenomena themselves are the only ones who can explain them to others.

According to Arantzamendi *et al.* (2015:14), Phenomenological research is essentially reflective writing. They go on to state that this research approach is complex because it is hard to pinpoint a single article or author who specifically lays out the pedagogic rules for this kind of research.

Phenomenology is a qualitative research method that is grounded in the humanistic research paradigm. It provides significance and insight into an experience from individuals who have gone through it (Mapp, 2008:19). The old women narrating *iintsomi* in the QR codes and the children playing games in my exhibition have lived and experienced the phenomena of that kind of socialisation, learning and enculturation. This study explores lived experiences of the narrators of *iintsomi* and the players of games within the enculturation of Xhosa children and is supported by literature and theory and this has been done by looking at phenomenological reduction.

Phenomenological reduction, according to Moustakas (1994: 179), is a technique for determining the core of lived experience. This made it easier to investigate the ways in which these cultural customs are experienced, recalled, and embodied. In order to let the unfiltered experience speak, bracketing was utilized to push aside preconceived notions and expectations. Without giving them priority, significant statements were selected from the participants' comments of their experiences. By classifying the claims and explaining what was experienced and how it was experienced, the essential elements of experience were explained. The core of the experience of using games and storytelling as a teaching tool was encapsulated.

3.7 AUTOETHNOGRAPHY RESEARCH METHOD

I have included some of my own childhood memories of *iintsomi* and games that we used to play in my research, which inspired me to also look at the autoethnography research approach. Under the category of qualitative research, autoethnography is a synthesis of autobiography and ethnography. By delving into my personal experiences as a researcher, I was able to analyse my cultural and social phenomena and produce a story that is representative of larger settings. A key element of this research process is reflexivity, in which the researcher considers their own prejudices, experiences, and positionality in the study (Chang 2008:98).

According to Bochner *et al.* (2011:274), autoethnography, is a method of writing and study that aims to analyse and characterise individual experiences

in order to comprehend social and cultural experiences. To deepen our understanding of cultural phenomena in a variety of contexts, it primarily uses the researcher's personal or professional experiences as data sources (Chang 2013:107). According to Hayano (1979:161), it is a cultural study in which the researcher shares the experiences and viewpoints of the group being studied by becoming a member of that group. Chang (2008:20) emphasises how this research design recognises and takes into account subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on the findings.

This method approaches research as a political, socially just, and socially conscious act, challenging well-established research methodologies (Bochner *et al.* 2011:285). This method frequently presents findings through storytelling and narrative tactics. Autoethnography emerged as the preferred approach in the 1990s for examining cultural experiences in communication via the lens of personal experiences and reflectivity (Adams *et al.* 2017:96). According to Kim and Reichmuth (2021:155), this research approach gives researchers the chance to express their worries and interpret their experiences in the context of the study. Additionally, it involves the person in cultural interpretation and analysis (Chang 2008:27). Hickey and Austin (2007:26) also emphasised that autoethnography is commonly perceived as enabling the individual's critical involvement with how it has been socially constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed.

According to Jones (2005:764), personal autoethnography is devoted to areas where research and discussion result in catalytic change and produce a particular viewpoint on the world. Narrative analysis was used in this study since autoethnography focuses on the investigation of the individual in connection to others and the environment around them, games and storytelling (*iintsomi*) are ideal subjects for this kind of research since they inevitably involve the social creation of knowledge, identity, and culture.

According to Clandinin & Connelly (2000:15), narrative analysis is perfect for deciphering the autoethnographic writing's personal tales and the stories themselves. As a researcher, this has enabled me to investigate the cultural

and personal ways in which meaning is formed through iintsomi. Traditional stories were analyzed for their structure, language, characters, and themes. As a crucial component of narrative inquiry, temporality, sociality, and place were examined together with the researchers' narrative voice.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FOLKLORE AND CHILDREN'S GAMES THROUGH ENCULTURATION

The discursive analysis and interpretation of children's games and folklore through enculturation is presented in this chapter. It presents a number of folktales and traditional games and how they serve as a means of passing along identity, values, social conventions, enculturation, language learning and critical thinking skills. According to Rossano (2012:529), social norms are morally relevant behavioural rules that are accepted by the community and are at least partially to blame for the distinctively human forms of social organisation and cooperation.

A social norm, according to Mackie (2014:6), is what members of a group consider to be usual activity, an appropriate action, or both. These social norms are significant because they are social phenomena and are spread through communication among group members (Lapinski & Rimal 2005:127). This study argues, among other things, that these social phenomena are passed down through the usage of games and folklore within the Xhosa culture. The lived experiences of engaging in these Xhosa social behaviours are investigated using phenomenology from the perspectives of both this study's participants and the researcher.

In order to confirm the importance of this research, this chapter also incorporates a number of elements that cohesively frame this study's argument by citing other pertinent sources and artists. The verbal interpretation of my artwork, which contextualises the visual metaphors depicted in my exhibition "Chosi: Kwathi Kekaloku Ngantsomi", is one of these elements. In light of the goals of my research, this reflection is compared to the creations and perspectives of other artists who have worked with folklore and traditional games, and it is further enhanced by literary works. A lens through which enculturation is viewed as a dynamic and participative process is offered by the discursive analysis and interpretation of games and folklore.

4.1 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE CHOSEN IINTSOMI

The Indigenous Knowledge System was presented in my exhibition "*Chosi: Kwathi ke kaloku Ngantsomi*", through activities and storytelling that foster language and critical thinking skills. I have explored artistic storytelling or narration of *iintsomi* and playing traditional games in a visual genre to project the acquisition of language skills, enculturation, critical thinking skills and cognitive development. I have highlighted my personal early experiences playing these traditional games and listening to *iintsomi*, which influenced my cognitive development and acquisition of my native language, isiXhosa.

An important component of this approach was using Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), which included storytelling, listening to actual women share folktales they were told as children, and delving deeply into my personal experiences. A few folktales from Gcina Mhlophe's book and folktale narrations from different elderly women were chosen to produce a collection of artworks. This chapter reflects on the process of graphically representing the function of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (*iintsomi* and games) in language development, enculturation, and the development of cognitive and critical thinking abilities.

4.1.1 KWAHLALA, KWAHLALA KWAYINTSOMI

The sculpture installation "*Kwahlala, Kwahlala Kwayintsomi*" depicts a hybridised figure of a grandmother surrounded by children, some with their limbs protruding under her skirt. The goal of this multimedia sculpture installation is to portray the actual social context in which *iintsomi* were being told in order to leave a lasting effect on participants or viewers and to alter their perception about *iintsomi* (DeGuzman 2023:48). This piece evoked my experience of sitting around the fire with the pot when my grandmother was telling us *iintsomi* as we waited for supper to be prepared. I included children, a pit fire with a pot, and a life-size figure of *Umakhulu* (grandmother) in this installation.

A ceramic sculpture of a hen's head with a stuffed human body-like figure represents *Umakhulu*. In order to make the hen's head figure 4.1 lighter than

a typical ceramic sculpture, paper clay was used in its creation. Paper pulp (from soaked recycled newspapers) and recycled clay were combined to create paper clay. I chose this kind of clay because it has cellulose fibres, which are typically found in paper, which give the clay a sturdy structure (Gabriel *et al.* 2023:2).



Figure 4.1: Zimasa Fana, 2024, *umakhulu: work in progress*, (Ceramic Sculpture)

According to Ozkanli (2018:31), using paper clay has benefits, including being lightweight after firing and being simple to fix fractures when drying. Ozkanli (2018:31) came to the conclusion that because of their benefits in terms of lightweight and ease of healing, paper additions in porcelain can be useful for artistic purposes, particularly for huge porcelain sculptures.

“as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings” (Holy Bible, 1982, Matthew 23:37)

In many cultures, hens are frequently associated with fertility, motherhood, altruism and wealth. The isiXhosa phrase “*Sisikhukukazi esizithandayo nesithanda amantshontsho aso*” is directly translated to mean “it’s a hen that loves itself and loves its chicks”. This phrase is usually referred to or said by a Xhosa person when he/she is admiring a mother or grandmother’s love and principles and caring for her children. African proverbs and folklore frequently contain these symbolisms (Thompson 1955:59). The protective tendency of hens is one of their distinguishing characteristics, and I consistently observe this in grandmothers (*oomakhulu*). From choosing a safe or hidden place to protect the eggs while they are being brooded to acting defensively once the chicks hatch, hens become extremely protective. In order to protect their chicks from danger, hens are known to puff out their feathers and spread their wings, allowing the chicks to dive under and peck violently. Even the way they cry out to their chicks and alert them to danger by employing various or unique clucks. For these reasons, I decided to depict *Umakhulu* (grandmother) as a mother hen. In Xhosa tradition, *umakhulu* serves as a mother and a protector.

Umakhulu was created by placing the hen's head, depicted in Figure 4.2, on top of a stuffed life-size soft human sculpture. Some of the children in the installation are hiding under *Umakhulu's* skirt to demonstrate *Umakhulu's* protective nature, much like a hen (*isikhukukazi*) shielding its chicks. As she has witnessed and experienced more, *Umakhulu* is considered a conduit of oral history, cultural heritage, and cultural knowledge (Ntuli 2005:62). As a young Xhosa lady, I have seen in my own family that an elderly family member should be approached to explain the process to the younger members if we are doing a traditional ceremony and are unsure of how to carry it out. In other

words, *Umakhulu* is always seen as a knowledgeable person with a wealth of expertise who carries on family traditions. Since she is typically the one left with children while their parents are at work, always *Umakhulu* plays a vital role in the raising of the children in many Xhosa households (Mkhize 2004:53). She fosters a caring atmosphere while enforcing discipline and cultural instruction (enculturation), which typically takes place while storytelling or telling *iintsomi*.



Figure 4.2: Zimasa Fana, 2024, *Kwathi ke Kaloku Ngantsomi*, (installation: series 1)

When Lux (2019:15) saw Suzan Noesen's "Livre d'Heures," it made her think back on her own grandmother, observing the commonplace actions and the wisdom in her grandmother's wrinkles. The film by Suzan Noesen examined identity, age, and the common experiences of women across history. Lux (2019:15) goes on to explain that she thinks we are left with the realisation that, in the discourse of time (past and present) and in the genealogy of who we become as women in youth and in age, painting your grandmother's image also means drawing a portrait of yourself. As a result, I made a life-size sculpture of *umakhulu* to help me and the audience feel more connected and

affected. This will allow us to connect with the sculpture on a personal level and think back on the experiences and tales *Oomakhulu* told us as the next generation.

According to Potts (2020:62), sculptures from the modern era emphasise energy and immediacy. Yet, their persistent stillness has caused a great deal of unease, especially for pieces that are supposed to depict living figures. The centrepiece of the installation is this life-size statue of *Umakhulu*, with children gathered around the fire to gaze and listen to *Umakhulu* narrating *iintsomi*. It illustrates how *iintsomi* were told in a social context prior to modernisation and an educational system that denigrated our Indigenous Knowledge System. This scene reflects my experience of sitting as my aunt Nomahobe Fana would tell us *iintsomi*.

As an isiXhosa teacher, my aunt loved reading books in isiXhosa and teaching children the value of speaking their own language. We used to go to her if we had homework in isiXhosa that we didn't understand, especially if it had figures of speech like proverbs, metaphors or idioms. She used to tell us stories about the origins of idioms and metaphors, most of which were folktales. For example, the phrase "*imbila yaswel'umsila ngokuyalezela*" is derived from the legend of an *imbila* "dassie" who has no tail and is explained that it was too sluggish and lazy, and when the animals were called to be issued with tails, the dassie asked another animal to collect its tail on its behalf. Hence, it does not have a tail, as each animal had to personally collect their tails and not to send other animals on their behalf. After hearing *iintsomi*, or the stories that gave rise to these figures of speech, it was simple to comprehend them as a child, even if the stories were made up.

Similar to Credo Mutwa's life-size sculptures at his Traditional Village in Soweto, Mafikeng, and the Eastern Cape, this work was created to teach young people the value of *iintsomi*, or oral traditions, and to portray historical events so that we can relive them. To illustrate African culture and mythology, Mutwa crafted enormous sculptures of people, animals, and thatched houses built in various African architectural styles (Steyn 2003:69).

“I weep even now when Euro-centric education is being fed to our children. Fed in order to make them Afrophobia, creatures that hate and despise their motherland, which look down in contempt upon their own people, because this is what Europeans educate black people to do.” (Mutwa, 1964:3)

In order to symbolise the Goddess Mutwa had learnt about and had observed as a Zulu Sangoma (traditional healer), he sculpted this enormous image of *Nokhubuwana* (God the Mother) and the three lesser figures, some of whom were on her lap. One of his spiritual sculptures, shown in Figure 4.3, serves as a visual depiction of sacred knowledge and oral traditions that he aimed to preserve from vanishing due to colonial influence and modernisation (Mutwa 1964:6). According to Chidester (2002:16), Mutwa's work was intended to teach the next generation about African customs, heritage, rituals, and folklore while also serving as an authenticator for social and political issues.



Figure 4.3: Credo Mutwa, 1974 – 1986, *Nokhubuwana: God the Mother*, (cement sculpture), www.gettyimages.com

Around the life-size sculpture of *umakhulu*, there are sculptures of children listenint to iintsomi being told by *umakhulu*. The children in Figure 4.4 are created with wire nets and silicone hands and feet that have been moulded and placed on logs and blankets around *Umakhulu*. Because silicon has a

doll-like appearance and feel, I decided to utilise it. I also included wire, which I used to make wire vehicles when I was younger. Because this content relates to things I was familiar with as a youngster, it liberated the child in me. I believed this content would appeal to children because my display focused more on them. When *iintsomi* are being told, the hands and feet stand in for curious children who listen, interact, and ask questions, hence my focus on hands and feet.

I recall that we would sing, chant, dance, clap hands, or mimic certain characters from these stories when we were told *iintsomi*. My aunt used to insist that we, the audience, sing any chants or magical songs that were to be performed during storytelling. As I was creating my artwork for the exhibition, I saw and observed Nompucuko Zakaza at her finest as she shared her folklore with a group of children. She gave me the go-ahead to record and use the performance in my art exhibition. There is a sound recording of children singing and Dr. Zakaza reciting two of her folktales that were played in the vicinity of the installation. This recording was *Umakhulu's* way of narrating "*iintsomi*" to her grandchildren.



Figure 4.4: Zimasa Fana, 2024, *Kwathi ke Kaloku Ngantsomi*, (close up look of installation: series 1)

Children would join the storyteller in singing songs while storytelling, just like the children in Dr. Zakaza audio. The results of Kultti's (2012:1955) study show that singing exercises give children access to a variety of communication tools, including artefacts, rhythm, gestures, lyrics, and chances to repeat the activity. Studies on language development and children's enculturation attest that singing and language are related, and they both use the same parts of the brain (Trollinger 2010:183). According to this research, the brain's language processors also support musical harmony. This finding implies that language proficiency can be improved by musical training. This is because singing has a favourable impact on language development, speech, and understanding. Trollinger (2010:183) believes that skilled singers have superior language perception abilities. This means that children can easily learn a language's vocabulary by singing and listening to the songs' repeating lyrics found in *iintsomi*.

Children take part in more than just singing when stories are being told. In one of Zakaza's sessions, where the story she told was about farm animals having a tea party, she also asked the children to mimic the noises of various farm animals in her audio. Because they are also active participants in this art form, youngsters would remain awake throughout storytelling in this way. Additionally, they had no trouble associating the sound with an animal. For example, they were fully aware that the cow was now saying or doing something when the storyteller made the bellowing sound "moo". Children learn idiophones from folklore because they use sounds like "dyumpu" (water sound when something heavy drops into a pond or river), "phaxa" (sound of a wet and floppy thing when it gets in contact with the floor or falling on the floor), "nkqo" (a door knock knock sound, "tywa" (expression of a thing or person or animal lying flat on the ground like it is helpless or fatigued sometimes after falling heavily on the ground from an unexpected impact, similar to a person or animal lying flat on the ground after it was hit by a car and pushed up and fell uncontrollable), "lakatyu" (expression of a jump over in a very fast way or a swift hop or leap". These are, among other sounds of expression, frequently used in the narration of *iintsomi*, as can be heard in the women's audio

recordings included in the exhibition. Children learn all of these sounds as necessary language and figures of speech.

As Dr Zakaza narrates the stories in her audio, she invites the children to picture these animals and act like they are animals while sipping tea. Children participate in oral traditions such as storytelling by making sounds and imagining the appearance of characters, particularly the mythical creatures found in folklore. This helps children to exercise their imagination. My aunt used to question us about how we imagined the "izim or igongqongqo" (a giant creature) or how we thought it looked like when we were told *iintsomi*.



Figure 4.5: Zimasa Fana, 2024, *Kwathi ke Kaloku Ngantsomi*,
(full installation: series 1)

Go to the link for the Video: <https://youtu.be/bg5wJNhq2SU>

Because these stories were not read from the book and there were no pictures to show children, storytellers could only describe how the characters looked.

Children could use their imagination to picture the story's characters and setting. This imagination allows room for creativity development in children. According to Smith & Mathur (2009:52), imaginative children tend to have better coping skills and emotional regulation and perform well in thinking, logic and communication. Sometimes, we were even given an opportunity to predict what would happen next in the story, and that forced us to use our imagination even more.

Conversations took place during storytelling in the social context, as depicted by the installation in Figure 4.5. Discussions between adults and children are essential for language development; parents should have two-way discussions with their kids instead of merely reading to them (Zimmerman *et al.* 2009:342). When told *iintsomi*, younger children become quite curious. They would ask a variety of questions in an attempt to comprehend the narrative and offer their own suggestions for how they would like it to conclude. Inquiries such as "*Makhulu*, what prevented the jackal from scaling the tree? or "Why do ants gather so much food"? *Umakhulu* would then have to respond to the queries and explain the story's lesson to young children. The study by Tizard and Hughes (1984:276), which showed that the child exhibited intellectual curiosity and a significant power of logical argument in the framework of mother-child conversation, as well as in its revelation of the notable differences in their conversations at home and at school, is reflected in Dunn (2013:81).

In the installation, a pit fire and a black pot allude to the period when the *iintsomi* were being told. The fire symbolised by the twinkling lights beneath the pot implies that *iintsomi* were recounted at a family time in the evenings while they were waiting for supper to be ready. This was a strategy to encourage children to return home early so they wouldn't miss story time. Additionally, if stories were told throughout the day, this would prevent them from doing their chores and might even interrupt *Umakhulu* while she was doing her chores; hence, children were told that if they listened to *iintsomi* during the day or before sunset, they would grow horns and be ugly. Another Xhosa phrase is "*sukubalisa intsom' emini, uzophuma impondo*", and the meaning of this expression is to caution a person who constantly lies. It is a

polite way of saying don't lie, or I am aware you are lying. Another one is “*ayizange yenzeke lento nasentsomini*”, meaning what has happened in real life was never even heard of in folktales and thus is a very strange occurrence, another polite way of saying it's a lie. It also implies that the person is making up stories that no one will believe. This demonstrates that *iintsomi* and fairytales alike were mainly made up, similar to fiction stories, even though they would be based on real-life experiences and observation of nature as a form of both knowledge creation and teaching and learning. Hence, they were important tools for enculturation and preservation of cultural identity, among other important functions.

4.1.2 CHOSI NTSOMI

This is a collection of watercolour paintings depicting *iintsomi* that were told by Xhosa women during this study and documented by the researcher. These women recounted *iintsomi*, which their grandmothers had told them. I went to the Eastern Cape's rural communities and invited elderly women to each narrate *intsomi* anonymously, which I then recorded. I informed them that during the exhibition, the audio would be accessible to the general public, and they consented. I translated the stories into English for those who did not speak Xhosa after they were told in isiXhosa.

After that, the audio and its English translation were converted to QR codes and links so that they could be accessible to viewers during and after the exhibition. Each *intsomi's* audio is in isiXhosa and translated into English in the subtitles, as the link under Figure 4.7 can be accessed. Since virtual or computer-generated information has permeated our modern-day lives and our cultural spheres, thus, these virtual audios and visuals of storytelling are important and represent real-life simulation towards authenticity. This has made room for new and innovative modes of communication and cultural delight (Bonacini 2022:16). In addition, in order for these stories to reach Gen Z, who live in the digital age, this way of capturing and archiving makes the study and its accompanying visual and audios easily accessible and archivable for future generations. Thus, one of the objectives of this study is to teach Generation Z about how their cultural knowledge was created/formed and

transmitted by exposing them to real-life simulation. Yilmaz *et al.* (2018:10) claim that digital storytelling, which uses digital tools like QR codes and internet links to create and share stories, and transmedia storytelling, which is a narrative technique where a story is told across multiple platforms and formats, are new forms of traditional storytelling.

Although the women in this study tell their stories in a variety of ways, they all strive to make the people and events in their stories come to life through their charisma, expressiveness, and vocal modulation. For Example, Mpako in one of her audios narrating the story of the “Lion Thatches his Roof and the Hare”, in “*Phondo Phum’apha Ungaphum’apha*”, a Stop-Frame Animation with six *iintsomi*, she is heard imitating the roaring of the lion, making the sound “*Yaqquma yaqquma!*” meaning the lion roared in anger.

All the narrators who told these stories in this study made an effort to capture the listeners to keep them engaged as the stories were narrated. These women recounted what was told to them, and since these stories were not visually recorded, they were narrating their own versions and supplementing with their imaginations. According to Nongenile Zenani, who was interviewed by Scheub (1992:19), oral traditions were never intended to be memorised or preserved in time; rather, the storytellers were always attempting to connect the past and present while giving a needed lesson.

Nongenile Masithathu Zenani is a typical Xhosa woman from the Eastern Cape, as seen in Figure 4.6, embodying the spirit of *iintsomi*. She is renowned as a highly regarded Xhosa oral poet and storyteller with an extraordinary magnetic presence. With its abundance of idioms, proverbs, and metaphors, Zenani's narrative reflected the linguistic and cultural legacy of isiXhosa (Scheub 1975:91). Harold Scheub's publications, such as "*The Xhosa Ntsomi*" (1975) and "*The World and the Word: Tales and Observations from the Xhosa Oral Tradition, Nongenile Masithathu Zenani*" (1992), contain considerable documentation and analysis of Zenani's storytelling.



Figure 4.6: Nongenile Masithathu Zenani, at her performance,
www.alamyimages.com

The ladies in this series of artworks, like Zenani, have utilised their voices to preserve and influence the rich heritage of the Xhosa people. Similar to Mpako's audio, where her voice is full of dramatic representation, which is influenced by her experience of having listened to her grandmother narrating *iintsomi*, each of the storytellers in this study presented dynamic improvisation to capture the listeners' curiosity and imagination. This demonstrates the strength of oral traditions by fusing entertainment with philosophical and cultural insights. Children can learn moral lessons from each of the folktales told by these women. These narratives' use of metaphors, idioms, proverbs, idiophones, and songs is highly beneficial and effective for language enrichment. The language structure is also enhanced by hearing how they construct their sentences when telling these tales. The role that women play in Xhosa communities is typified by these women. According to Tshazibane (2012:9), creativity appears to be rather feasible when viewed through an African woman's imaginable lens.

I visually translated the six folktales into watercolour paintings, which were narrated by elderly women and recorded on QR codes or links. These folktales are titled: *uDyakal Ashe noMvolufu banyuka intaba*, *uDyakal Ashe noMvolufu baya ebukhweni bezinja*, *uNomaselana*, *uNwelezelanga*, *iZim negugu lomnt'omkhulu* and *uMakhulu noDyakal Ashe*. I also read a lot of children's

books and folktales (iintsomi zesiXhosa) written by Gcina Mhlophe and Nompucuko Zakaza while I was creating the artwork. My inspiration for the painting series came from observing how the stories are depicted using vivid, eye-catching, relatable colours to grab children's attention. In order for my graphics to feel more vibrant and alive and to leave a lasting impression on my audience, I tried to capture the essence of oral storytelling.

Our African heritage consists of the oral tradition (storytelling) that has been passed down through the generations like the drawings found in rock art. According to Hinaai (2010:40), pictures can preserve culture and identity by illustrating historical events and traditional attire. African patterns and symbols are used in Mhlophe's books' illustrations to represent African art, culture, and history. In order to conserve culture and tradition, Hinaai (2010:44) recommends the creation of a centre for illustrated Omani folktales and fairy tales. Illustrations should be included in educational materials because they are an important source of information that children incorporate into their mental picture of the story and are essential to their reading comprehension (Pike *et al* 2010:243).

As a graphics-oriented generation, Generation Z is always looking for graphics and images in practically everything they come across. Storytelling with illustrations can also foster greater creativity, critical thinking, and language development. According to Nicholas's (2007:142) research, children who were shown drawings while the story was being spoken aloud had a higher level of indirect vocabulary acquisition than children who were not shown visuals. Underwood (1989:216), who emphasised the value of visuals by addressing the problem of visual memory, is quoted by Karakas & Karaca (2011:351) as stating that visuals enable learners to contextualise the language in a realistic and authentic way, gaining autonomy and engaging themselves in affective and cognitive learning.

After listening to each story, I used watercolour paints because they are more relatable to children to create my own visual interpretations of each *story*. Figure 4.7 is one of my visual representations of the story of “uNomaselana”,

depicting one of the folktales told. Watercolours are easier to deal with, especially when working with young children, so I used them a lot while I was an art teacher in primary school. I still use them with my beginner painting students at the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) where I currently lecture.



Figure 4.7: Zimasa Fana, 2024, *Chosi Ntsomi4: uNomaselana*, (Watercolour Painting)

Go to the link for the Video: <https://youtu.be/f9qqN5nvhGw>

According to Howell (2017:91), Korky Paul began working with watercolours when he was around five or six years old, and later advanced to acrylic and oil paints. He goes on to state that his wife and clients like his watercolour paintings even if he still uses them for sketches (Howell 2017:91). The pictures included in children's books are typically straightforward paintings or drawings with vibrant colours, which is what I aimed for with my watercolour illustrations. This series of paintings was inspired by Korky Paul's straightforward yet appealing images of Winnie the Witch.

Born in Zimbabwe, Korky Paul is a well-known British children's book illustrator who currently resides in Oxford, England, after studying and working in South Africa. In addition to selling millions of copies of his series "Winnie and Wilbur",

he is renowned for his colourful and intricate artwork (www.korkypaul.com). With his illustrations appearing in several exhibitions and inspiring and delighting audiences worldwide, Paul's contributions to children's literature have received recognition on a global scale (www.childrentoday.org.uk). In an interview with the English Association, Paul reveals that he does his artwork using watercolour paints and ink, as illustrated in Figure 4.8. Paul's vibrant illustrations are influencing the children's book industry and are a testament to his inventiveness and commitment to his profession.

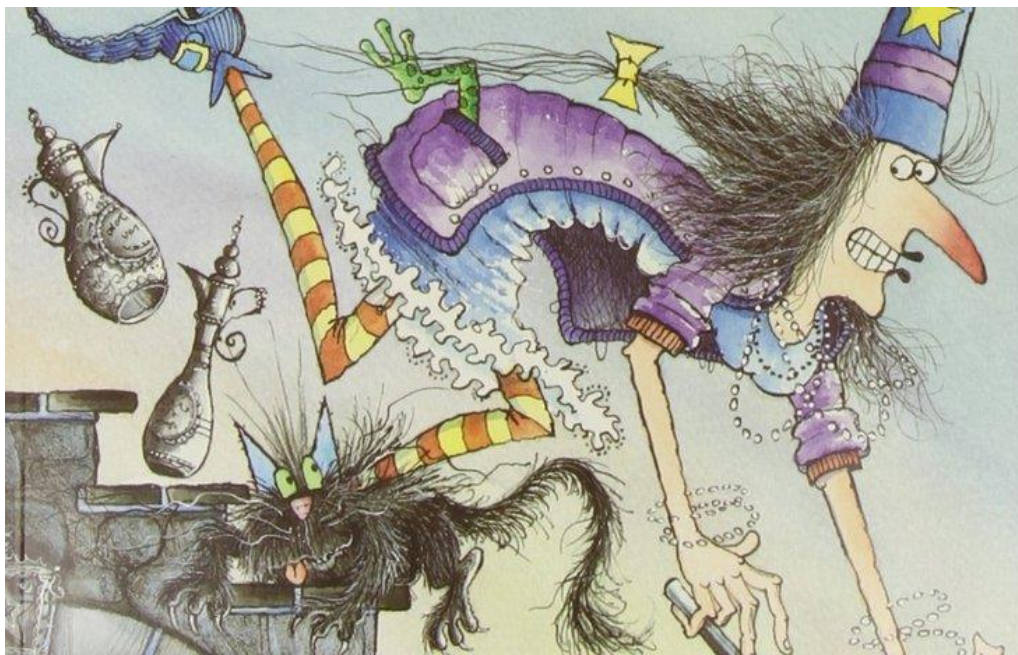


Figure 4.8: Korky Paul, 1995, *Winnie the Witch Activities: Words foe Life*, (Watercolour painting with ink)

Paul's childhood experiences and life, having grown up in the wild and affluent African bushveld, inspired his artwork. His creativity was greatly influenced by his grandmother, a painter and illustrator, whom he used to observe sketching and painting everything she saw on her farm in the rural Kalahari region (www.fivebooks.com). At a young age, Paul began reading comic books and drawing cartoons, which is why his books and illustrations are so well-liked by young children. His illustrations always transport readers to a fantastical world (www.korkypaul.com). Just as my illustrations aim to bring folklore to life and support children's language development, Paul's illustrations consistently bring stories to life.

4.1.3 UKHETSHE NESIKHUKUKAZI

One piece of art that was inspired by stories told by elderly women is “*Isikhukukazi noKhetshe*”, which I have transformed into a sculpture-like mini-installation. I was inspired to craft this hen out of wire and beads by my early years of building and playing with wire cars with my cousins. Figure 4.9's hen and chicks' beaded designs symbolise my Xhosa history and culture, which I wish to highlight and maintain through my artwork.



Figure 4.9: Zimasa Fana, 2024, *Isikhukukazi noKhetshe*, (wire and beads sculptural installation). Go to the link for the Video: https://youtu.be/pN_C9Ywlt0o

In order to teach children how to recycle or gather trash in the neighbourhood for beneficial use, these wire cars were constructed out of waste materials like old fence wire, bottle tops, and glasses. According to Mpako (1999:3), the primary means of passing down cultural traditions from one generation to the next among Africans has been through art-based schooling.

Wire cars originated in the Northeast South African highlands of Kwa-Zulu Natal where young boys began creating toy cars out of bottle tops, tin cans, and leftover coat hanger wire (www.southafrica.net). According to Mpako (1999:4), these types of toy-making enhance basic creative skills and intellectual development, including constructive thinking, imagination, self-expression, self-identity, initiative, perceptual capacities, intuition, and empathy. This art has become popular in South Africa's major cities and has expanded to townships and rural areas across the nation. These days, wire artists combine wire and beads to produce a creative variety of ornamental and useful wire art items (www.southafrica.net). When making my wire sculpture, I was inspired by wire artist Johnson Zuze (Figure 4.10).

Contemporary Zimbabwean artist Johnson Zuze creates works that discuss and/or reflect myths, social issues, and religious or spiritual figures, and he uses waste materials to tell intricate stories. In Figure 4.10, Zuze produced a piece of art that combined mythology with modern concerns.



Figure 4.10: Johnson Zuze, 2020, *Pegasus? Celestine Prophecy*, (wire and found material), www.gallerydelta.com

Zuze's artwork has received recognition, been included in a number of exhibitions, and taken first place at the National Gallery's 2014 Heritage

Exhibition. Zuze's art promotes environmental advocacy in addition to artistic expression (NRL. Northumbria.ac. UK).

“I collect items of urban junk: wire, glass bottles, plastic, rubber, and the like, and skilfully join them into harmonious sculptures of birds and animals, each of which portrays character and humour. The idea is to give new existence to daily objects, providing them with a lively, unexpected presence beyond their primary use and into a poetic dimension” (Zuze, 2018:6).

In order to arouse feelings and stimulate cognition, Zuze (2018:6) explains that his aim is to give his work a poetic dimension, which entails placing it within an interpretive framework. According to Tarallo (2011:451), the poetic dimension is the point at which the interaction of words and visuals creates a more complex experience with the idea being communicated. In order to allow the conversation between the narrations and the artefacts to express the idea of *iintsomi* in language development, the wire and bead sculpture in Figure 4.9 was created.

4.1.4 GAMES

The most significant aspect of our ancestors' upbringing in the past was playing traditional games, which are today hardly ever played by children. Because the traditional games had an impact on their upbringing, some of today's parents are still quite familiar with them and their meaning. These games were handed down from the previous generations through oral and auditory presentations and played to the next. This indigenous knowledge system is nearing extinction as a result of industrialisation and technology. According to research findings by Sulistyningtyas & Fauziah (2019:431), in 2019, only 20% of 50 youngsters played traditional games.

While creating my artwork, I had the opportunity to watch, take part in, and record children performing traditional games. The interactive display I made for my exhibition was inspired by the players' interactions and conversations with one another. I selected three native games I played as a child, some of which are unfamiliar to Generation Z, and some children still play them today.

My recordings of children playing these games can also be accessed via QR codes or links so viewers can see how the game was played.

Children usually draw circles and lines on the ground when playing some of the chosen games, but since the exhibition was inside a gallery, I had to use sheets of vinyl and stickers. I chose three games, Mamcheli, Mampuca, and Izandla, because each of them has a distinct purpose in cultural education and indigenous knowledge.



Figure 4.11: Zimasa Fana, 2024, *Game 3: Izandla - short video*, (interactive games display). Go to the link for the Video:
<https://youtu.be/zB83AqbHIYU>

The traditional games that I selected and documented for the exhibits emphasise the value of games in developing children's language, critical thinking skills, fine and gross motor skills, cultural/self-identity, and social abilities. According to Mpako (1999:4), children can acquire fundamental creative skills and intellectual development through playing with and creating dolls and other toys. These skills include constructive thinking, imagination,

self-expression, self-identity, initiative, perceptual capacity, intuition, sympathetic understanding, and more. Players must be informed of the rules and restrictions of these games. According to Pic *et al.* (2019:742) the rules in any game create numerous boundaries in interpersonal connections, and this means that each game becomes a lesson in social relationships. Language and critical thinking abilities can grow as a result of this social contact.

Izandla is one of the games I prepared for the exhibition, and it contains rules and regulations that must be understood and complied with. This game requires the players to sit in a circle with their fists out in front of them (Figure 4.11). All the players must follow the game's rules. Participants must sit motionless while keeping their fists up. The lead player makes a single fist and substitutes his lips with the second fist. As the lead player sings or chants a song and taps her fists or hands in sync with the song, all participants must recite the song. They also give the final tap when the song or chant is over, and the player who gets tapped last exits the game. The song or chant is then repeated until only one fist is left, indicating the game's winner.

The chant is recited repeatedly (at least five times) until the last hand is tapped, just like in the recorded video provided in the QR code or the link underneath it. By listening to the older children and repeating the lyrics or chanting with them until they know the songs, the younger children can also learn the song. Repeating the chorus helps them expand their vocabulary. This turns into an enjoyable method of learning the vocabulary and sentence structure of the isiXhosa language.

Nguban'osuzileyo?

Ngunomsuzwana

Usuze ntoni?

Igqabi letswele

Khanimhlekeni, Oh hahaha

Khanimphindeneni, Oh hahaha

Okokugqibela, Oh hahaha

Isik'ingathi nguye kanye, kanye lo

*Who has farted?
It's Nomsuzwana.
What did she fart?
An onion leaf
Let's laugh at her, Oh hahaha
Laugh again, Oh hahaha
For the last time, Oh hahaha
It seems like this is the one.*

(unpublished oral literature, translated by Zimasa Fana)

Children like to say things that sound silly and embarrassing just for them to laugh and have fun. This chant is one of those trivial games they like and laugh about. Although this game might be mindless and fun, its objective is to teach children the ability to sit still, listening skills and patience.

Mampuca, an indigenous game played by our mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers when they were younger, was another game chosen and shown in the exhibition. Professor Mpako my supervisor attested to her playing this game as a young girl even though she said she does not remember all the rules. The Nguni tribes love this game, which we call *Mampuca* in isiXhosa, while some tribes call it *Puca*, *Magave*, or *Diketo*. Girls typically play this game in groups of two or three. A pebble known as "*ingudu*", which is larger than the other twelve smaller (12) pebbles is hurled into the air and with the same hand the player pulls out the 12 pebbles from a circle drawn on the ground before quickly catching the *ingudu* that was tossed in the air. Previously, the circle used to be a shallow hole carved out of the ground so the pebbles could be pulled out smoothly. In my exhibition, I drew a circle on sticky vinyl, adhered it to the floor, and set the twelve pebbles in and out of the circle.

The rules of this game are: a player tosses or throws the big pebble (*ingudu*) in the air while quickly pulling out the other pebble from the circle with the same hand before catching the *ingudu*. In the first round, all 12 pebbles must be pulled out of the circle with one toss/throw and then pushed back to the circle,

leaving one pebble outside the circle also with one toss, the second toss. In the second round, again, all the remaining 11 pebbles must be pulled out of the circle with the third toss of *ingudu* and pushed back with the fourth toss again, leaving one pebble at a time outside until all the pebbles are out of the circle, meaning 23 tosses as on the twelfth time the last one has to remain outside making all 12 outside the circle, and the player then places her hand inside the circle to declare winning a round. This continues until the player loses by missing to catch the *ingudu* or being unable to pull all the pebbles from the circle, or making a mistake in pushing the required pebbles into the circle.



Figure 4.12: Game 2: Zimasa Fana, 2024, Game 2: Mampuca - short video, (interactive games display). Go to the link for the video:<https://youtu.be/6WVy-NAmxLpo>

Children playing this game have to count the stones they leave behind in each round, which helps them develop their mathematics skills. Children must be quite strategic when playing this game despite it primarily being about mathematics. They have one chance to push the pebbles back after they have been drawn out of the hole or circle, so they must plan and think creatively about how to do it while only leaving one behind.

Children even strategise how to pull and push the pebbles out and in, as they need to have enough pebbles per round. All this strategic planning and creativity used in this game develops the child's critical thinking skills because throwing and catching the stone requires eye-hand coordination. This game also helps children develop their gross motor skills. Fine motor skills are developed when pulling and pushing the pebbles in and out using their fingers.

This game aims to teach children to be patient, develop their cognitive and social skills, and develop their eye-hand coordination, gross motor and fine motor skills. It encourages strategies and cooperation among the players as well as passing down cultural values, norms and traditions.

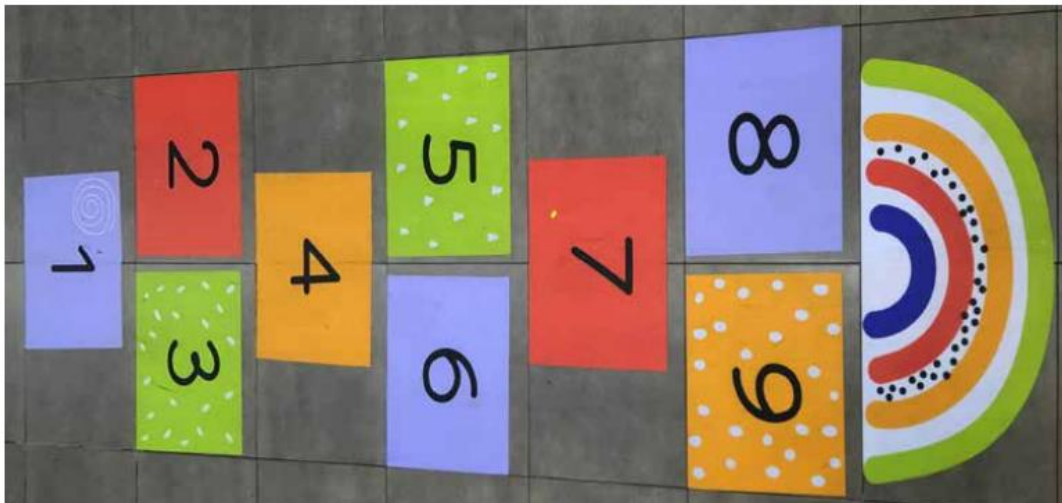


Figure 4.13 Zimasa Fana, 2024, *Game 1: Mamcheli - short video*,
(interactive games display)

Go to the link for the Video: <https://youtu.be/A0U1bljuiYU>

Figure 4.13 is a game called “*mamcheli*”, also known as hopscotch. Typically, this game is drawn on the ground using clay or chalk, but for my exhibition display, I used vibrant vinyl stickers because it was on the floor inside the gallery, as can be seen in this amended version above. I designed the game grid with bright colours to make it more engaging and eye-catching for viewers. This grid consists of numbered squares arranged from 1 to 9.

The rules in this game are: the first player throws their coin or stone onto the number 1 square, then they must hop on one leg in single squares and land

on both legs in the double squares without stepping on the line and also skipping the square that has their coin or stone. The player must balance on one foot while picking up the coin or stone after returning and hopping back. After each round is successfully finished, the player throws the coin or stone to the next number on the grid (two, three, four, and so on). Players are not allowed to step on a line, miss a square, or lose balance as their turn ends, and the next player goes on to play. The game is won by the first player to finish the entire grid.

The balance and coordination in this game sharpen the child's Gross Motor Skills (Gallahue & Donnelly 2003:59). Even though this game emphasises physical training, it also fosters linguistic abilities and allows for talks because the rules must be understood. Players must plan how to toss the coin or stone in the grid, particularly when tossing in a square somewhat distant from their current position.

This is a fun and physically engaging outdoor game for children, and its objectives are to promote patience (turn-taking), rule-following, cooperation and social skills. This game improves cognitive skills as it requires concentration, planning and counting. It also develops physical coordination and enhances balance, agility and locomotor skills (Piaget 1952:84).

In my show, these games created an interactive display that allowed viewers or visitors to participate, play the games, and become a part of the exhibit. These days, instead of merely strolling and reading the exhibit, visitors or viewers hope to enjoy themselves and experience the full thrill. Visitors may experience a strong emotional and sensory impact from this interactive display if they feel as though they are in the recreated space (Maria 2008:92). Paul (2008:171) quotes Falk and Dierking (2000:59) when they highlighted that viewers or visitors often report being more engaged with the display or the exhibit when they have the opportunity for interaction.

The two contemporary artists, Wayne Garrett and Caitlind Brown, have shown the evolution in the forms of artistic expression and the concepts of interactive

display or exhibition in their work. This artistic expression allows art to broadcast social issues in a new way, allowing people to gain and view a new reality (Barchugova & Rochevova 2022:64). Figure 4.14 illustrates the partnered art installation developed by these two artists, which carries an intermediate position between installation and performance.



Figure 4.14: Wayne Garratt and Caitlind Brown, 2012, *Cloud* , (interactive installation), www.incandescentcloud.com

Among the interactive installation projects that Garrett and Brown have developed are *Cloud* (2012), *Solar Flare* (2013), and *New Moon* (2014). They have experimented with a vast array of media in their artistic endeavours. According to *Cloud*, the reason for its appeal is the way the community engages with the artwork and one another to make it come to life. By turning the lights on and off, visitors to this interactive installation of 6000 light bulbs produced various iterations of the composition to experiment with the lights and interact with one another (Barchugova & Rochevova 2022:65). As an interactive work, *Cloud* reflects the idea that interactive art seeks to realise and re-establish a communal collective space of shared social involvement (McIntosh 2014:112). He goes on to add that the installation's authorship,

display location, and interactive features serve and engage the public while drawing their attention (McIntosh 2014:57).

Social contact is made possible by these interactive displays, such as the games in my exhibition and the Cloud installation. Style and Kuhl (2017:620) emphasise the importance of social contexts, including family and community interactions, for language development from infancy. They stress that social interaction helps people acquire languages by providing information and incentives through social cues. Early social engagement and language development are related (Durkin *et al* 1982:48).

4.1.5 PHONDO PHUM'APHA UNGAPHUM'APHA

A variety of visual effects, including sound, animation, projection, simulation, holography, and video, can help make an exhibition come to life. By using this technology in heritage shows, artists can improve opportunities, create simulated experiences, clarify complex concepts, re-discover significant historical events, and place preservation or archiving in context (Hashim *et al.* 2014:315). Figure 4.15 shows the Stop-Frame Animations created for the exhibition as part of my third series of work. I read a lot of Gcina Mhlophe's and Nompucuko Zakaza's folktales before these animations were created. Given that the goal of my show was to educate young people and preserve Xhosa heritage in a way that appeals to Generation Z, I considered making animated films based on the folktales I had read and recreating scenes to visualise the stories while making the visuals appeal to children.



Figure 4.15: Zimasa Fana, 2024, *Phondo Phum'apha Ungaphu'apha*, (stop-frame animation). Go to the link for the Video: Part 1: <https://youtu.be/W0J9w1Rx7is>

I selected six folktales from Gcina Mhlophe's children's book and examined them, focusing on the morals, values, or enculturation that each tale conveyed. [1] Crocodile and the Monkey's Heart [2] Lion Thatches His Roof, [3] Mzanendaba, [4] Nanana bo Sele Sele [5] Leopard's Gift, and [6] How the Tortoise Won Respect, are the stories I selected from the book "iintsomi Zase-Afrika". The scenes that carry the story's sequence were then drafted after I had a look at the people in each story. As one of my elderly women who narrated *iintsomi* for the exhibition, Professor Mpako's voice can be heard in each animated movie, telling the stories in isiXhosa. For the benefit of non-Xhosa speakers, subtitles are displayed at the bottom of the video as the narrator tells the stories, while animated visuals are playing to give summarised context. Mpako's isiXhosa narration aims to improve the isiXhosa vocabulary and sentence structure.

The stop frame animation has become an important medium for modern artists over the last few decades. According to Saez (2016:4), animation is the process of creating artificially moving images, a goal that people have had since the beginning of time, including the cavemen, Leonardo da Vinci, and others. Luneburg's (2017:1) study cited Sherman's (2005:17) claim that video is a widely used medium for expressing and sharing individual and group tales.

"Some artists use video to present personal subjective narratives, almost like small fragments, to reflect their own emotions, interpretations, and memories regarding their history" (Luneburg 2017:1). One artist who reflected social themes through stop-frame animation is William Kentridge.

One of William Kentridge's well-known charcoal stop-frame animations is displayed in Figure 4.16. Since political and social events significantly impacted Kentridge's work, he employs stop-frame animation to convey political storytelling (Kentridge 2017:10). In response to the 2012 Marikana massacre, Kentridge narrates a social and political issue in this stop-frame animation (Figure 4.16), which is a charcoal sketch. A traditional burial song performed in Sesotho serves as the animation's soundtrack, and the English translation of the lyrics follows.



Figure 4.16: William Kentridge, 2013, *Second-Hand Reading*, (stop-frame animation), www.sfmoma.org

This stop-frame animation's narrative of the Marikana massacre interprets the experience of the 34 striking mine workers and their families in a way that suggests the past and present are constantly conversing. The victims' cultural heritage is depicted in the song. Kentridge provides an English version of the hymn for those who do not speak Sotho. In order to ensure that viewers

comprehend the meaning of the song and the commentary Kentridge is portraying in this animation, this translation gives non-Sotho speakers context. Similar to Kentridge, the purpose of the subtitles in my animation was to convey the emotional depth of the *iintsomi* narrative so that viewers who do not speak Xhosa could feel the same emotions as those who do. Giving viewers a chance to learn isiXhosa terminology and better comprehend each *iintsomi* being narrated adds educational value.

4.2 METAPHORS AND SYMBOLISM IN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

The formation of abstract ideas, social awareness, and emotional expression all depend on metaphors and symbolism, which are vital components of language. Segal (1978:315) asserts that symbols have a continual meaning and symbolise what has been suppressed from consciousness. He also claims that intrapsychic conflict¹² (internal struggle) between the repressed and the repressing tendencies is the cause of symbolism (Segal, 1978:315).

According to Jones (1918:183), a symbol represents or replaces another notion from which it acquires a secondary value that is not inherent in the context. Peyre (2010:1) contends that while symbolism has long been employed in mythology, theology, anthropology, and psychology, it was most influenced by early French philosophers who gave it a meaning that was in opposition to what poets had originally intended. Lyytinen *et al.* (2001:875) found that symbolic ability is more closely linked to language comprehension than output.

Children may always grasp their cultural, moral, and societal concepts through the use of symbolism and metaphors, which are means of giving actions, objects, and even words deeper meanings that may be derived from experiences people have had. Children learn signs through sensory involvements before beginning to use symbols (words) to express those experiences as part of the language development process (Peirce, 1931-

¹² The term "intrapsychic conflict" describes a mental or emotional struggle that takes place inside a person's head, frequently between conflicting demands, wants, values, or aspects of who they are.

1958:[sp]). In my exhibition, for example, the head of a hen represented *umakhulu*, or the protector, since hens cover their young under their wings to keep them safe and to provide them with warmth and comfort. This is what older women are typically connected to within their families.

According to Asano *et al.* (2015:199), toddlers have been shown to use sound symbolism in verb and noun learning in addition to being sensitive to it. Breastfeeding infants will come to identify their mother's breasts with the verb "*ukuncancisa*", which means "latching", and even start to refer to the breasts as "*incanca*", which is a term used to represent their mother's breasts. The study by Orr and Geva (2015:159) reveals possible connections between language and symbolic development throughout the first 18 months of life.

According to Piaget's (1952:63) theory of cognitive development, children acquire the ability to represent things, actions, and ideas through language as they progress from the sensorimotor stage (birth to two years old) to the preoperational stage (two to seven years old). For instance, children can pretend to be grandma or grandpa by using a walking stick or a spoon as a microphone. As an additional illustration, if a lion is mentioned in a folktale, you can be certain that it refers to magnificent power, authority, and a leader. Research indicates that children with more developed symbolic play actions exhibit superior language comprehension in both structured and unstructured contexts (Lyytinen *et al.* 2001:875).

Metaphors are frequently employed in narrative, particularly when character descriptions are being given. Children frequently utilise metaphors to understand difficult cognitive concepts by drawing on comparisons from familiar experiences (Peyre 2010:142). For an example, when someone says, "*uyingcuka eyambheth'ufelegusha*", which translates to "he/she is a hyena wearing sheep skin", due to the folklore they have heard about a hyena that disguises itself as a sheep in order to capture sheep for food, they realise that hyenas are linked to deception and deceit.

It seems that the understanding and creation of metaphorical language entails the transfer of knowledge from one conceptual domain to another, which, while critically dependent on the child's prior conceptual knowledge, also serves to enhance and progress that knowledge (Vosniadou 1987:2). Most of the IsiXhosa phrases I am familiar with come from the folktales my aunt and grandmother told me, which were also handed down to them by their own grandparents.

When I heard the phrase "*buza embovaneni vila ndini!*" which is also quoted in the bible Proverbs 6:6, "Go to the ant, you sluggard", meaning that a lazy person should observe the hard-working ways of ants and learn from it. Even before I read about this expression in the bible, I can recall that I had heard an *intsomi* about an ant that worked hard to gather food in the summer while the grasshopper sat around being lazy. When winter arrived, the ant had food, while the lazy grasshopper was left in the cold without any food. I learnt from the *intsomi* I was told as a child about the moral of this phrase even before I could read and write.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory holds that metaphors are essential to the human mind and are not only verbal expressions. In addition, metaphors that are ingrained in language influence the way we think (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:75). In his study of how metaphors represent cultural values and notions, Kovecses (2005:69) made the case that metaphorical language serves as a means of communicating cultural understanding and pointed out that some metaphors may be more common or structured differently in other languages and cultures. The phrase "*buza embovaneni vila ndini!*", teaches the value of endurance and tenacity because, although small, ants could gather enough food to last them through the entire winter season, something that larger creatures could not achieve.

4.3 METAPHORS AND SYMBOLISM IN CRITICAL THINKING

By allowing children to debate and reason about things that are not immediately present, metaphors and symbols aid in language acquisition and foster creativity, flexibility, and critical thinking. According to Lakoff and

Johnson (1980:71), metaphors are crucial for structuring and comprehending experiences. Reflective thinking, which includes critical thinking, is necessary to comprehend what has been encountered by those experiences. Ennis (1987:34), who defined critical thinking as reasonable reflective thinking centred on determining what to believe or do, as cited by Ivie (1996:58).

Since democracy cannot exist with ignorant citizens, critical thinking is essential to a democratic community's health (Beyer 1995:2). This implies that the development of children's critical thinking abilities is crucial. Metaphors are a helpful tool for analysing intricate thought processes, and developing the practice of analysing metaphors is a prerequisite for developing reflective thinking skills (Ivie 1996:67). Metaphors are useful in critical thinking because they make difficult and abstract concepts or societal concerns easier to understand (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:73).

According to Gentner and Cohn (2010:129), metaphors in critical thinking enable people to identify patterns, make analogies between events, and reason about complicated problems by putting them in more relatable contexts. Like folklore, people observed patterns in animal behaviour and connected them to human traits, constructing stories that reflected needed behaviour and what might have happened in a symbolic or metaphorical fashion.

Children see symbols everywhere, whether in books, shopping malls, billboards, or apparel. In addition to objects, symbols can also be employed to represent abstract ideas or logical relationships, enabling people to reason explicitly about them (Peirce 1913–1958:145). Vygotsky (1978:89) asserted that symbolism is necessary for higher-order cognitive processes, including abstract thought, problem-solving, and the ability to categorise information, think abstractly, and create generalised rules.

According to Schieffelin and Ochs (1986:15), language is a social and cultural phenomenon, and symbols, as cultural constructs, can affect how we approach argumentation and critical thinking. For example, a story featuring

an "owl" may symbolise knowledge in Western cultures, but death, witchcraft, and even disaster in African civilisations. This has an impact on people's critical thinking. Symbols and metaphors are frequently employed in creative endeavours such as visual art, music, writing, and storytelling. Crick and Grushka (2009:447) assert that symbolic knowledge strongly holds life and education. It is potent because it is subtly linked to cultural practices, including art, myths, stories, and rituals.

According to Koestler's (1964:234) bisociation (the simultaneous association of idea or object with two unrelated fields or ideas) hypothesis, people become creative when they fuse two unconnected ideas to create new ones. Metaphors are employed to help people do this by tying disparate fields of knowledge together. For example, in the folktale of the tortoise that went to fight the monster in the animation series, it is reported that "the tortoise froze in fear", terror is equated with a temperature in this metaphor. People who use symbolic thinking can think through potential solutions, evaluate the effects, and convey problems abstractly. In critical thinking, problem-solving, and risk assessment, symbols can be used to simplify complicated problems and methodically work through answers (Sternberg & Grigorenko 2001:59). Words like "biohazard" (a natural event or substance that is dangerous to people or the environment, such as a volcanic eruption) have the power to incite fear and sway judgment. The application of these symbols in critical thinking can change how people handle situations involving danger or uncertainty.

4.4 CHILDREN'S GAMES IN LANGUAGE AND CRITICAL THINKING DEVELOPMENT

Though they may strengthen their language and critical thinking skills by playing with other kids, youngsters are only encouraged to play for their physical development. Games for kids offer a rich setting for developing critical thinking skills and language acquisition. With these activities, children can learn vocabulary, grammar, narrative, and communication techniques in both structured and unstructured settings. According to Sakhuseyinoglu (2007:266), games and plays that are intended to improve a child's language

and critical thinking abilities can help early illiterate children develop these abilities.

One of the earliest games that kids enjoyed playing was symbolic play, and even today, you can see children acting like their parents or teachers. The "house" was one of the games we played as children when we would set up our imaginary personas as mothers, fathers, grandmothers, children, and so on. We would mimic our parents' speech patterns, work styles, and roles in the home in what amounted to a role-playing game.

Because we had to play with other children to make these games more enjoyable and useful, they encouraged social interaction. According to Vygotsky (1978:85), social engagement is crucial for language development, and role-playing games are a great way for children to interact and socialise. Children internalise linguistic and social duties when they play these games under the supervision of older kids. Through these role-playing games, children may understand the function that character plays in society and expand their vocabulary by using words that the character they are playing would use.

Cook (2000:31) asserts that games allow children to experiment with a variety of language usages, such as humour, metaphor, and inventiveness, all of which are beneficial for language and cognitive development. There is always a plot in these role-playing games that players must follow, and these plots are always narratives that children wish to portray through the games. According to Bruner (1991:74), language games that promote storytelling aid in children's cognitive development by helping them organise their thoughts, make sense of their experiences and surroundings, and practice coherently sequencing events.

Through games, children are encouraged to solve problems, plan, assess, and make decisions, which helps them develop their language skills and logical reasoning abilities. Children can gain insight by using critical thinking to explore and learn about the world around them (Putri & Widyasari 2019:76).

As the educational landscape changes, cognitive evaluation has become and is seen as a crucial ability for children to enable them deal with the complexity of today's world (Yaqubova, 2024:302).

Piaget's (1952:185) theory of cognitive development states that children acquire cognitive abilities in phases, with the concrete operational stage (7–11 years old) seeing the emergence of critical thinking abilities, including logical reasoning and problem-solving. Similar to the games of "*umampuca*" and "*umamcheli*", which are covered in this chapter's "Games" section in Figures 4.12 and 4.13, children can develop critical thinking skills such as formulating and testing ideas, assessing the evidence, and defending conclusions by playing games that require them to solve problems.

Children participate in a range of cognitive, social, and language activities during play that might influence their communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and thought processes. These games typically involve rules and instructions that must be followed; language is employed and developed through discussions, turn-taking, and dialogue. Flavell (1979:906) asserts that children acquire self-control and the capacity to examine their own thought processes. Metacognitive abilities, which are essential for critical thinking and self-directed learning, are fostered through games that ask kids to evaluate their choices and behaviours.

The rules of the games force children to evaluate their choices and actions, a metacognitive ability essential to critical thinking (Flavell 1979:906). For Example, children must toss the stone into the grid and jump without stepping on the line when playing "*mamcheli*". They must examine their positioning and throwing technique in order to toss the stone so that it lands in the proper grid without hitting the line. Metacognition is used in this decision-making and action evaluation process. Paul and Elder (2006:124) stress the value of argumentation and logic in critical thinking. Children negotiate, assess, and defend their choices when established and conveyed norms are essential to critical thinking.

In addition to being essential to critical thinking, communication, bargaining, and justification also help to improve language proficiency. Some of the games are "listen and respond" games, in which players must correctly answer questions after hearing them. For example, in the audio in my exhibit, Zakaza asked children to identify the creatures that could fly as part of a game. And if she said something that could fly, they had to clap in response. Some of the games help children improve their language abilities by having them sing and recite words or chants. According to a study by Yaqubova (2024:306), game-based learning not only improves language acquisition but also creates an atmosphere in which children may actively participate

4.5 PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND AUTOETHNOGRAPHICAL DISCOURSE INTERPRETATION

Both phenomenology and autoethnography have been useful methodological frameworks in this study to comprehend the lived experiences of Xhosa people, how they interact with cultural practices, and how these practices affect their linguistic and cognitive development. I have reflected on my experiences as a Xhosa child and analysed my early cognitive and linguistic development. I have also observed playing of games and storytelling with a group of children. I was able to give a more comprehensive picture of the research situation by combining individual¹³ and group perspectives, integrating autoethnography and phenomenology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:53).

This forced me to consider my experiences from the perspective of Xhosa culture. One qualitative research technique that blends culture analysis (ethnography) and personal experiences (auto) is autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner 2000:733). This method was helpful in examining how I experienced and interpreted games and *iintsomi* from my personal and lived experiences. Autoethnography helped me better understand my own experiences in the Xhosa cultural context and how these experiences affect how children's language is interpreted in the setting of this study.

¹³ Shared opinions, views, experiences, values, and interpretations held by a group of people as opposed to individuals are referred to as group perspectives.

Sitting around *Umakhulu* as a child and listening to *iintsomi* being narrated was always interesting, even though some were frightening, others were sad, and some were hilarious. We had to sing along to some of the songs that were sung throughout these stories, and I can still recall some of them since they were so catchy and repeated. The moral of these stories remained the same, despite different people telling them in different ways because they were not recorded. Since there were no images to refer to, it was always fascinating to imagine what these figures/characters looked like. We asked questions and responded to some of the questions posed to us.

Reflecting on the times we spent singing these songs with my grandmother, I see how the lyrics helped me expand my vocabulary and improve my language skills. I still recall singing a melancholy tune from the folklore my aunt used to narrate, like the one in the *intsomi* about "*uDema*" would sing upon returning from a hunting trip in order for his sister "*uDemazana*" to recognise him and unlock the cave. Ginsberg (2010:113) asserts that song repetition helps children internalise language by allowing them to hear and repeat words repeatedly in a variety of contexts. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) supports this practice of song repetition because it allows children to practice language skills, frequently with the help or supervision of peers or caregivers, which promotes language acquisition (Dissanayake 2008:49).

As a child, I became quite curious and wanted to learn more and participate more in various social activities like games and storytelling. We would ask Grandmother many questions while storytelling to comprehend the characters, particularly the anthropomorphic animals and mutant characters. I had to speak in my native IsiXhosa to answer these questions and improve my language abilities. As an insider, these introspective thoughts enabled me to relate my own observations to a more general societal phenomenon. Being able to speak and understand my own language made me feel secure and at ease with who I am. I learnt about my cultural heritage, values, and moral education from the conversations that followed each narrative.

Having to help with the boys' chores because I didn't have an elder brother, I loved going to the fields to look after the sheep while growing up in rural areas. Making wire vehicles and moulding clay cows by the riverbanks were only two of the many pastimes I enjoyed with my cousins and brothers. My creativity was greatly enhanced by some of these games. In the past, if you wanted a toy that you were not competent at making, you would trade it or use a bartering method with someone else's. Because it is simple to con someone who does not value their creation of work, that alone requires someone to be extremely vigilant when making decisions. Those games required the use of critical thinking and bargaining abilities. My critical thinking skills were honed by some of the games I played, such as "*umlabalaba*", which is more akin to a chess board game in which every move you make decides whether you win or lose.

I was able to understand the core of lived experiences as they are described in phenomenology by watching and conversing with Dr. Nompucuko Zakaza. According to Zakaza (2024:3), there are no longer grandmothers like those of the past, which means that storytelling—especially telling *iintsomi*—is not as common as it was when she was a youngster. Zakaza (2024:3) also cites Jordan (1968:17), who states that this contributes to the weakened foundations of oral society, depriving children's stories of their vitality to some extent and causing women to vanish from the literary scene completely. According to her experience, *iintsomi* were told in the correct vocabulary of the isiXhosa language, which people today consider impolite and uneasy.

In order for *iintsomi* to develop children's isiXhosa vocabulary and sentences, Zakaza (2024:2) believes that they should be told in the same manner as before. She rewrote Jordan's English-language *iintsomi* in a book called "*Mazibuy' ekhaya iintsomi zesiXhosa*" because he wanted his stories to be passed down to the next generation in isiXhosa. She highlighted stories like "*intaka enya'amas*" (a bird that shits milk) that aren't told anymore. In her reflection on her grandmother's telling of her *iintsomi*, Zakaza said that her grandmother used certain terms that she was either not permitted to use or was expected to respect as a married lady. Zakaza was also taught about her

language and culture in this way. She uses the word in some of the stories in her book "*Mazibuy' ekhaya iintsomi zesiXhosa*" (2024).

I was able to observe how she engaged with the children and how they reacted to the stories as I saw her perform *iintsomi* to them in isiXhosa. Children's openness and curiosity were stimulated by this connection, which created a space for conversations and singing. A similar reaction was shown when children played games and talked about the rules, and older ones recited and repeated words while the younger ones learned from their older siblings. Children's linguistic and critical thinking abilities were enhanced by this social contact (Vygotsky 1978:60).

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study's arguments and contextual discourses are brought to a close in this chapter. The chapter examines the conversations that have taken place and takes into account the key issues that sparked interest in this research. Through art, this study sought to highlight the important role that indigenous games and traditional storytelling (*iintsomi*) play in Xhosa children's language and critical thinking development. I have used my experiences learning the IsiXhosa language through traditional games and *iintsomi*, learning about other people's lived experiences, and delved deeply into a literature review regarding relevant theories underpinning how children learn and develop critical thinking skills. My lived experience with *iintsomi* and traditional games provided deep cultural immersion and my reflections draw out a broader cultural insights.

As a researcher, I have critically examined personal and cultural narratives to comprehend more general social and cultural phenomena by using phenomenology and autoethnography in this study (Ellis & Bocher 2000:733). My insider knowledge of Xhosa culture has given me a unique viewpoint on the legitimacy of the Indigenous knowledge systems under study. Autoethnographic reflections revealed how engagement with storytelling and games shapes identity, memory and belonging. My experiences demonstrate the complexity of these activities' emotional and cognitive dimensions, which are sometimes overlooked in formal education.

In addition to my own experiences, other people's lived experiences were also considered. In order to investigate how Xhosa children perceive *iintsomi* and games in their daily lives, phenomenology was employed to explore human experiences in the Indigenous knowledge system (van Manen 1990:73). Direct interaction with storytellers such as Nompucuko Zakaza and other elderly women who took part in telling *iintsomi* anonymously in this study helped to describe and comprehend the substance of experiences. This study shows that indigenous knowledge systems, which were abandoned due to modernised schooling, are vital for maintaining the legacy of African culture in general and Xhosa culture in particular and for developing children's language

and cognitive abilities (Posey 2002:29). Phenomenological findings revealed how games facilitate embodied learning in group-based problem solving and how children internalize meaning via *iintsomi*, including empathy, consequence, and moral ambiguity. These encounters' social, ritualistic, and imaginative aspects are what make them so special.

The two theoretical concepts that frame this study's arguments are constructivism and sociocultural theories. Constructivism provides a deep knowledge of how children learn through language, cultural context, social interaction and teamwork (Vygotsky 1978:57). According to sociocultural theory, the social and cultural context significantly impacts human development, which is not solely an individual process (Wertsch 1991:112). Throughout this study, these theories were applied to analyse and clarify how *iintsomi* and games facilitate Xhosa children's development of their language and critical thinking skills in a social context. The results of this study indicate that by encouraging children to solve problems, be creative, and engage with others, *iintsomi* and games can be used as tools for language instruction, improving communication skills, and fostering critical thinking.

Indigenous wisdom, such as moral principles, survival techniques, social conventions, and environmental awareness, is strongly ingrained in *iintsomi* and traditional games. Due to their oral and performative transmission, these types of information are accessible through regular engagement. Children who are exposed to *iintsomi* and games exhibit improved oral language abilities, including as metaphorical reasoning, expressive vocabulary, listening comprehension, and taking turns. Critical thinking is based on problem solving, pattern detection, and strategic thinking, all of which are fostered by games.

Although there are research on Xhosa children that are context-specific, the evidence that is currently available supports the educational usefulness of African oral traditions. Interactive components that are essential to conventional learning such as gesture, rhythm, and audience participation, are sometimes overlooked in documentation. According to this study, traditional games and *iintsomi* provide different frameworks for instruction that are based

on African worldviews. By acknowledging these traditions in formal education, we can restore indigenous agency in knowledge production and challenge Eurocentric curriculum.

5.1 ENCULTURATION THROUGH *IINTSOMI* AND CHILDREN'S GAMES

Xhosa children's enculturation through *iintsomi* and games is a potent instrument for language and critical thinking ability development. *Iintsomi* and traditional games are imbued with indigenous knowledge and have been utilised in this research to engage children through art, demonstrating their importance in language development and critical thinking skills. By producing artworks that visually convey the social context of *iintsomi*, the manner and the set-up in which *iintsomi* were narrated, and traditional games were performed, I was able to delve deeply into my own experiences while also working in tandem with the lived experiences of participants in this study. The employment of stop-frame animation, recorded videos of games (in QR codes and links) and interactive game displays, storytelling audios (in the various links provided), and illustrations of my own interpretation of *iintsomi* facilitated the achievement of this study's aim and objectives. This visual representation is important in many African societies because it is a tangible way to transfer cultural values, morality, and wisdom from generation to generation.

All of these artistic creations served as a means of graphically conveying the customs that support a Xhosa child's cognitive development and the essential part they play in protecting and enhancing the Xhosa cultural legacy. The interactive game display aimed to acknowledge the educational value of these indigenous knowledge systems and the ways in which educational systems and communities can support the continued linguistic and intellectual success of future generations of Xhosa children while maintaining ties with their cultural heritage. Children find the *iintsomi* and games to be quite fascinating due to their creative and participative elements. These age-old methods foster critical thinking, inventiveness, and creativity in a fun and engaging way.

Children are given a sense of cultural identity by the interactive nature of both *iintsomi* and games, which connects them to their Xhosa heritage as they learn community customs and values from these stories. This fosters social cohesion and a sense of belonging. This interaction also promotes critical thinking by enabling children to make choices, evaluate circumstances, and draw conclusions while constructing their own knowledge. *Iintsomi* and traditional games offer rich linguistic settings, which help children pick up new vocabulary, grammatical structures, and expressions like metaphors and symbols. Children gain proficiency in their native isiXhosa language and are exposed to intricate narratives that enhance their comprehension of language use through storytelling and listening.

5.2 PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE THROUGH ART

African cultural heritages that are based on indigenous knowledge systems are quickly disappearing as a result of colonisation, adoption of the modern lifestyle, and shifting market dynamics (Hung *et al.* 2001:801). The growing dissemination of global culture through media and technology impacts the shadowing and dwindling of local traditions, including cultural and indigenous knowledge. Indigenous languages that are dying are also impacted by modern education. Art forms like oral traditions (*iintsomi*) that are linked to native languages like IsiXhosa also lose their means of transmission. Maintaining the characteristics of our original African languages requires the preservation of cultural knowledge. According to Asogwa (2013:2), “traditionally, to know (rationally, intuitively, empirically, and authoritatively) means being familiar with, having experience and mastering. The definition of knowledge, as such, was not the aim of science in the traditional sense but trying to render it in clarity as a primary act of experience”. Knowledge is connected to reality multi-dimensionally and “onto-genetically” and could be of every day, aesthetic and the scientific referentially (Spirkin 1983:193).

In this study, art is utilised to preserve Xhosa’s traditional legacy by archiving oral traditions and indigenous knowledge in addition to projecting its social context. My exhibition's interactive art displays turned into a group activity that improved relationships, encouraged knowledge transfer, and strengthened

shared cultural memories. Ethnic identity creation is still effectively facilitated by the information kept in the indigenous people's folk art (Mikhailovna & Anatol'Evna 2018:238). According to Mikhailovna and Anatol'Evna (2018:232), the preservation and revitalisation of artistic practices used by indigenous people are significant issues for both the native population and the community at large.

Through art, cultural information may be effectively passed down through the generations, creating a strong sense of community and shared history. Preservation is essential, especially in light of modernisation, globalisation, and the possible extinction of traditional lifestyles. In the modern world, the role of artists in the creation, comprehension, and maintenance of national traditions can be crucial, and we are grateful for the efforts of professional artists who enable traditional indigenous artistic, creative work to advance and attain new forms of development (Mikhailovna & Anatol'Evna 2018:244). An essential procedure that guarantees the survival of a community's history, identity, values, and customs is the preservation of cultural knowledge through the arts.

Art, in general, either visual art or performing art, is often a direct expression of a community's identity, serving as a canvas for reflecting and preserving the nuances of culture. Through different artistic media, individual artists and/or groups of artists can express their opinions or views of the world, values and traditions. The visual art genres like sculpture, painting, printmaking, pottery and beadwork often carry cultural symbols, metaphors and meaning. For instance, in my exhibition, the ceramic sculpture of a hen is used as a symbol of "*umakhulu*" as a protector. These art pieces not only reflect personal or communal beliefs but also preserve the techniques and methods passed down through generations.

One of the earliest methods of conserving cultural knowledge is the performance art of storytelling. Many African communities transmit myths, tales, and historical narratives through storytelling or *iintsomi*. The art in this study demonstrates how Xhosa people educate history, morality, ethics, and

community values through *iintsomi*. This study's research demonstrates how storytellers frequently engage children in compelling ways by fusing narrative with gestures, dancing, and music. Storytellers engage children in their performances, as demonstrated, by the audio played in the exhibition of Zakaza narrating *iintsomi* while children sing, clap, and chant. Oral traditions retain historical information, cosmological perspectives, and social laws through these stories, songs, epics, and performances.

5.3 ORAL KNOWLEDGE IN THE TRANSMISSION OF CULTURE

Traditionally, stories or folklore were the primary method of transmitting various forms of teachings encompassing the cultural history of African people's existence and knowledge formation. Africans have always had unique ways of transmitting and preserving their cultural knowledge through storytelling, which is influenced by observing their natural habitation and daily surroundings. According to Bruchac (2014:3814), "knowledge" is factual data, "belief" is taught concepts such as religious principles, and "tradition" is practice, but these terms are often used loosely and interchangeably to describe indigenous epistemologies. Thus, knowledge transfer and preservation relied on the traditional method of telling African folklore, a concise narrative that captures the listener's imagination towards cognitive understanding. This folklore were told as a strategic learning aid, ensuring the listeners' engagement without overwhelming them. According to Ilutsik & Bouker (2009:2), within the oral tradition, knowledge was sacred, and it encompassed all aspects of life from birth to death, including the natural world and environment. Oral knowledge and its transmitting concepts thus form the basis of African empirical knowledge.

Due to new communicative evolutionary processes, like writing, which have emerged within oral traditions, their technique has been losing social significance as society progresses (Vargas-Chaves 2024:103). Oral traditions were frequently the main method of transmitting cultural knowledge, beliefs, history, and values in nonliterate or preliterate societies. Proverbs, songs, chants, rituals, storytelling such as *iintsomi*, and other verbal teachings are all examples of oral knowledge. Cultural continuity is based on this living,

dynamic basis, which is always changing to represent the present while maintaining ties to the past.

Storytelling/*iintsomi*, one of the most potent kind of oral information, has been utilised to transmit a community's history, values, and customs. Folkloristics is unquestionably a field that advances primarily through its neighbouring fields, including linguistics, comparative religion, psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, comparative literature, and history (Pentikainen 1978:238). This study demonstrates how civilisations reinforce cultural values and social standards through the repeated telling of stories throughout time. For example, the stories that the elderly women in the exhibitions tell are the ones that their grandmothers taught them, and they teach moral education, Xhosa traditional values, and the repercussions of bad behaviour.

Oral traditions are flexible and can change over time, enabling a society to continuously reframe its past in a way that is still relevant to the current generation. This is demonstrated by the stories presented in my exhibition. This makes it possible for historical occurrences, accomplishments, and customs to be passed on to contemporary culture. According to my reflection in this study, I have acquired IsiXhosa language skills through *iintsomi*, including vocabulary, language structure, and figures of speech such as proverbs and phrases. Proverbs are another oral tradition that transmit cultural wisdom, impart life lessons, and guide navigating everyday life's challenges. I have discovered that several of the proverbs I was taught in formal schooling were actually borrowed from folklore that I just so happened to have heard from my grandmother and aunt. Some proverbs reveal deeper truths and wisdom's cultural relevance by using metaphors from ordinary life, animals, and the natural world.

Many societies also convey their culture orally through songs and chants. In *iintsomi*, songs are also well-liked due to their performative, mnemonic, and emotional aspects. Songs are sung throughout religious ceremonies, rites, and gatherings, and they are a great way to help people remember the events. Certain songs, which frequently contain cultural values, are sung during

initiation ceremonies or rites of passage in Xhosa culture to honour and educate young people as they enter adulthood.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are offered in light of the study's findings to strengthen the contribution of games and *iintsomi* to Xhosa children's language and critical thinking development. This study recommends that as part of language learning and cognitive development programmes, *iintsomi* and traditional African children's games should be integrated into the formal education curriculum, considering the school's language policy, which determines the languages taught at the particular school. While games can improve thinking and social skills, teachers can utilise storytelling (*iintsomi*) to teach moral reasoning, language, and narrative abilities in schools and other educational institutions.

Fewer novels and children's books are written in IsiXhosa these days, and people are not interested in reading them. In order to preserve and promote *iintsomi* and games, we should consider alternative innovative ways to produce isiXhosa instructional materials, such as e-books, audio recordings, digital content, or animations. These resources can be utilised both at home and in classrooms to give children access to these age-old teaching methods in a contemporary setting. Fusing these traditional knowledge systems with modern teaching techniques can create an interesting and dynamic learning environment. By accommodating different learning styles, a mixed approach can guarantee that language and critical thinking abilities are fostered in ways that appeal to today's learners.

Respect for Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural sensitivity are crucial when integrating *iintsomi* with traditional games. Community stakeholders should be included in educational programs to guarantee the preservation of cultural integrity and the respectful and genuine presentation of traditional practices. It is important to urge elders and community leaders to actively pass down oral traditions such as traditional games and *iintsomi*. As such cultural mentors, elders can impart knowledge and tales in a way that improves

language proficiency and fosters a sense of community. The effects of *iintsomi* and traditional games on other facets of child development, such as moral reasoning, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving, should be investigated further. Research evaluating these techniques' wider educational advantages can support their incorporation into traditional educational frameworks.

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