

Chapter 11

Promotion of Indigenous Languages and Culture through Social Media

Kganathi Shaku

The emergence of social networking (SN) has resulted in various digital communication platforms that enable the instant exchange of information. Such platforms include Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp. These platforms became popular internationally and have easily dominated the digital space since many people have access to electronic gadgets. Statista (2023) reports that worldwide, many people have access to the internet, with Facebook having 2,989 million users, WhatsApp 2,000 million users, Instagram 2,000 million users, TikTok 1,081 million users, and X 564 million users. In Africa, Statista (2023) reports that social media users favor Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, X, TikTok, and Instagram. Africa alone has 384 million social media users. North and southern Africa dominate the social media space, with 56 percent of the population in northern Africa and 45 percent in southern Africa using social media.

Al-Tarawneh (2014:1) observes that “social media is the fastest growing web application in the 21st century. The nature of applications like Wikis, video streaming and application, and social networks makes it the phenomenon of the century.” With the growth of social networks worldwide, Datareportal (2023) shows the active participation of youth, wherein they spend a minimum of three hours a day on social media. Shaku (2021) also reports that messaging (texting) is one of the main reasons why youth visit social media platforms. This means that most of the time, social media users exchange communication rather than scrolling or using such platforms for passive entertainment purposes.

Furthermore, when engagements take place on social media, language becomes central as a channel through which messages travel. According to Chapelle (2019) and Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2011), language is a channel through which intangible knowledge, such as cultural heritage, is disseminated. Chapelle (2019) further notes that language is a carrier of an imperceptible cultural heritage that holds the representation, expressions, and knowledge that the communities regard as their cultural treasure. Furthermore, UNESCO (2020) regards language as a tool used to develop and resuscitate cultural values and an enabler for the delivery of information and knowledge coded in different sociocultural, political, and economic contexts (UNESCO, 2020). Likewise, Bella (2021) notes that culture and language are inextricably linked; that is, one cannot understand a culture without understanding the language. Additionally, a specific language is usually associated with a particular group of people. When you interact with a speech community, by default, you also interact with their culture.

For instance, more often, social media users dedicate discussions to cultural issues such as lobola or wedding and funeral procedures and the cultural life of the people. In such discussions, language becomes central as a communication tool. Moreover, when language matters such as the teaching of idioms and proverbs, language development, and language anthropologies are discussed, issues of culture are also embedded. This makes language and culture inseparable. Thus, we cannot talk about language without touching on the issues of culture and vice versa.

Moreover, in social media platforms where communication takes place, the use of language is also a factor since people use language for communication. Simultaneously, the sharing of cultural information also develops. Therefore, social media enables exposure to both language and culture. Shaku (2021) observed that in South Africa, communication takes place in both official and unofficial languages. These include eleven of the twelve official languages of the country (Sepedi, Setswana, Sesotho, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, SiSwati, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, Afrikaans, and English) and their dialects. As social media platforms have no language policy, users can choose any language for communication. Consequently, users have created various communication spaces where interactions solely take place in specific languages. For instance, on social media platforms, you would find *#BapediTwitterSpace*, *#SepediSeReng*, *Diema tša Sepedi*, and *Sešego Pukuntšutlhaloši ya Sepedi* (Basket: Sepedi monolingual dictionary) as platforms created by the Sepedi-speaking community to engage in issues relating to culture and language. Such platforms keep the Bapedi people connected regardless of their location, age, and educational level. These platforms empower Bapedi people linguistically and culturally, as they constantly engage in various topics concerning language and culture.

This chapter uses Facebook, TikTok, and X because of their popularity worldwide and in South Africa. Table 11.1 demonstrates the Statista (2023) and Datareportal (2023) social media statistics of Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X worldwide and in South Africa.

Table 11.1 shows that Facebook is a leading social media platform (2,989 million users worldwide and 22.2 million locally), followed by Instagram (2,000 million worldwide and 5.7 million locally), TikTok (1,081 million worldwide and 5.4 million locally), and finally X (564 million worldwide and 3.6 million locally). Table 11.1 justifies the use of Facebook, TikTok, and X as social media platforms of focus. These social media platforms show the dominance of social media internationally and locally and their potential impact as channels for information distributors.

This chapter explores the use of social media platforms to promote language and culture. It looks at the Sepedi language and its cultures and how the Sepedi speech community, on social media, embraces their linguistic and cultural values. The role of social media in the promotion of indigenous languages and cultures has not been appreciated; hence, this chapter closes that gap.

FACILITATION OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA: A BACKGROUND

Social media has become a platform of communication, enabling effective communication between its users. The nature of communication is effective because users can either have synchronous or asynchronous interactions. Synchronous communication allows them to have live chats, audio, and voice conferencing. In contrast, asynchronous interactions allow users to leave messages, and targeted people can respond when ready to do so. This means that people are allowed to engage without communication barriers, such as time and location. This creates compatibility between people’s mode of communication and the concepts carried by the communication—language and culture in the context of this chapter. Language and culture are constant

Table 11.1: Social media distribution worldwide and in South Africa. Source: Author. Data from Statista (2023) and Datareportal (2023).

<i>Social media platform</i>	<i>Worldwide statistics per billion/ million</i>	<i>South African statistics per million</i>
Facebook	2,989 million	22.2 million
Instagram	2,000 million	5.7 million
TikTok	1,081 million	11.8 million
X	564 million	3.6 million

social pillars that require nurturing. Therefore, social media could facilitate and resuscitate cultural and linguistic awareness within a group of people. For instance, Sepedi language speakers on social media constantly promote language and culture through social media features such as the following:

- Status posting;
- Hashtagging;
- Video conferencing;
- Audio conferencing; and
- Gamification.

More often, social media users share information by posting statuses, using hashtags (#) to open a trail of discussions, using video and/or audio conferencing to facilitate engagements, and using gamification to test language and culture knowledge. The mentioned social media features allow users to have continuous engagement regardless of their various remote locations. The synchronous and asynchronous nature of these channels makes social interactions more effective.

On Facebook, there is a page such as *Sešego: Pukuntšuthaloši ya Sepedi* (Basket: Sepedi monolingual dictionary), which is created to promote the Sepedi language through the teaching of proverbs and explanation of unfamiliar vocabulary. On this page, users post terms to understand their meaning or post a proverb to test others' knowledge of Sepedi proverbs. Ultimately, group pages such as these become educational and have much potential for developing the Sepedi language (Ngoepe, Shaku, & Letsoalo, 2022).

On X, a hashtag such as *#BapediTwitterSpace* is a synchronous space initiated by Sepedi speakers to discuss language issues, culture (teaching of lobola procedure), and issues concerning the Bapedi youth. In addition, on X, there is a handle such as *@Sepedi Bapedi*, created for the promotion of Sepedi cultural attire and music and for the teaching of the taboos within Bapedi society. On TikTok, language and culture are also promoted. The nature of TikTok allows users to engage in various components of language and culture. These include cultural music, language tutoring, cultural practices relating to marriage, the naming of children, and wedding and funeral procedures. This shows that the new media and social media platforms are potent tools for the promotion of cultural values and that through them, the cultural system will resist extinction (Asemah, Ekharefo, & Olaniran, 2014).

This chapter also falls within anthropological linguistics—a branch of linguistics and anthropology that focuses on language from the cultural and social points of view and the role it plays in cultural practices and societal structures. In the context of this chapter, anthropological linguistics facilitates the relationship between language and culture and shows the importance

of language and culture promotion. Sepedi social media users are a social media community that relates to common experiences and interests; Douma (2007) categorizes them under a community of interest. Daily, the community engages in interesting and ongoing topics relating to language and culture. The following figure is an example.

Figure 11.1 demonstrates Douma’s (2007) point about social media’s ability to create communities of interest. In the group “*Learning Sepedi 'thwii' [Are boleleng]*” (Learning the correct Sepedi [Let us speak]), the concerned community is interested in preserving the Sepedi language and culture by creating an inter- and intra-cultural and linguistic transfer environment. The other group, “*MAREMA KA DIKA: DIKA LE DIEMA TSA SEPEDI. . . LE DITHAP*” (Idioms: idioms, proverbs, and riddles of the Sepedi language), is concerned with the teaching of Sepedi idioms, proverbs, and riddles.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Sociocultural Theory and Constructivism

The learning of language and culture through social media can be positioned within sociocultural and constructivism perspectives and uses and gratification perspectives. This section positions social media platforms within sociocultural and uses and gratification theories. According to Osuna (2000:3), “Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory posits that learning is grounded in social contexts.” Furthermore, Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, as a learning theory, suits well with the learning of a language, as Magnan (2008) regards the social environment of an individual to be very fundamental for the development of



Figure 11.1. Sepedi Facebook groups for language promotion.

language. Therefore, social media, as an environment where communication about language and culture continually takes place, should be acknowledged, and explored fully. This will help with the understanding of how learning takes place on social media.

Panhwar, Ansari, and Ansari (2016) argue that the sociocultural approach can be intertwined with constructivism if it focuses on teaching and learning. Panhwar, Ansari, and Ansari (2016:522) emphasize that “constructivism is the philosophy, or belief, that learners create their own knowledge based on interactions with their environment including their interactions with other people.” In the context of social media as a teaching and learning environment, social media users can understand the Sepedi language and culture through their engagement with knowledgeable Sepedi speakers. Therefore, the Bapedi content creators on social media ultimately contribute to the linguistic and cultural empowerment of others.

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)

Whiting and Williams (2013:363) opine that uses and gratifications theory is relevant to social media because of its origins in communications literature. Social media is a communication mechanism that allows users to communicate with thousands, and perhaps billions, of individuals all over the world. The basic premise of uses and gratifications theory is that individuals will seek out media among competitors that fulfils their needs and leads to ultimate gratifications.

This means that social media users compare different social media platforms and choose relevant platforms that meet their needs. With the widespread use of social media platforms internationally and locally, social media users are spoiled for choice. However, Facebook, X, and TikTok appear to be some of the highly favored social media platforms; hence, they are used as environments for learning. The content put on these platforms gratifies the needs of the users.

Furthermore, Eginli and Tas (2018:88) observe that:

Most users of social network sites regard social media not only as an alternative communication medium but also as an expressional environment in which they can express their ideas and take ideas. However, another important reason why social network sites provide satisfaction for individuals is that information can be acquired immediately, and this can be done at the global level.

Uses and gratification theory posits that individuals actively seek out certain media content to satisfy specific needs. Individuals may have different needs that drive them to seek out types of media content. As Douma (2007)

posits that social media creates communities of interest and different users use social media to satisfy different needs. Therefore, the uses and gratification of the social media users who consume Sepedi content on social media is twofold. There are those who access the content to gratify their eagerness to learn the Sepedi culture and other groups that consume the Sepedi content for them to learn the language.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FOR CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

This section looks at the promotion of language and culture on social media. Although language and culture are discussed separately in this section, they should not be treated or regarded as two separate or unrelated concepts. Mohiuddin (2016:181) captures the relationship between language and culture by stating the following:

Every language has a culture, and every culture bears a language. Every culture nourishes a language, and every language accomplishes a culture. Hence a language is a “Barometer” and a “Thermometer” of the culture as well. A minor motion, or vibration or under current at the level of culture may be well depicted through the language and its literature. The language and literature acts like a seismograph of the relative culture. In short language and culture are the paradigms to the social maturity.

Thus, language is an important aspect of culture, as is culture to language. The following subsection discusses the promotion of the Sepedi language and culture through social media.

Social Media and Language Promotion

The promotion of language on social media contributes to language development and maintenance. Therefore, when social media users share information and knowledge through their languages, particularly indigenous languages such as Sepedi, such languages gain strength, increasing their chances of sustainability. UNESCO (2020) opines that it is within the people’s rights to preserve, revitalize, and promote their languages. Therefore, this implies that no one besides the speakers of the Sepedi language can develop the Sepedi language. Social media has become a convenient platform for the promotion of the Sepedi language. This is confirmed by Outakoski, Cocq, and Steggo (2018) who see social media as one of the digital spaces that open doors for the promotion and strengthening of languages.

This discussion explores the promotion of the Sepedi language on the following social media platforms: Facebook, TikTok, and X. The presented excerpts are extracted from these social media platforms to demonstrate how Sepedi speakers promote the Sepedi language on social media.

Promotion of Sepedi on Facebook

The Facebook platform creates a conducive environment for the promotion of the Sepedi language by enabling the operation of groups such as “*SEPEDI SE RE MOPEDI OMANG?*” (Sepedi says Mopedi who are you?) and “*Sešego: Pukuntšutlhaloši ya Sepedi*” (Basket: Sepedi monolingual dictionary). See figure 11.2 for reference.

The Facebook groups displayed in figure 11.2 show social media users’ commitment to the promotion of the Sepedi language. The first group, “*SEPEDI SERE MOPEDI OMANG?*” (Sepedi says Mopedi who are you?) focuses on the use of the Sepedi language to communicate issues relating to kingship, customs, music, attire, and history. Therefore, groups such as these are dynamic, as they simultaneously promote language and culture. The “*Sešego: Pukuntšutlhaloši ya Sepedi*” (Basket: Sepedi monolingual dictionary) also deals with the promotion of the Sepedi language through the discussion of less-known vocabulary. This group is a platform for Sepedi users on Facebook to inquire about the unfamiliar vocabulary of the Sepedi language or to understand anything related to the Sepedi language. For instance, figure 11.3 is an excerpt showing a member of “*Sešego: Pukuntšutlhaloši ya Sepedi*” asking about the Sepedi word for technology.

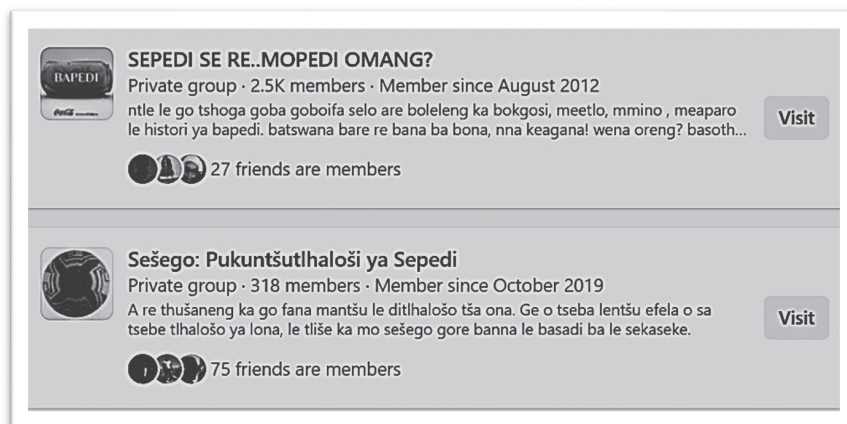


Figure 11.2. Sepedi Facebook groups for language promotion.



Figure 11.3. Sepedi Facebook post for language consultations.

In addition to consultation purposes, social media is used as a space for the learning of proverbs, idioms, and riddles. Sepedi speakers also use social media for the teaching of proverbs (Figure 11.4).

It is inevitable that groups such as “*Diema le dika tsa Sepedi*” (Proverbs and Idiom of the Sepedi language) exist because learning of a language involves the understanding of both its literal and figurative aspects. This speaks to the understanding of how language is used on a daily basis and the messages hidden in its figurative expressions, such as proverbs and idioms. The Facebook group displayed in figure 11.4 focuses on the teaching and continual use of Sepedi proverbs and idioms. The group has 431.2 thousand followers, which implies that many Bapedi users and those interested in learning the language on Facebook take pride in the learning of proverbs and idioms as figurative entities of a language.

Promotion of Sepedi on TikTok

The TikTok platform also enables the promotion of the Sepedi language. Its video mode of communication adds value, as TikTokers can have live interactions for the purposes of language learning. Some of the TikTok posts are illustrated in figure 11.5 and table 11.2.

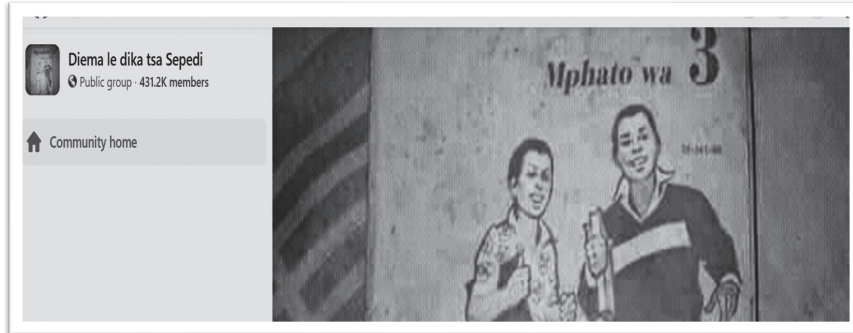


Figure 11.4. Sepedi Facebook group about the teaching of proverbs and idioms.



Figure 11.5. TikTok posts for language promotion.

Table 11.2 Translation (excerpts are translated sequentially). Author.

A re ithuteng go bala Sepedi (English translation: Let us learn to read Sepedi)

Tlhaloso ya lereo le “Lediri” (English translation: Definition of the word “verb”)

The TikTok posts shown in figure 11.5 display different TikTok handles created for the teaching and learning of the Sepedi language. Ultimately, the Sepedi language is promoted, as TikTokers share information about the Sepedi language. The TikTok handle “Learn Sepedi in 2 minutes” uses a code-switching teaching strategy to teach the Sepedi language. The content creator switches between English and Sepedi language to make language

learning easier and more fascinating. There is also the presence of TikTokers who voluntarily teach basic Sepedi grammar aspects such as phonology and morphology. For instance, the middle post in figure 11.5 shows a TikToker teaching Sepedi phonetics. Following the teaching post on Sepedi phonetics, someone provided a comment illustrated in figure 11.6 below.

Moreover, from figure 11.5, we also see other TikTokers who dedicate their time to the promotion of the Sepedi language by providing Sepedi lessons. In essence, this also contributes to the availability of language learning resources of the Sepedi language, as Outakoski, Cocq, and Steggo (2018, p. 21) state that “social media has become an arena where resources are created and shared, enabling communities of speakers to support each other and promote their languages.” For previously marginalized languages such as the Sepedi language, which lacks digital resources, social media is significant because it contributes greatly to the growth of the language. Outakoski, Cocq, and Steggo (2018) emphasize that the availability of digital tools and social media platforms plays a significant role in the promotion of languages.

Compared to Facebook, TikTok appears to be more dynamic and more effective in the promotion of the Sepedi language. This is because the “TikTok news feed is essentially based on a system called ‘Discovery Engine.’ This tool combines a complex algorithm that customizes the content displayed to each user based on their previous interests and positive interactions” (Bastien, 2023). Thus, if you are a fan of the Sepedi language on TikTok, you will always be fed with content relating to the Sepedi language. This complex algorithm makes it easy to get your favorite content updates.

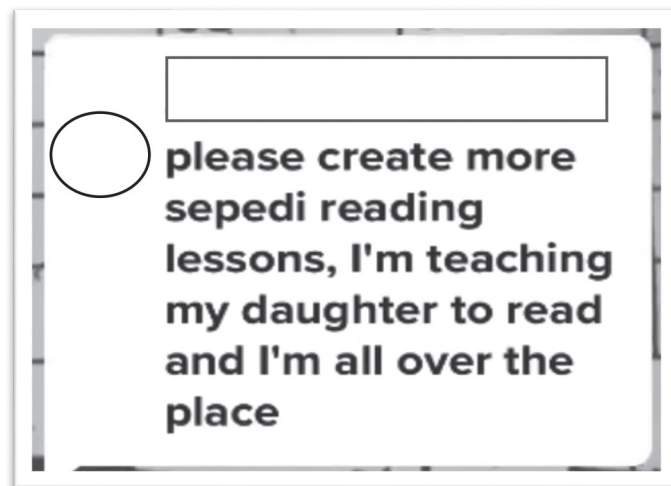


Figure 11.6. TikTok appreciative post.

Promotion of Sepedi on X

The X platform also opens a space for the promotion of a language. Tweeps (people who use X) can use their X handles or create hashtags (#) for content related to the promotion of the Sepedi language. Language could be promoted through the teaching of proverbs or other linguistic subcategories. The cases in point are the X posts about the promotion of the Sepedi language, displayed in figure 11.7 and table 11.3 below.

Figure 11.7 displays a promotion of the Sepedi language on X. The selected posters focus on the teaching of months and proverbs of the Sepedi language. The poster under “*Bolelang Sepedi*” (Speak Sepedi) shows a detailed teaching of proverbs because the author of this tweet provided a proverb and its meaning. Notably, the middle poster shows a gamification approach to the teaching of Sepedi proverbs. This is done through the combination of emojis and having people guess the combination.

The use of the Sepedi language on social media is advantageous for the promotion, development, and sustainability of language, as Outakoski, Cocq, and Steggo (2018) mention that for language to develop, it should be used in as many domains as possible. Consequently, the Sepedi language as a previously marginalized language (previously confined to being used at home or between mutual speakers) gets exposure and room for sustainability. Therefore, it is worth appreciating the role played by social media in the promotion of languages and, more importantly, the previously marginalized.

Nonetheless, social media is not confined to the promotion of just a language, but also culture (Aydin, 2012). Aydin (2012:1098) states that “culture and language are intimately related, the uses and meanings of language are



Figure 11.7. X posts for the promotion of the Sepedi language.

Table 11.3 Translation (excerpts are translated sequentially). Author.

Months in Sepedi	I am a teacher here on Twitter. This is the assignment for the long weekend. The Sepedi proverbs. What do they mean?	As we conclude the month of August, and go into September, we will share the Sepedi proverbs, every day, until the end of September ----- Proverb You cannot sever two masters. Explanation: If someone tries to do two duties simultaneously, both those duties might fail. If someone loves two people, he will end up being committed to only one and making the other one a fool.
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shaped and dictated by culture, while conversely, to some extent, culture is determined by language.” Hence, the following section discusses social media and the promotion of the Sepedi culture.

Social Media and Culture Promotion

According to Aydin (2012), social media platforms have recently become environments for the teaching and learning of culture. This is the case, as people traditionally meet physically to share knowledge about culture. These platforms also provide exciting possibilities for cultural transfer, as they are constituted by heterogeneous users. The promotion of culture on social media more often comes in the form of social media groups, the posting of messages, video conferencing, and hashtags (#). Social media communication platforms are shaped to be intercultural (happening between people of different cultures) and intracultural (happening between people of the same culture). Therefore, learning of culture may occur between Bapedi users or between Bapedi and other tribes with an interest in learning about Bapedi culture. A case in point is the Facebook group “*Learning Sepedi ‘twii’ [Are boleleng]*,” displayed in figure 11.8. Its description states that the aim of the group is to preserve language and culture and to facilitate inter- and intracultural transfer.

The promotion of Bapedi culture on social media is deemed significant. Asemah, Ekhareafo, and Olaniran (2014) report that social media can redefine and promote culture’s core values. Thus, when cultural transfer, learning, and teaching take place, promotion prevails. One of the key points realized by Asemah, Ekhareafo, and Olaniran (2014) is social media’s ability to promote

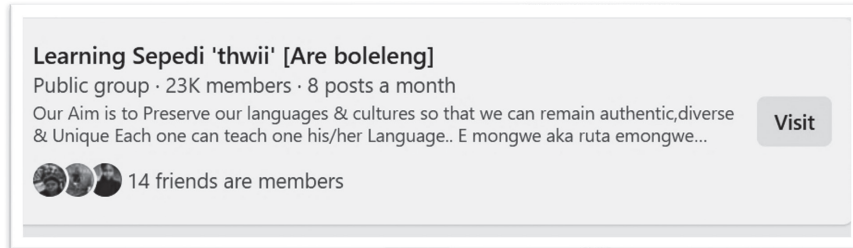


Figure 11.8. Facebook public group on the promotion of Bapedi culture.

the core values of a culture. Essien (2020) states that cultural values are the core principles and ideals upon which an entire community exists and protects and relies upon for existence and harmonious relationships. The concept is made up of several parts: customs, which involve traditions and rituals; values, which are beliefs; and culture, which is a group's guiding values. The core cultural values of the Bapedi include traditionalism relating to funeral procedures, marriage procedures, traditional medicines, healing procedures, and the naming of children. In this section, we look at how social media promotes Bapedi cultural norms relating to the marriage procedure and naming of children. Extracts from different social media platforms are used for clarification.

CORE CULTURAL VALUES OF BAPEDI

Marriage Procedure

Teaching and learning about the marriage procedure of the Bapedi people can also be found on social media platforms. X, Facebook, and TikTok are used to provide evidence.

Figure 11.9 shows an announcement about the topic of an X Space known as "*Sepedi Leleme la Gae*" (Sepedi Home Language). This announcement informed the Bapedi speech community on X that the topic of discussion for the night would be the explanation of the wedding procedure for the Bapedi people in detail.

In addition to conversations over X spaces, Sepedi users also share information about wedding procedures through X posts. This can be seen in figure 11.10 and table 11.4.

An X handle *@BolelangSepedi* explains the activities that are supposed to take place during the Bapedi wedding. Since Bapedi wedding ceremonies often occur on Saturday and Sunday, this X thread explains activities to take at the bridal home on Saturday and what is to happen at the groom's home



Figure 11.9. Bapedi X space announcement for the wedding procedure from X.

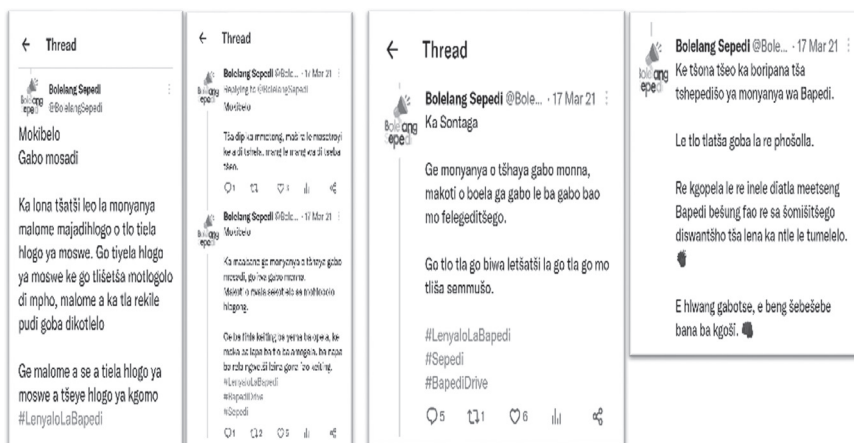


Figure 11.10. X thread for the Bapedi wedding procedure.

Table 11.4 Translations (excerpts are translated sequentially). Author.

Saturday Bridal home On the day of the wedding, the uncle of the bride will bring gifts to the bride. He can come with a goat or bowls. If not bringing the gifts, he will take a cow's head.	Saturday I will leave out the issues of putting a sound system on the walls, the bridal dress, bridal and groom's mates, everyone knows about that. Saturday After the wedding ceremony has been completed at the bridal home, the same night people will go to the groom's home. The bride will carry the mohlobolo bowl. When they arrive at the groom home's gate they sing and get welcomed. When they are still at the gate a bride would be given a marital name.	Sunday After the wedding ceremony, the bride will return with her companion. Later, they will put a date to officially bring her to the groom's place.	That is a brief procedure of the Bapedi wedding. You will add or correct us. We apologise for using some of your pictures without your permission. Have a good day. We wish you all the best.
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on Sunday. Since culture is a complex social element whereby Bapedi have slightly different but related practices (depending on the geographic areas), the author of the above thread concludes by putting a disclaimer that what is communicated can be added or corrected.

X enables mass communication and has a greater reach than other social media platforms, as De Villiers (2020:27–28) states that “X can be seen as a synchronous microblogging service that allows users to share short thoughts and ideas in the form of Tweets to a timeline wherein users can read and access anyone’s messages, even though they do not follow that specific person.” This means that information about Bapedi culture could be reached by anyone regardless of being a member of a particular group or a follower of someone. Once you type in any keyword, such as *Bapedi culture*, *Sepedi wedding*, *Setšo sa Bapedi* (culture of Bapedi), *Lenyalo la Bapedi* (wedding of Bapedi), etc., a list of available information will be provided.

Naming of Children

The Bapedi people have a unique way of naming their children, known as “*theo ya maina* or *go rea maina*.” This forms part of the cultural and traditional practices of the Bapedi people. In some Bapedi speech communities, children are named after their family members from the paternal and maternal family sides. However, there is a procedure to follow when names are given. Bapedi social media users take advantage of social media and use it to share information about the naming of children. On social media platforms such as Facebook and TikTok, some users dedicate their time to sharing information regarding the naming of children. For example, figure 11.11 and table 11.5 show an example of what one Facebook user wrote about naming children.

Figure 11.11 and Table 11.5 show a Facebooker who needed guidance about the procedure of naming children in the Bapedi speech community and to confirm the repercussions of giving a child a wrong name. The user posted this on social media with the knowledge that the Bapedi speech community on Facebook would provide helpful information.

Consequently, many Bapedi followers of the person who inquired about the correct procedure of naming children replied. One of the respondents wrote what is illustrated in figure 11.12 and table 11.6.

The response provided in figure 11.12 and table 11.6 emphasize the convenience of social media as a source of information. Thus, the effectiveness of social media should also be acknowledged since users make the sharing of information easy by being active and responsive to queries posted.

Moreover, TikTok plays a role in the promotion of Bapedi culture. The teaching of naming procedures for Bapedi people also takes place on TikTok. For instance, after one of the Bapedi TiKTokers who leads the conversation about culture and language shared similar information about the naming procedure, the following was said, as illustrated in figure 11.13 and table 11.7.

The chain of conversation depicted in figure 11.13 and table 11.7 followed a TikTok video created about the naming procedure of the Bapedi people. The responses appreciate the content of the video, as it helped them to resolve challenges they had in naming their children. More importantly, they regard the sharing of such content as a provision of great wisdom.

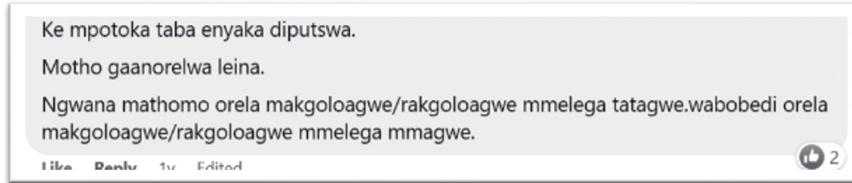


Figure 11.11. Facebook post about the naming of children.

Table 11.5 Translation. Author.

Post translation

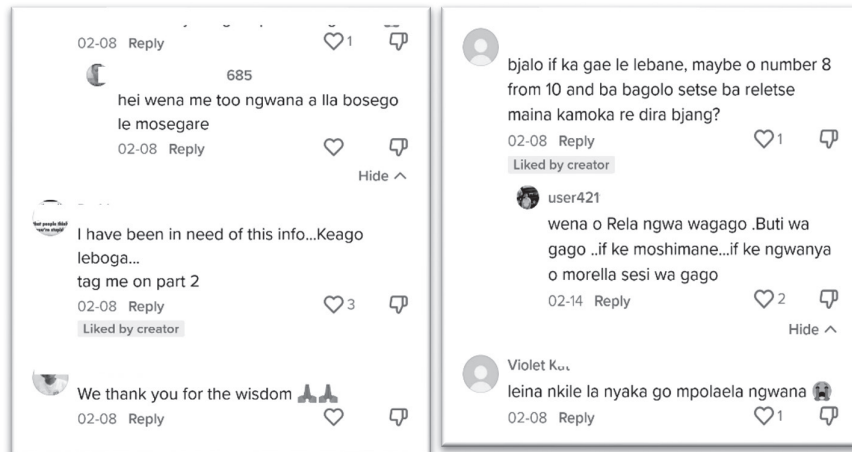
I often hear Bapedi saying a child suffers because of a name. The reason being that their parents gave the child a wrong name (family name given to a child). If this is true, I would like to know the correct procedure of giving name to children.

**Figure 11.12. Facebook responses for naming of children.****Table 11.6 Translation. Author.**

That issue is difficult it needs elders.

You do not just give a person a name.

The first-born is named after her paternal grandmother or his paternal grandfather, the second-born is named after her maternal grandmother or his maternal grandfather.

**Figure 11.13. TikTok conversation on the naming of children.**

Social media plays an important role in the promotion of culture. The promotion of Bapedi culture on Facebook, X, and TikTok is a case in point, as Bapedi speech communities on social media take advantage of its effectiveness as an information-sharing channel. Therefore, although social media cannot replace physical interaction between people, it enables them to engage more often (Mas, Arilla, and Gómez, 2021). This means that even though the Bapedi speech community is still able to have face-to-face interaction for

Table 11.7 Translation (excerpts are translated sequentially). Author.

My child would cry day and night. -----	Therefore, what happens if we are many at home, maybe you are an 8th born among the 10 children and the older ones have already allocated names to their children. How do you do?
I needed this information. I thank you. Tag me on part 2.	----- You should name your children after your brother, if is a boy and after your sister if is a girl.

the teaching, learning, and transmission of cultural knowledge, social media provide an effective and convenient mode of communication.

For instance, the Facebook page Sepedi Bapedi, presented in figure 11.14, is one of the groups that aims to promote Sepedi culture.

Figure 11.14 shows that social media sites such as Facebook serve as platforms for the promotion of Bapedi culture. Figure 11.14 depicts a Facebook page, Sepedi Bapedi, which was created for the promotion of Bapedi culture. Its description reads: “We are proud of our identity. This group is a space for Bapedi and those who love culture. Its main purpose is to promote our culture and share information.” As Ahmed, Miladi, Messaoud, Labidi, Ashour, Almohannadi, Fetais, Alkhateeb, and Alorfe (2022:195) state, “mass media play a significant role in modern society by providing content that shapes values, positively impacts shared identity and fosters a sense of belonging,” which shows that people see value and positivity in mass media platforms such as Facebook. Sepedi Bapedi’s membership of 106.2 thousand people implies that users have enthusiasm to learn about Sepedi culture. Consequently, when the Sepedi culture is communicated on social media, it becomes sustainable, as Baran (2002) holds that culture is socially constructed and maintained through communication.

CONCLUSION

This chapter explored the use of social media in promoting Sepedi language and culture. It demonstrated different initiatives taken by the Bapedi speech community on Facebook, X, and TikTok regarding the promotion of their language and culture. Through social media, Bapedi social media users are given the chance to understand and know their surroundings. Additionally, it is noted that they use social media for various purposes and to gratify different needs. Therefore, social media must be appreciated for playing an important role in enabling the promotion of language and culture. As UNESCO strives to promote all indigenous languages, in its Decade of Indigenous

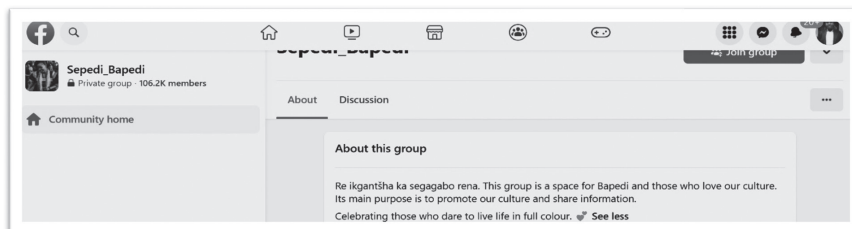


Figure 11.14. Facebook group for culture promotion.

Languages, social media should be considered an effective digital platform for the promotion and preservation of language and culture. This is because more often, African researchers focus on the negative effects of social media on languages and overlook or report less about the positive side. The research on how language is used on social media should also be expanded to unveil some of the positives of social media.

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