

## Linguistic Adulteration of the Shona Culture? An Ubuntu Perspective

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### Abstract

*Zimbabwe constitutionally recognises sixteen (16) languages. Of these officially recognised languages, only English is a foreign language. Be that as it may, its hegemony is all over the country as the de facto lingua franca. Against that backdrop, this paper argues that the dominance of the English language has corrupted lived and liveable philosophies such as Ubuntu/Unhu. Utilising the Shona people as its case study and guided by the Ubuntu/Unhu philosophy, this paper holds that the multilingual situation whereby English dominates the language landscape, though critical in bridging communication gaps, has far-reaching consequences in as far as upholding people's Ubuntu/Unhu and culture is concerned. This argument is guided and informed by the socialist perspective and the lingo-culturalists' standpoint that language is not only a means of communication but also a carrier of culture and a purveyor of political thought and ideology. This treble characteristic of any language, which English is not an exception to, has culminated in it exuding cannibalistic tendencies on the indigenous languages' thoroughgoing cultural nuggets such as Ubuntu/Unhu. Since Ubuntu/Unhu focuses on the whole person in terms of upbringing, the assimilation and continuous use of English throughout various spheres of life has perpetuated cultural genocide. By opting for English wherever culturally sensitive topics are debated, foreign norms, values and beliefs are (un)consciously spewed to avoid culturally sensitive words in the vernacular. Though the intention is to censor what are termed unprintable words in the vernacular, the consequences of the fluid identities are far-reaching in as far as upholding Ubuntu/Unhu is concerned since cultural groundings are slowly being eroded. Though this study focuses on the effects of English culture and language on Shona, the writer acknowledges the impact that other languages in Zimbabwe have.*

**Keywords:** Ubuntu/Unhu, lingua franca, culturicide, multilingual, lingo-culturalist

## **Background**

Shona is a language spoken by a large number of the Zimbabweans. The presence of Shona is also felt in neighbouring countries such as Mozambique and Zambia. In South Africa and even Botswana it is now widely spoken because of the Zimbabwean Diaspora. There are also Shona speakers in Kenya. The Shona society, like any other, has an unwritten code of behaviour which spells out acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and speech, particularly in the public space, so that one's behaviour and speech do not cause discomfort to the listeners (Mubonderi and Mpofu-Hamadziripi, 2018). Ingrained in the Shona language is the Shona culture. Language is culturally transmitted, which implies that people acquire language as a component of the culture they learn (Mhute, 2015). Culture is also imparted through language which means the promotion of language ensures the promotion of culture and vice versa. Furthermore, language can be used as a tool to change or maintain the culture. This resonates with Masaka and Chemhuru (2011), who state that the Shona possess much that is worth retaining and the prospects are that they will save a good deal of it in succeeding generations. As with other indigenous groups, the Shona are bound by Ubuntu/Unhu principles which govern the behaviour exhibited and expected in Shona speaking communities. Hence, the Shona language needs to be preserved and passed down. Previous researchers have tended to shy away from the fact that the community's attitude towards English and code-mixing is paving way for the use of English terms instead of existing Shona ones, hence Shona first language learners are now acquiring Shona that is diluted with English expressions (Matandare and Mugomba, 2016). Sadly, the dilution of the language implies the watering down of the culture and the death of Shona together with its culture. Crystal (2000) notes that language death is a process that affects speech communities where the level of linguistic competence that speakers possess of a given language variety is decreased. This eventually results in the decline and final disappearance of native and fluent speakers of the variety. However, it is essential to recognise that extrinsic factors do not always drive language changes; the language also has a natural evolution, and it adapts to society's needs (Bolban-Abad and Hanifi, 2014).

## **English Language in Zimbabwe**

English is spoken as a second language by most Zimbabweans. Though it is taught up to university level just like Shona and Ndebele, it is the language that guarantees one access to scarce resources both nationally and internationally (Mhute, 2015). Those who are incompetent in it are disadvantaged because the language is the main medium of instruction throughout the education system, a measure of educational achievement and an important qualification for higher education and employment. As explained by Ndhlovu (2009), given that Zimbabwe was a British colony for close to a century, colonial policies

ensured the entrenchment of English as the language of record and documentation. The importance of English as a medium of record has cascaded down to other linguistic facets, rendering other indigenous languages, such as Shona, less important. The perceived raising of English at the expense of indigenous languages is in response to the demand for English in business, trade and education. Mhute (2015) points out that the Shona people have developed a negative attitude towards their first language; they are eager to develop their ability to communicate in English to greater heights, as it is the only avenue to scarce resources as well as international communication in the global world:

*In most middle- and high-class Shona homes, there are English terms that are used in everyday conversation slowly replacing the Shona words. Language learners acquire these terms instead of the Shona ones at the language development stage. They only come to learn the Shona terms when they go to school and start learning Shona as a subject (Matandare and Mugomba, 2016).*

This implies that the resultant code-mixing leads to the dilution of the Shona language as the English words replace Shona ones causing a decline in its use.

## **Problem Statement**

Language choice and acquisition are heavily influenced by the perceived power a language wields. The prominence and dominance of the English Language on the Zimbabwean linguistic landscape threatens to hamper the preservation, teaching and passing down of Shona cultural norms and values. This paper seeks to analyse how the ever-increasing use and preference of English seemingly leads to linguistic adulteration of the Shona culture.

## **Aim**

The study aims to explore the role of language in transmitting cultural norms and values preserving or destroying Ubuntu/Unhu with specific focus on the perceived effects of English on Shona culture.

## **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. How do cultural norms surrounding Ubuntu/Unhu intersect with language to shape the individual?
- ii. How do the Shona people understand the terms language and culture?
- iii. How can Ubuntu/Unhu principles be upheld through language and culture?

## Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Ubuntu/Unhu philosophy. Ubuntu/Unhu is principally a normative ethical system among the people of Southern Africa (Ewuoso and Hall, 2019). These ethics are learnt, preserved and passed on through the generations. Language plays a pivotal role in ensuring that these ethics are upheld. Ubuntu/Unhu has emerged as a global favourite in a space that desires a diversity of worldviews and global naturalism (Moyo, 2021). As put forward by Khan and Ntakana (2023), Ubuntu/Unhu ploughs togetherness where an individual does not survive alone but with and through others. The existence of various languages affords individuals the opportunity to converse in languages of their choice. With most people being ignorant about the fact that language carries culture, language choices and language use emanating from the dual and/or triple heritage are arguably a direct result of fluid identities, and promote adulteration of culture. This adulteration, it can be argued, occurs due to the perceived loss of cultural identity and the failed preservation of linguistic heritage which occurs when topics ordinarily censored become commonplace discussions. As much as Ubuntu/Unhu holds African societies together, its knowledge and cultural system is rapidly being expropriated through modernisation and globalisation (Khan and Ntakana, 2023). The love for the English language among the Shona-speaking community and its rampant use in everyday communication and as a medium of instruction continuously sees the intrusion of foreign mannerisms in everyday conversations. In their daily conversations, due to code-mixing, the middle- and high-class society can hardly finish a simple Shona structure without bringing in English terms; even when there is a Shona term to use, they replace it with an English one (Matandare and Mugomba, 2016). For example, *Mai vaenda kuhospital* or *Ndichaenda kutown masikati*. The terms 'hospital' and 'town' feature prominently in day-to-day conversation even though the Shona equivalents are there, that is, *chipatara* and *dhorobha* respectively.

## Conceptualising Ubuntu/Unhu in Language in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The philosophy of Ubuntu/Unhu is governed by several factors in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Ubuntu/Unhu as a philosophy is based on generic life values of justice, responsibility, equality, collectiveness, relatedness, reciprocity, love, respect, helpfulness, community, caring, dependability, sharing, trust, integrity, unselfishness, and social change (Mayaka and Truell, 2021). All these should, however, be seen as present in a 21st-century society characterised by the ever-increasing fluid identities. These fluid identities, though inevitable, impact the linguistic heritage of the people. To counter this, Mourad (2018:8) posits:

*Learners of English worldwide need to recognise the importance of learning about the culture of the other in order to reduce stereotypes and clichés and*

*also to avoid cultural clashes and misunderstandings; not only this, by understanding the culture of the other, they will gain insights into their own culture and understand it in another way than they did before.*

This speaks to a need for balance and restraint in knowing when English ceases to be a means of communication but a propeller of moral degradation.

## Literature Review

The intersection of language and culture is rooted in the understanding of the dynamics between language and identity and language and culture. Language and culture are intertwined; they cannot be separated. Language can be understood only if it is linked to society. Generally, individuals use language to identify themselves and speak about their origins, feelings, thoughts, and communities (Hamidi, 2023). When one understands a language, they should also understand the cultural implications in the context used. Through language, the beliefs of a community are reflected highlighting what is respectful and important to that culture thus leading to identity formation. Language is not merely a tool for communication but a powerful medium through which individuals express, negotiate, and construct their identities (Zrike, 2025). Figurative expressions often provide insights into the values, moral lessons and cultural norms of societies. Additionally, languages lead to the formation of language communities. These communities have a sense of belonging as they are brought together by their common language despite the variations resulting from accents and dialects. Nxumalo and Mncube (2019) posit that if one wants to achieve successful engagement with members of the community, respect and dignity are the requirements. This is also echoed by Zvitambo (2017), who states that Ubuntu/Unhu's values incorporate caring and understanding of one another. Respect is often measured by the language one uses which is 'culturally appropriate' and considers the setting and people one is in conversation with. Through language, cultural groups learn about their culture from stories and history. As a social tool, language is instrumental in maintaining social relationships, relationships that are governed by norms and values. It is crucial to note that the meaning of words and phrases differs depending on context. This then points to the fact that language cannot be understood fully without culture, as how the language is used responds to cultural expectations. Kangira and Mudzingwa (2003) assert this when they posit that the core ethical values of a nation's culture are transmitted from generation to generation through the interactions of children with their parents and surrounding people. In addition to that, a person's value -orientation is not innate, but is rather acquired during childhood, and is passed on from one generation to the next through language (Mhute, 2015). The varying language communities may have different ways of using language as is dictated by its cultural norms and values.

The language and thought relationship proposed by Sapir (1921) and Whorf (1956) who postulate that thoughts, perceptions and how one understands culture are influenced by the language one speaks (Hussein, 2012). The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis holds that the semantic categories of one's native language influence thought, and that as a result, speakers of different languages think differently (Regier and Xu, 2018). The first language is the one in which the world is defined. The implication, therefore, is that the more one is exposed to languages other than one's mother tongue, the more exposed they become to cultures that are not their own leading to multiple definitions of the world. This raises the opportunities for the corruption of one's culture. This corruption may then affect how celebrations, ceremonies and rituals are conducted, if at all, as demanded by culture. Cultural continuity may thus be compromised. Shahrehabaki (2018) argues that there is a seamless interaction between language and social identity, and this interaction is multi-faceted and contributes to myriads of ramifications. Language and identity points to the role of language in transmitting cultural norms and values. Language plays a central role in the formation and expression of identity, serving as a key marker of group membership (Zrike, 2025). This group is governed by a specific set of norms and values. The social identity theory assumes that individuals derive a significant portion of their self-concept from the groups to which they belong. As suggested by Story and Walker (2016: 138), "identity refers to specific sets of characterisations expressed in particular ways, to which both individuals and groups may subscribe in order to emphasise who they are and to distinguish themselves from others." Fluid identities and linguistic heritage have an immense impact on Ubuntu/Unhu. Fluid identity is one which is not rigid, whose boundary is fuzzy and permeable and can still support some notion of free will and responsibility (Hongladarom, 2019). The way in which individuals express their identities through language is dynamic. This dynamism is caused by factors such as multilingualism, code-switching, variations in language, cultural movements as well as youth language and slang. The interplay between culture, personal identity and language are brought out through fluid identities. Speaking multiple languages and switching between these languages allows an individual to skirt around the different confines of cultural spaces as they express themselves in their language of choice, bound by the context, audience and setting of the discourse. Individuals with fluid identities can communicate with diverse groups of people. This often leads one to explore their identity as they interact with people from different social groups. An understanding of the fluidity of identities allows one to have an appreciation of the negative effects of these identities regarding the preservation of cultural norms and values. Zimbabwe is a case in point where fluid identities exist, fuelled by multilingualism, code-switching, dialect variations, and online communication. The question is thus, since language is a carrier of culture, can cultural values and norms of the Shona be preserved with the existence of these fluid identities? From an ecological perspective, identities are specific mind-sets representing themselves in divergent ways of talking, behaving, and writing, eating, and dressing (Stibbe, 2015). Fluid identities

influence language, which, as alluded to before, carries culture. Though the use of multiple languages may result in mutual intelligibility in society, it may be argued that the purity of individual languages is compromised. This is exemplified by the way in which thoughts, intentions, and ideas are expressed at will in one language but may be socially unacceptable in another. Culturally sensitive words and expressions are easily spoken in English, words and expressions which, ordinarily, are avoided in Shona. Individuals may then be marginalised by their own language community if they exude cultural traits not in tandem with those of their language community.

## **Methodology**

The study is within the qualitative paradigm as a case study. A case study research design of the Shona-speaking people in Gweru urban was used to identify the phenomenon faced by these speakers. Interviews, focus group discussions, and observations were the data collection tools used. Purposive sampling was used to identify the 25 participants in the study. The participants were purposively selected, targeting information-rich pockets of the Shona society in Gweru urban. The participants include teenagers, the elderly, students, and educationists. Gweru was chosen because it is at the centre of Zimbabwe and comprises people with diverse linguistic backgrounds.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***Linguistic Adulteration of Culture?***

The colonial influence of English has continued, though independence was attained over forty years ago. By virtue of its status as the language of communication, English has had a privileged status. Its importance has grown in stature since independence because it completes the 'O' Level certificate. It is the language used in the business environment, and it is the medium of instruction in schools and colleges. It is a lingua franca. As a lingua franca, it opens opportunities for trade and business with countries worldwide. As a result, the general populace has gravitated towards the use of English at the expense of Shona. To ensure they are well versed with the language, the use of English has permeated the home as a means of preparing the children to use it in the outside world. Yet again, in doing so, the English culture is assimilated with its mannerisms that are not always in sync with those of the traditional Shona speaker.

The study found that speaking in English and assimilating its culture is viewed as prestigious by the participants interviewed.

*Student 1: It is cool to speak in English both at home and with my friends.  
Speaking in Shona is a bit backward (laughs).*

*Elderly 2: My grandchildren are very intelligent. They speak fluent English. They have a bright future ahead of them.*

The implications from the excerpts are that English is perceived as superior and mastery of the language, in turn, implies that the speaker too becomes superior. It also seemingly creates a sense of intelligence, even though in reality this may not be the case.

The participants acknowledged that there are differences between English and Shona.

*Student 1: Shona does not always have specific words to explain a concept. It becomes easier to use English or we come up with our own terms to explain what we want to say.*

The differences between English and Shona are in the way of speaking, the choice of words and the tone of voice among others. Student 1's assertion that they come up with their own terms insinuates the concept of Shonglish which, according to Chidora (2024) is a direct translation from Shona to English. All these are means through which Ubuntu/Unhu principles can be reflected. The multilingual situation in Zimbabwe means there is exposure to other cultures through language. These languages do not always share the same dos and don'ts regarding topics that may or may not be discussed.

*Student 2: My mother is Shona and my father is Ndebele. At school, we use English most of the time. At home, we use all three languages.*

The bilingual and sometimes multilingual situation in the home means that the Shona acquired is no longer in its original form. Linguistic practices, languages and dialects are all encompassed in linguistic heritage. The interchanging of languages in the home makes it difficult to differentiate the linguistic heritage of one language from another leading to the linguistic adulteration of cultures as cultural identity is compromised. Cultural identity is an aspect of linguistic heritage as it not only reveals the community's traditions but values and history as well.

The findings also showed the differences in greetings. Greetings in African languages are not just for greeting per se, but are also meant to find out how the recipient is. To find out how one spent the day, "*Maswera sei?*" (Good afternoon) is used. The use of the plural in *Maswera?* (Afternoon) instead of *Waswera?* (Afternoon) as in "*Waswera sei?*" (Good afternoon) points to the collectiveness of the greeting and representativeness and respect as well as the speaker will be asking if all is well even at home. The same applies to the response given, "*Taswera kana maswerawo*" (We are fine, thank you, how are you?). This resonates with the findings of Manyonganise (2023), in Shona, when it is morning, they ask '*Mamuka sei?*' (How did you wake up?) Such a greeting is an inquiry about the state of affairs in the home and immediate environment, such as health. The expected response is '*Tamuka kana mamukawo?*' (We have woken up well, if you woke up well as well). In other words, one is saying I can only say I had a good sleep if yours was good

too. The example above points to the principle of Ubuntu/Unhu, which emphasises that one's wellness depends on the wellness of others around him/her. The theoretical thread in Ubuntu/Unhu lays emphasis on the collective first before individualistic needs are met and the individual cannot be divorced from being a social actor without the family, community and African society, which provides social cohesion, social order, and stability (Khan and Ntakana 2023). The same greeting in English does not indicate that one's wellness depends on the wellness of the other. A simple 'Good morning' warrants a 'Good morning' in response. In this instance, the Shona greeting reflects Ubuntu/Unhu. As African philosophy has long been established through Ubuntu/Unhu, there is a family atmosphere, that is, a kind of philosophical affinity and kinship among and between the indigenous people of Africa (Ramose, 1999). There is, therefore, a need to uphold the language to ensure the continuity of cultural norms and values.

Following globalisation, contemporary trends, and human rights advocacy, we now talk about anything. In primary schools, infants are taught not to allow anyone to touch their bodies, especially their private parts. As a result, the phrase, "don't touch" is commonly used. Though the teachings are meant to protect children by making them aware of what is wrong and what is right, the teachings, however, open the minds of the learners. They are thus exposed early in life to aspects they would have traditionally been made aware of in their teenage years. Discussions on topics such as genital organs occur from as early as the Early Childhood Development (ECD) level in schools. However, these topics are not openly discussed in the African culture, and when discussed, euphemisms are used for genital organs, unlike in English. The study revealed that the school curriculum involves teaching and discussion of topics regarded as culturally sensitive. These topics are discussed in a classroom setup with both boys and girls.

*Educationist 3: As we teach in English, we use words that are explicit and not roundabout, as is the case in Shona. Learners quickly and easily understand the topic at hand.*

*Student 3: We cannot run away from what is in the syllabi. We use the words that are used there to refer to the body parts.*

The learners are therefore unable to avoid some culturally sensitive words and topics as this may affect their progression in formal schooling. Respect and dignity, as values of Ubuntu/Unhu and cornerstones in the African culture, are compromised because of the conversations that occur among modern day Shona speakers. Usually, these conversations disregard normal Shona norms as topics of discussion are diverse with minimal censor as to what is discussed which may include taboos.

In Shona speech communities, as is other cases as that of Ancient Hebrew, you will hear people say, for instance, "*Ndichamboenda kunozvibatsira* (lit. I am going to help

myself = meaning going to excrete). About sexual intercourse, euphemistic expressions are used such as *vakarara vese* (they slept together); *vakasangana* (they met), both referring to the fact that the act of sexual intercourse was performed (Mubonderi and Mpofu-Hamadziripi, 2018).

In English, however, as indicated by the findings from the focus group discussion, phrases such as “they had sex/ we had sex” are commonly used making the act appear trivial. The shyness, for example, which may be expressed when speaking of sex in Shona may not be exhibited when discussing the same topic in English. However, despite the ease with which issues may be discussed in seemingly normal settings, those same words adulterate the Shona culture. Values and norms are compromised when culturally sensitive topics are openly discussed. Thus, the more a Shona speaker converses in English the more they become comfortable in uttering culturally unacceptable words and phrases. The breakdown of Unhu/ Ubuntu being experienced in linguistic domains is thus exhibited by the way in which language is used loosely in discussions of aspects normally regarded as taboo.

The study also found that non-verbal gestures differ between English and Shona. For example, in Shona, looking at someone in the eye is disrespectful yet the opposite is true in English. The excerpts below show how Student Participant 5, a student who mostly converses in English, perceives looking one in the eye differently compared to Elderly Participant 4 who is an elderly participant more inclined to using Shona.

*Student 5: I expect you to look at me in the eye when we speak to each other.*

*Elderly 4: These young ones, they will look directly at you and still refuse to do what you ask them to do.*

The differing mannerisms carried by English result in the negation of the Shona norms, such as not looking elders in the eye when talking to them. Looking someone in the eye in the English custom reflects one's confidence and willingness to engage in a conversation. However, Shona culture perceives this as disrespectful and a reflection of one's poor upbringing. There is also the incorporation of signs and symbols in discourse, which are foreign to Shona. The Shona norm of crouching to greet is another example. Crouching to greet elders is a respectful gesture practised by the Shona, yet it is viewed as primitive by the English.

*Student 1: Crouching? No ways. We don't do that these days.*

The defiance by the participant to crouch when greeting, as is the norm in the Shona culture, implies that the participant has lost aspects of their culture and assimilated English.

Participants in the study were reluctant to provide the Shona terms for the genital organs during a focus group discussion but were quick to give their equivalents in English. In their study, Mubonderi and Mpofu-Hamadziripi (2018) identified the Shona equivalents of the names of male and female genital organs. Examples of these terms include: *sikarudzi* (creator of a tribe), *mukana* (passage=vagina), *mhuka* (animal=penis), *mbonausiku* (a thing that sees at night=penis). These terms are euphemistic in nature. Manyonganise (2023) further states that in African communities, the Shona included, the discourse on sex and sexuality is shrouded in secrecy and the very act is treated as taboo, yet the reverse is true in most Western societies. Normally, elders in the community are meant to be the ones to lead in discussions to do with these topics and they use socially acceptable terms even when discussing sexuality. It is evident, therefore, that language can corrupt culture. Traditionally, taboos are used to promote good behaviour and dissuade engagement in topics that are labelled as not morally right. Chabata and Mavhu (2005) observe that words which fall under the label of taboo language refer to a variety of words which are viewed as obscene, vulgar, impolite, derogatory, and those which refer to the physically and mentally challenged. Though Shona taboos are fear inducing, this fear has no intrinsic worth, but is a means to an end, that is, promotion of good behaviour (Masaka & Chemhuru, 2011). The fear instilled leads to avoidance of the trait ensuring that the bad or dangerous behaviour is not practised. Shona people always insist on observing the rules concerning taboo word use (*zvinyadzi*) in situations of verbal interaction (Mubonderi and Mpofu-Hamadziripi, 2018). This is done to maintain Ubuntu/Unhu in social interactions.

In addition, education systems have played and continue to play a role in the adulteration of culture. The evolving curricula in schools has seen the rise in translations of learning material from English to African languages and vice-versa. English has, however, not been adulterated because the translations are meant for the Shona speakers whose English Language context is Zimbabwean and the English is a variant of the standard English which does not necessarily carry the standard (British/American) culture. The participants in the study indicated that they preferred to read English versions of stories and documents because English was easier to read.

*Student 4: I prefer to read the English versions of any form of writing because it is easier to read English than Shona.*

The preference for using English versions at the expense of Shona versions of reading material has risen. The priority given to the English language at the expense of Shona has made English appear as more prestigious than Shona. As a result, everything

associated with the Shona language is looked down upon and seen as uncivilised. Sadly, this too reflects how the culture that is carried by the language is viewed.

Technological advancements have been the highlights of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*Educationist 5: Technology has brought a change in behaviour, even language use. We want to fit into the global village so English is the way to go.*

The use of technology has led to the development of gadgets and applications that have impacted lives. Through social media platforms, conversations and meetings are held via WhatsApp or video calls. New forms of communication have emanated, and these are often characterised by abbreviations and slang. Slang is also created as a youth culture phenomenon whereby linguistic forms respond to trends among the youths. Slang use varies based upon which generation is currently using a term and how long a specific term has been in use; as such we can expect the meaning of certain words to change over time as the users mature and enter new phases of life (Haqiq, 2019). An ever-evolving cycle of slang words is found throughout history and each generation brings with it a new youth culture thus introducing a unique set of lexemes. These slang words, a type of informal language, carry their own culture, one normally devoid of traits of the language from which the slang emanated. The implication, therefore, is that with the coining of each new word, new behaviours emanate. These behaviours conform to the group culture, usually generational. There are then new expected behaviours regarding drinking, eating and general socialisation which are different from the culture carried and expected by one's mother tongue. In the context of this study, the slang comes in with its own culture, a culture partially or at times solely devoid of any Shona norms and values thus adulterating the language.

## **Implications**

During language acquisition, children also undergo identity formation as they are introduced to their culture and are made aware of what is acceptable and what is not. This will have an impact on their view of the self and how they then relate to others in the community. However, in instances where children are exposed to a multiplicity of languages and language varieties, their cultural grounding may be compromised. The multiplicity of languages at their exposure affords them a broader view of the societies in the world around them, and by default, the cultures. When parents and guardians actively ignore this challenge, their cultural grounding stands to be corrupted as there will be a lot of borrowing and assimilation of various norms and values from the varying languages. This will also have an impact on their thought processes as all thinking is done in a language. Urban vernaculars, it may be argued, are also detrimental to the development of wholesome, culturally sound members of the communities. This is because they are

made up of discourse elements, lexical items, and syntactic forms drawn from a number of different languages (Makoni, Brutt-Griffler and Mashiri, 2007). The presence and impact of urban vernaculars cannot be argued as they contribute to the changes in a language. However, the changes in a language due to natural motion also need to be acknowledged and what these changes mean to culture, for examples changes in spelling conventions and standardisation of the language where several dialects are merged. This resonates with Matandare and Mugomba (2016) who argue that when a child is regularly exposed to code-switching, the child will have difficulty developing the original mother tongue. Though language choices are usually made based on what would be beneficial to their cognitive development, these choices may not always ensure that culture is not corrupted. This implies that measures need to be put in place to safeguard culture. A balance between global and cultural needs must be achieved. Despite the modernisation that comes with globalisation, the self still needs to be preserved, safeguarded and respected. It is prudent to be cognisant of the fact that languages are always evolving in response to global trends. As such, faced with globalisation and migration effects, cultural shifts constantly occur meaning that language use evolves to suit the shifts. Due to migration in families, changes in linguistic preferences have been noted in favour of English. Though adapting to new trends that emanate from cultural shifts is crucial to remain relevant, signs and symbols have been incorporated into the language as non-verbal forms of communication. The signs and symbols may not have been in existence before or may be in response to the evolution of language and culture. Their impact may not always conform to the traditional norms and values thus corrupting culture as their application is confined to specific contexts. Ultimately, this may lead to language death. It is important to note that the death of a language means the disappearance of the culture it carries. This will mean the loss of the traditional values, wisdom and knowledge housed in that language (Mhute, 2015). With these implications in mind, adequate intervention measures can be put in place to minimise the linguistic adulteration of the Shona culture. Raising awareness on the need not to assimilate the English Language wholly can minimise this adulteration.

## **Conclusion**

The linguistic adulteration of the Shona culture continues to occur largely as a result of perceived behavioural demands, perceptions and shifts in response to the heavy influence of English on the Shona culture. Language adulteration continues to exist with the advent of technology, curriculum demands and multilingualism among other factors which go against the Ubuntu/ Unhu philosophy. The Ubuntu/Unhu philosophy needs to acknowledge the impact of the fluid identities that are prevalent in Zimbabwe. This is because this fluidity has led to the incorporation of the beliefs, behaviours, and traits of other cultures by the Shona people. The assimilation of other cultures through languages

learnt and used, is not an avenue for one to denigrate their cultural values and norms. With the dual and triple identities comes the need to ensure that the Shona remain morally right by ensuring they remain conscious of who they are, where they are and the topic of discussion. In addition, Ubuntu/Unhu principles should be taught at schools and workspaces to ensure that the Shona remain in touch with their culture.

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