

HLONIPHA “THE TRADITIONAL LANGUAGES OF RESPECT USED AMONG NGUNI, SOUTHERN SOTHO, ZULU, NDEBELE, AND XHOSA WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA VERSUS DING WOMEN IN DRC

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RÉSUMÉ

*Selon les recherches en sociolinguistique, il existe une différence entre le langage des hommes et celui des femmes à travers le monde. Dans cet article l'auteur va exploiter une variété de langage des femmes appelée Hlonipha dans le vif de son article, essaye de retracer les racines linguistiques de ce mot « Hlonipha » qui dérive de la tribu Nguni en Afrique du Sud, à partir de la racine « hloniph », qui attachée au préfixe « isi » et du suffixe « o », aussi attaché à la même racine deviendra le nom **isihlonipho** qui signifie simplement le langage de respect utilisé par les femmes dans les tribus Nguni, Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele. Les compare avec la tribu Ding (Zone 80, group B), en République Démocratique du Congo selon la classification de langues Bantu par Guthrie (1970). Les femmes de ces tribus utilisent hlonipha comme langage de respect et révérence pour éviter de prononcer les syllabes taboues qui apparaissent dans les noms de leurs chefs, leurs beaux-pères, époux, beaux-frères, épouses de beaux-pères, grands-pères et grandes-sœurs de beaux-pères. Elles utilisent aussi la méthode de substitution, de remplacement de syllabes tabous ou simplement d'effacement de la syllabe et créent une autre forme qu'elles utilisent dans leur jargon quotidien pour exprimer le respect à l'égard de cette catégorie de personnes susmentionnées.*

Mots-clés : *Hlonipha, Igama lasekhaya, Ukuhlonipha, Isikhwetha, Abakwetha, IsiZulu or Zulu, Tata kulutu or leki, Tata mwasi or Tata nketo, Noko, Maman leki.*

ABSTRACT

According to research conducted in sociolinguistics, there is a difference between the language of men and that of women. In this article the author will examine a variety of women's language called 'Hlonipha'. Indeed, , he will try to trace back the linguistic roots of the word 'Hlonipha' which derives from the 'Nguni' tribe in South Africa, from its root 'hlonip', which attached to the prefix 'isi' and the suffix "o", also attached to the same root will become the name 'isihlonipo' which simply means the language of respect used by women in the Nguni, Xhosa, South Sotho, Ndebele tribes and it is compared with the Ding tribe (Zone 80, group B), in the Democratic Republic of Congo, according to the Bantu language classification by Malcon Guthrie (1970). Besides, the women of these tribes use "Hlonipha" as a language of respect

and reverence rooted in the avoidance to pronouncing the taboo syllables that appear in the names of their chiefs, fathers-in law, husbands, brothers-in-law, wives of fathers-in-law and grandparents, fathers-in-law's sisters. They also use the method of substitution, replacement of taboo syllables or simply deletion of the syllable and create another form which they use in their daily jargon to express respect towards this above-mentioned category of people.

Keywords: *Hlonipha*¹, *Igama lasekhaya*², *Ukuhlonipha*³, *Isikhwetha*⁴, *Abakwetha*⁵, *IsiZulu* or *Zulu*⁶, *Tata kulutu* or *leki*⁷, *Tata mwasi* or *Tata nketo*⁸, *Noko*⁹, *Maman leki*¹⁰

1. INTRODUCTION

In this article, all African names or words will be italicized, whereas their English equivalence will be put between parentheses. It focuses on ten most important sections; the first consists of introduction, and its subpoint: the research problem. The second, methodology with five subpoints namely: chart 1, interpretation of the chart 1, different answers from different women of the selected languages and interpretation of the chart 2. The third deals with the study theoretical background, with its subheadings: why is *Hlonipha* considered to be traditional? The significance of *Hlonipha*. The fourth: the function of *hlonipha*. The fifth: who are involved to *Hlonipha* as a custom of respect? The sixth: exemplification of the linguistic characteristics of *hlonipha*. The seventh: who else use this linguistic custom of respect? The eighth: some aspects of *Hlonipha* in Zulu society. The ninth: The hierarchy of age in Zulu society. The tenth: *Ukuhlonipha* and king: respect shown in terms of a king. A short conclusion will bring together all the points we presented in the above-mentioned lines.

¹ *Hlonipha* : A system of ritual avoidance observed as mark of respect especially by *Xhosa* and *Zulu* wives towards their male relatives by marriage etc.

² *Igama lasekhaya* : Personal property as the man himself.

³ *Ukuhlonipha* : Also *Hlonipha*.

⁴ *Isikhwetha*: Male initiate.

⁵ *Abakwetha*: Female initiate.

⁶ *IsiZulu* or *Zulu*: A dominant language of a Southern *Bantu* language of the Nguni branch spoken in Southern Africa. It is the language of the *Zulu* people with about 12 million native speakers, who primarily inhabit the province of *Kwazulu Natal* of South Africa. *Zulu* is the most widely spoken home language in South Africa. 24% of the population. And it is understood by over 50% of its population. It became one of the South Africa's 11 official languages in 1994 <http://www.dsae.co.za> <entry, zulu>.

⁷ *Tata kulutu* or *leki* : Paternal uncles.

⁸ *Tata mwasi* or *Tata nketo* : Paternal aunts.

⁹ *Noko*: Uncle.

¹⁰ *Maman leki*: Maternal aunt.

1.1. The research problem

In this research study the author wants to compare the language of avoidance (*Hlonipha*) (tabooed languages), or the language of respect among *Nguni*, Southern *Sotho*, *Zulu*, *Ndebele*, and *Xhosa* women in South Africa versus *Ding* women in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The problem then is not with *Hlonipha* but with patriarchy that privileges it. Indeed, while the ideology that promotes the idea of women inferior to men is besides problematic, so is any custom or social practice (such as *Hlonipha*) that serves to promote and further entrench said ideology. In this regard, cognition and action are never mutually exclusive in manifestation of societal discourse.

1.2. The research questions and hypothesis:

- a. What is the *isinholipo* like?
- b. Can the language of avoidance and respect compare between South Africa and DRC?

2. THE STUDY THEORETICAL FRAME

In fact, to consider the meaning of the word *hlonipha* itself, Kroff and Gogfrey (1915, 161), define it as “the bashful respect, keep at a distance through reverence and to shun approach”. They further maintain that, “this word describes a custom between relation-in law and is generally but not exclusively applied to female sex, who, when married, are not allowed to pronounce or use words which have for their principle syllable any part of syllable of the name of their chief’s or their husband’s relations, especially their fathers-in-law.

Before moving to the depth of our article, we would like to trace the origin of the key word *hlonipha* from the *Nguni*’s stem (cf. *-hloniph-* which is the root form) with the same semantic content of respect, when attach to the prefix *’isi’*-to the root and suffix-*’o’* the language of respect is considered. That is, *isihlonipho* that can be used by both men and women by *Xhosa* to show respect for the initiation, for example *isikhwetha* or *Abakwetha* which is used exclusively by male initiates (Barnes 1988, p.96).

Socioculturally, according to the research conducted by Zungu (1997, p. 172) *Hlonipha* originated from *Zulu* personal name (*igma lasekhaya*) in *isiZulu*. For the author, in order to understand the custom of *ukuhlonipha*, one must know the nature of *Zulu* personal name because Western names are not *hlonipha’d* because they don’t have any links with *Zulu* ancestors.

Zungu (1997) found that if the term *hlonipha* is attached to its possessor, women (*sabafazi* or *sehlonepho basadi* among the *Nguni*, *Zulu*, *Xhosa* and

Ndebele or *sabafati* among the *Swati*), one come to a speech variety of language which is regarded as the core of the idea relates to the question at hand, that is, the language of respect or of avoidance for women.

By the language of respect, we mean a common phenomenon in most cultures. A system of ritual avoidance in speech as mark of respect, especially by Xhosa and Zulu wives towards their male relatives by marriage, a code of manner, observed especially in the avoidance of names and similar-sounding words. [http//www.m.dsae.co.za](http://www.m.dsae.co.za). [accessed on December 2,2022].

This language of respect, is very often demonstrated in a number of different ways for one another, which may be visible in the way we dress in the society, through our facial expression, i.e., by the way we address to older person, talk to women, react to outsiders and the like. In this view *Hlonipha* or *isihlonipho sabafazi* or *sehlonepho basadi* is regarded as a "traditional languages of avoidance used by women in *Nguni, Southern Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele*, as well as in *Ding* women in DRC in order to respect their chiefs, husbands, and their in-laws' families. This takes the form of avoidance of the syllables that occur in their husbands' families', mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law brothers and their wives and the mothers-in-laws' sisters and their husbands names in their everyday speech.

However, there are many ways by which a woman may arrive at her particular form of *hlonipha*. She may, for example replace or substitute the tabooed syllable with another syllable, or simply delete the syllable.

e.g. *amagqabi* ('leaves' in Xhosa) > *amashabi* ('tea' in *hlonipha*) or she simply delete the tabooed syllable altogether, e.g. *ukufukama* 'to hatch' > *uku'ukama* (*hlonipha*).

Another mean at the woman's disposal is to use the 'old' form of the *Nguni* or *Southern Sotho* word e.g., *inkomo* ('head of cattle' in Xhosa) > *inombe* (*hlonipha*). This form may be traced back to an original Bantu word postulated as **-ŋombe*.

2.1. Traditional

Nowadays, this linguistic custom of respect is dying out among the traditional women in *Ngudi, Zulu, Southern Sotho, Ndebele, Xhosa, Swazi*, as well as in *Ding* women communities. Traditional extended families are becoming less common with rapid urbanization and as the nuclear family lifestyles take over, women do not have the necessary social infrastructure to support the continuation of such a custom. Elsewhere, the working women today are unable to support two linguistic varieties especially for educated ones. Previously women who disobeyed this tradition were ridiculed and

ostracized. Nowadays this practice can be only seen in the traditional families in remote rural areas. <http://www.Jstor.org>. [accessed on May 23, 2019].

2.2. Signification

Trudgill (1974, pp. 29-30) commenting on language and taboo says "the value of a society has an effect on language, the most interesting way in which this happens is through the phenomenon known as "taboo". Taboo can be characterized as being concerned with the behavior which is believed to be supernaturally 'forbidden' or regarded as 'immoral' or 'improper'. It deals with behavior that is 'prohibited' and 'inhibited' in an apparently 'irrational manner'. In practice of course, this simply means that there are inhibitions about normal use of items of this kind. If they were not said at all they would hardly remain in the language.

Zungu (1997) further argues that women, men and children *hlonipha*. Women particularly carry a greater charge, for there are many rules peculiar to men that women understand, but they never can use them in public, but as men do. For instance, in Ding language the hunter may ask his son to give him a *ndeb nwa* "a small bell for dog" which the hunters usually tie under the dog's stomach when circle it from its back, in order to know the direction, the dog takes when hunting antelopes or hares.

The first word *ndeb* means "testicles", cannot be pronounced by women. Another interesting taboo word which has been substituted by women in Ding language is *Nkun nswo* "oasis" where women put their manioc or collect clear water for drinking in the forest. This tabooed word has been changed to *Elong* "oasis" because, the word *Nkun* has two connotations: either it stands for the 'airs of the pubis' or 'oasis'. Some women exaggerate loyalty to the custom or just substitute much of their daily vocabulary in order to be dual sure that in no circumstance they would pronounce taboo words or syllables of language of avoidance. In my tribe taboo words are considered as the system of values and beliefs to be kept.

As Makoni (2014:32) explains, "the expectation is that every female of any age uses *isihlonipho*". The rules of the *isihlonipha sabafazi* custom culture dictate that a wife must avoid uttering the phonemes that occur in the syllables of the first name or clan name of her husband, father-in-law and mother-in-law, as well as that of father-in-law's brothers and their wives, mother-in-law's.

According to Zungu (1997, p. 180), in Zulu culture, *ukuhlonipha* is a socially-governed sub-system. On one hand men and children in Zulu society use the detailed *ukuhlonipha* terms as a means of communication, in situation where they wish their discussions to remain personal, sacred, and private or in special situations. They are however, not tied down to *ukuhlonipha* like women. On the other hand, Girls are however, scolded within a homestead if

they mention a *hlonipha's* personal name. Boys in the contrary, stop the *ukuhlonipha* custom as soon as they gather with other boys and cease using the mother tongue.

3. METHODOLOGY

I felt it necessary to base this research 'mostly' on information given by methodology. Firstly, it means the study based on anecdotal, rather than empirical evidence. However, some notions of this standpoint have been extracted on the subject of *Hlonipha*.

The data of this research study has been collected in the sub quarter MARABASTAR in the Ouest of Pretoria in South Africa, from 2005 to 2008, and at the University of South Africa among the targeted women of each following tribes: *Nguni* (3), *Sotho* (2), *Zulu* (5), *Ndebele* (2) and *Xhosa* (8). In the capital city of Kinshasa in DRC, the targeted population were 10 *Ding* women. I resorted to interview technique with the type recorder. In South Africa, I sometimes used the interpreters to help me translate any language of interview into English. Some of the interpreters asked me to pay them for the translation. In the capital city of Kinshasa, I did not get problems with my respondents for I know two Congolese national languages *Lingala* and *Kikongo* for the interview and also, I know the dialect of *Ding* tribe. The percentage of the questions and answers of my investigation: Why do you use the traditional language of respect or of avoidance in your daily conversation, among the selected tribes in the study is presented in the chart 1 and 2. It is worth mentioning that some respondents did not answer my interviews. It was not easy for South African students to agree my interviews since I was a foreigner student. They were looking me with cunning squinting eyes.

4. RESULTS

4.1. **Table 1.** Why do you use the traditional language of respect or of avoidance in your daily conversation?

No	Tribes	Number of respondents	Number of answers	Percentage
01	<i>Nguni</i>	5	3	0,15%
02	<i>South Sotho</i>	5	2	0,1%
03	<i>Zulu</i>	8	6	0,48%
04	<i>Ndebele</i>	3	1	0,03%
05	<i>Xhosa</i>	7	7	0,45%
06	<i>Ding</i>	10	10	1%
	Total	38	39	2,21%

Interpretation of the chart 1

The above chart reveals that Zulu (0,48%) and Ding (1%) women have high level of the use of language of respect in their daily conversations.

4.2. Table 2. Different answers from different women of the selected languages.

No	Tribes	Answers
01	<i>Nguni</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1: <i>we are respectful of our tradition</i> 2: <i>the tabooed words cannot be pronounced in front of young people</i> 3: <i>I cannot call my father-in-law by his surname</i>
02	<i>South Sotho</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1: <i>We no longer mention the name of our father-in-law, and we must also avoid all words related to it either in a purely phonetical manner, or morpho-phonemically. Such relationship is based on sounds occurring in the radical of the name, and the radical of any given word.</i>
03	<i>Zulu</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1: <i>I cannot call my husband by his name be it of Zulu personal name or his Christian name, instead I call him "Baba kasibanibani" that means: "Father of so-and-so", to show respect toward his husband</i> 2: <i>We call the king by mean of metaphor such as: iSilo, iNkandla, Wna Wendlou, uMutwana, uNdabezitha etc. which mean: "Beast", "Lion", you of the Elephant", Child of the Royal Family, The affair of the enemies.</i>
04	<i>Ndebele</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1: <i>'while men can easily refer to a penis as isende, we women must resort to metaphoric expressions like igwayi likababa ('to play'). (Makoni, 2014:32) ('father's cigarette'), isondo ('wheel'), or impompi ('pipe') to avoid using a term considered obscene'. A further example from Thetela (2002:180) is the hlonipha vocabulary for the term 'sexual intercourse' - ho arolelana dikobo ('to share blankets'), ho kopana ('to meet'), ho bapala</i>
05	<i>Xhosa</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1: <i>A part from a display of basic humility, we pay respect in specific ways according to Hlonipha requirements. We refrain from using everyday tabooed words in our conversation and instead, we use a special vocabulary of substitute words in their place.</i>
06	<i>Ding</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1: <i>There are some tabooed words that cannot be pronounced in public place in front of teenagers. The word such as buttock has two connotations. It means either: buttock (ndongwe) or vagina (matôo), women prefer to substitute the word by (ndongwe) as a word of respect</i> 2: <i>In the Ding tribe, the old man who stays all the day in his hut is called "Nsakwe" as the first syllable (nsak) of this word sound like that of the word "Nsakul (ant). In order to avoid using offensive name (Nsakul) that resembles Nsakwe women, prefer to honor him with the name "Ngaal" (your Majesty) to express the language of respect to the old man.</i> 3: <i>As a sign of respect to my husband, I never call him by his Christian name. I instead add the name of our first born for example: papa Jean</i>

No	Tribes	Answers
		<p>(the father of John), John being our first born.</p> <p>4: If her daughter is badly dressed; exposing her breasts (Mabio) which is not acceptable in our traditional culture, when her mother wants to blame her, instead of saying in front of her brother: hide your breasts, she substitutes the tabooed word breasts (Mabio) by the word chest (Ntul), then her mother will say (fu Ntol ya) to men: hide your chests, just to avoid using the tabooed words breast (Mabio).</p>

Interpretation of the chart 2.

In the second chart, out of three women who have answered the question in chart 1, only one woman out of three from South Sotho discussed the question or (0.03%), two women out of six in Zulu language answered the question or (0.12%), one woman out of one in Ndebele language or (0.01%) answered the question, one woman out seven or (0.7%) in Xhosa language answered the question and four out of ten women (0.4%) in Ding language answered the question.

5. DISCUSSIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

5.1. The function of hlonipha

It is difficult to establish exactly what it is, but it is seriously viewed as being an indicator of the difference between the daughter-in-law and the natural daughters in a household Finlayson (1984). In using language variety, the daughter-in-law must be aware of the difference and be conscious of that state by showing respect to her new home and in turn should respect and has self protection. She must expect public pressure and severe admonishment and associated shame is forthcoming when she does not conform to the rules of the custom of linguistic avoidance in her in-laws.

Indeed, it worth mentioning that *isihlonipha sabafazi* does not limit itself to restricting the linguistic freedom of women. The custom also prescribes certain pragmatic rules, such as a sub-ordinate posture (bowed head, body turned to the side, eyes averted) and limitations regarding dress code, such as that a woman must cover her upper arms, shoulders, breasts, head and legs up to the ankles and may not wear trousers. In other words, *isihlonipha sabafazi* restricts the freedom expression and freedom of movement of women too. http://www.sihlonipha_sabafazi.org.co.za. [accessed on October 17, 2010].

In *Ding* language, sometimes women show respect to their husbands in that, they call their husbands by attaching the word 'papa' to the name of the first born of the family, for example if the woman's husband name is Jean (John) and their first-born name is Pierre (Peter), she will call her husband

(Papa Pierre). Another interesting example of the avoidance of tabooed syllable by women in my speech community is the following: my grandfather's name was *Nsakwe*, since the first syllable (*nsak*) of his name resembled that of *Nsakul* (ants) it was strictly forbidden for people to call him by this name for he was the chief of the village. He was a well-known man of the area, a brave man, he stayed in his hut all the day, he ate dogs and drunk only wine, the women and men of the village substituted his name to *munkorbong*, (a man who stay all the day in the hut), an invisible man because they must avoid the syllable *nsak* sounds in the word *nsakul* as it occurs in the chief's names. To meet him one must address to *Ntm* "his sender".

Dell (1974, p. 127) stresses the role that language can play in the transmission of culture, so also, we should realize that with social change we may find that we have lost possible 'keys' to linguistic change.

5.2. Who are involved in *hlonipha* as a custom of respect?

The father-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law's brothers and sisters and their wives and husbands and extends back usually as far as the great-grandfather-in-law. That is, the custom applies to the avoidance of the pronunciation of the syllables occurring in the names of the husband's families in the everyday speech of the daughter-in-law.

Freedom of speech, *isihlonipha* and women's sexual rights. Research by Thetela (2002) and Makoni (2014) indicates that, for *Sotho* and *Ndebele* women, the custom of *isihlonipha sabafazi* has further linguistic restrictions that extend beyond the avoidance of phonemes. There is a corpus of words which relate to sexual relations and sexual intercourse that it is often thought that click sounds may have been adopted into the *Xhosa* and *Zulu* languages via borrowing for the creation of *Hlonipha* words. However, there is still some debate as to how true this is. Finlayson notes that, while 'the two most common replacements are the palatal plosive consonants **ty** [c'] and **dy** [j]... which can... possibly be traced back to *Khoi* or *San*... there seems to be an avoidance of the use of click consonants... in *Hlonipha* vocabulary.' (1982:49). Conversely Herbert's (1990:308) 'claim is that the practice of *Hlonipha* "primed" the (Southern Bantu) language(s).

In this regard, most of the instruction comes from the mother-in-law but also her sisters-in-laws, especially the oldest, who plays an active role in instructing the daughter-in law.

In *Ding* language in DRC, women are mainly involved in the custom of *hlonipha*, they cannot hold a speech in front of men in a family talk, before outsiders. Children are obliged to respect their paternal uncles *Tata kulutu* or *leki* "uncles" and *Tata mwasi* or *Tata nketu* "paternal aunts" as well as their maternal uncles *noko* and aunts *maman leki* in the same way. They are not

allowed to call them by their names to express respect. They will substitute their paternal or maternal names by *tata kulutu/leki* or by *maman kulutu/leki* instead of calling them by their family names or Christian names: Failure of not respect to brothers or sisters of the two parents may cause a bad luck to the children.

However, *Xhosa* women keep the eyes downcast whilst addressing to older person or a White for example the case of (kinesics) "I do not like to look at white women in the eye, it is not part of my African culture" Parry (1993:11ii).

5.3. Exemplification of the linguistic characteristic of *hlonipha*

The complexity of the avoidance rules is facilitated somewhat by calling upon a core vocabulary but there is a variety of methods that the women may use to avoid the tabooed syllables. For example:

- (a) Substitution of word by a borrowing item from English or Afrikaans equivalent. For instance, *iqanda* 'egg' in the woman's everyday vocabulary and hence *i-egi*.
- (b) Synonyms may be used or an older form be called upon in the creative devices employed to avoid any tabooed syllable. For example, in my speech community *Ding*, the word *matôo*, meaning either vagina or buttock has the synonym *ndongwé* to mean simply buttock to avoid it to be tabooed by women or men.
- (c) In *Swazi* tribe for example if a *Swazi* woman's father-in-law name is *Langa* (which in sound is similar to *lilanga* 'day, sun') she will never refer to the sun or to a day as *lilanga* but as *lijiko*.
- (d) If a *Zulu* woman's father-in-law name is *uFuzindla* or *Ndlovu* or *Ndlwana*, she will call him *indlu* 'house' or '*inkisa*' because she must avoid the syllable "*dlu*" sounds in the word '*indlu*' as they occur in certain persons' names. The invention of new words to replace the tabooed syllable, form the basis of a core vocabulary nowadays called upon by the women to avoid the offending syllable.

According to the research conducted by Kunene (1958:52), it reveals that there seem to be standard forms of *Hlonipha*, when presenting to the informants, they immediately understand them. Taking into consideration their morphology, the way they are borrowed from English to Afrikaans, from *Zulu* to *Sotho* and according to their archaic forms.

5.4. Who else use this linguistic custom of respect?

Finlayson (1984, p.138) found that in Africa the only other recorded linguistic custom of respect occurs among the *Tsonga* people. She further maintains that the socially accepted way of acting in a community, the customs and beliefs, that were handed down from one generation to the next

become confused as the many forces being exerted upon the traditional family life style took place. But, in *Xhosa* rural communities a strict code of ethics existed among the people with a distinct hierarchy in the social system.

Capell (1966, p. 87) notes that '...among some of the southern desert tribes in Western Australia...not only terms of address but frequently items of ordinary vocabulary vary when used by a man to his (classificatory) brother-in-law from those speaking to other people'. Research in many rural areas, appears that there are three distinct categories of *hlonipha* users:

- The older group who still use *Hlonipha* and strictly uphold all the customs,
- The middle group, who have a partial retention of the *Hlonipha* vocabulary and,
- The younger set who hardly have *Hlonipha* at all and when they do, they include many words of English and Afrikaans origin (Finlayson's 1984, p. 143).

In fact, in the nuclear families, it has been found that, it is often the husband who teaches his wife how to *hlonipha*. The *Hlonipha* custom has begun to change, and is still retained by many *Xhosa* women. That is to say, life styles today in the urban areas make it virtually impossible for women to retain the custom of *Ukuhlonipha úmzi wabó* "the custom of respecting the homestead." Because, the customs involve, traced from the beginning of the marriage negotiations when the suitor has his bride negotiated for him while he remains at home, though the young girl's avoidance of her suitor's home during all the marriage transactions, up to the woman's life in her new home, have all undergone drastic changes. A young girl used to accompany the bride to enable the latter to communicate with the girl in her new home. This no longer happens as in most case, the bride will live in a home away from her in-laws and will not have to worry about linguistic and tradition as well as physical avoidance of things pertaining to them.

Therefore, there is no doubt that *Hlonipha* is still practiced in many rural communities today, but there is a change in the nature of this form of *Hlonipha*, because, long time ago women who did not uphold this tradition were ridiculed and ostracized, but today this does not generally happen, and in the urban areas the converse has been found to take place, namely, where women are ridiculed for upholding the tradition. Such women would be considered uneducated. Elsewhere, many school children consider the whole concept a joke. In our modern world, it appears that there is not enough time for the details of customs related respect. No bureaucrat has time to decipher the intricacies of linguistic avoidance patterns and thus as the basis for a tradition changes, so does the tradition itself fall away and in some areas, it begins to die.

Finlayson (1984) noted that over a period of some 8 years it has become apparent that more and more English and Afrikaans words are being used in order to avoid the tabooed syllables. She further argues that from the original list of *hlonipha* terms, the numbers of words of Afrikaans and English extraction were 33 to 60%. Respectively, more recent research has shown that more words from English are being used (1984b).

5.5. Some aspects of *hlonipha* in Zulu society

Zungu (1997, p. 172) maintains that *Hlonipha* originated from Zulu personal name (*igama lasekhaya*) *isiZulu*. He further argues that the culture of Zulu society, one must know the custom of *ukuhlonipha*, because the European names are not *Hlonipha* they do not have any link with Zulu ancestors. Even though the custom of *ukuhlonipha* is going to die out amongst Zulu speakers, it is still alive and practiced in certain areas of the country (Zungu 1997, p. 171). In fact, within Zulu society in present day's *ukuhlonipha* is used to show respect according to the hierarchy of power, starting from the king or chief up to the low class. This women language of avoidance is a sociolinguistic custom of the *Nguni* as well as Southern *Sotho* people (Kunene, 1958).

Koopman (1976) points out that the Zulu name (*igama lasekhaya*) is as personal property as the man himself. It is his personality, his *isithunzi* (shadow). The man is remembered after his death by this Zulu name."

According to most African cultures, the name relates a man to his family. Sometimes it is given to a child to remind him of his ancestors, clan history and thus for Zulu's case, a clan name (*isithakazelo*) may be given as a personal name. Similarly in *Ding* language, children are given the names of their ancestors or 'Mbl' (clan), of the grandfather or grandmothers. For example, my grandmother's name was *lakokreta* "every child is pride of his father". I gave this name to my second born in order to remind the name of my grandmother.

In Zulu culture, names which refer to clans are not *hlonipha*, i.e., no syllables of such a name are avoided. In words, once a personal name is turned into a clan name or surname, it is no longer respected. The home name can eventually become an *isithakazelo* by which a person can swear, for example: *Ngimfunge uManzini*, meaning "I swear upon the name of *Manzini*" It does not matter whether that person who is sworn upon is dead or alive. Males swear upon their female relatives and vice versa. Some women also swear upon the clan names of their-in-laws. They are not accused of disrespect if they swear upon a personal name which has been turned into a clan name.

This phenomenon is encouraged because it venerates the person concerned (Zungu 1997, p. 173). He further maintains that Zulu people avoid naming

their children after their relatives, particularly their in-laws when it comes to *igama lasekhaya*. However, it is not allowed, for it becomes difficult for the mother to call her child by such a personal name. The *Zulu* regard it as an insult and calling bad luck to name a child after the respected relative-in-law's *Zulu* personal name.

In contrast in *Ding* culture, there is a language of avoidance or respect for women. For example, in the rural or remote part of *Ding* tribe is the fact when a son-in-law meets his mother-in-law in the road, the former must enter to the forest to let the latter pass, the face-to-face meeting is not allowed. Even when they have a talk at home one of them mostly the mother-in-law whether she is at her son-in-law house, must have a seat by giving her back to the latter. Elsewhere, the mother-in-law cannot seat in the same place with is son-in-law. But nowadays, in the urban centers there is a slight change in this language or signs of respect in my speech community, the son-in-law doesn't care about this custom. This behavior has been termed '*Ki lelo*' (nowadays style of life)

If a man has many names in *Zulu* culture, his father will give him a respected one, *elikayise lelo* 'his father's name' meaning that he received this particular name from his father's personal name, hence it must be respected. For instance, the *Zulu* living in the *Mahlabathini-Nogoma* areas avoid the word *bonga* because this word is attached to king *Goodwill Zwelithini's* personal name, which is *Mbongi*. He got this name from his father King Cyprian *Zulu*. Instead of saying; *Ngiyabonga*, for 'thank you', they normally say. *Ngiyathokoza* (I am delighted).

5.6. The hierarchy of age in *Zulu* society.

According to the *Zulu* culture, the great grandfather's name (from the father's side) must be given the greatest respect (Zungu 1997, p. 174). The second in hierarchy in order being the grandfather, when he orders the children and teaches how to behave properly, they must obey him without question. His brothers are also respected as well. *Ubaba* "the father" whose commands are to be obeyed is also respected and feared. A child does not have a free talk in presence of his father. His wife cannot call her husband by his name be it of *Zulu* personal name or his Christian name, instead she calls him *Baba kasibanibani* "father of so-and-so". When the family has their first child, he too will not call his wife by her personal name: he would call her *maman kasibanibani* "mother of so-and-so", or *KaMancinza* "daughter of *Zondi*", that is, whether her maiden name is *Zondi*. *Mancinza* is a clan praise name for the *Zondi's* tribe. An elder brother is always treated with some respect. Even the children's paternal aunts deserved respect. In contrast, their maternal aunts are considered to be of low status and are less respected.

5.7. *Ukuhlonipha* and the king: respect shown in terms of a king

Krige (1974), states that "the King is a custodian of a number of sacred articles of the time which form part of the Royal Regalia and are handed down from father to son." That is, the king cannot approach the Lord of Heaven directly, but has to do so through his ancestors. He believes that the Heaven belongs to Royal House. Women do not respect the King's personal name when expressing surprise or swearing. They call upon his name for example, *UCetshwayo yini* or *uCetshwayo eNkandla* "the name of the king". He is called by mean of metaphors such as: *iSilo*, *iNgonyama*, *Wena Wendlou*, *uMutwana*, *uNdabezitha* etc. Which mean respectively: "'Beast', 'Lion', you of the Elephant', Child of the Royal Family', 'The affair of the enemies.'"

Similarly, in *Ding language*, a chief of many tribes who share the same administrative sector is called *Munkene* 'a customary chief'. He is a respectful man, he has a special way of clothing, he wears a long robe made of raffia of different colors, his chest and back are covered by the skins of leopard, lion or boa. His hat is made of different feathers of huge birds' fearful ones, such as the owl, golden eagle, vulture etc. His hands are full of many different rings made of copper, gold or silver. He is smeared of white and touched red clays. He is the only one who talks to the dead ancestors of the clan. He is respected by all members of the tribe or clan. Men or women do not call him by his personal or family name. When they want to talk to him, they are introduced to him by *Ntm* (his sender or guard). If they want to start a talk, one must kneel, nod and shake his two arms with that of the *Munkene* by saying, *Ngaal*, *Mukumbung*, *Ngul nsir*, *Nfum ba nfum*, *Nkwe*, *Nzo bi*, *Nga ngo*. Mean respectively: "'Your majesty', 'Brave man', 'Great hare', 'King of the king', 'our elephant', 'Powerful and fighter man'" in order to show respect and avoid the tabooed syllable that can appear in the king's name. Dittmar (1976, p. 124) states that "language varieties differ from one another in respect of certain linguistic characteristics which have resulted from the historical process of the mutual influence of language and social structures" and "from the point of view of linguistic variation in a social context, neutral (non-discriminating) varieties must be differentiated from those varieties which put a social stigma on a speaker and prevent his emancipation.

CONCLUSION

This article has been concerned with the concept of *Hlonipha* (language of respect) show by women in *Nguni*, *Xhosa*, *Southern Sotho*, and *Ndebele* in South Africa as well as *Ding* women in DRC towards their fathers-in-laws. This takes the form of avoidance of the syllables that occur in their husbands' families', mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law brothers and their wives and the mothers-in-laws' sisters and their husbands names in their everyday speech. Some questions can be raised in the mind of the researcher such as: What difficulties a *Hlonipha-ing* woman may experience in her attempt to avoid the taboo words? How she overcomes these difficulties? To what extent *Hlonipha* terms are universal or are restricted to certain localities? The reasons for such distribution? How a *Hlonipha-ing* woman adjusts herself to a new linguistic environment? These are among the questions considered here, where some answers have been given in the previous lines above.

Regarding the methodology of this research study, firstly, it means the study based on anecdotal, rather than empirical evidence. Secondly, one could wonder what parameters were applied in this 'setting' of information data. However, some notions of this standpoint have been extracted on the subject of *Hlonipha* within the above-mentioned languages. The problem then is not with *Hlonipha* but with patriarchy that privileges.

However, there are many ways by which the woman may arrive at her particular form of *hlonipha*. She may, for example replace or substitute the tabooed syllable with another syllable. Even though *Hlonipha* has its root from the *Nguni's* stem as we have mentioned it in the previous lines.

As Zungu (1997) stated, in order to understand the custom of *ukuhlonipha*, one must know the nature of *Zulu* personal name because Western names are not *hlonipha'd* because they don't have any links with the *Zulu* ancestors. To avoid the tabooed words to appear in the syllables of their fathers-in-laws, husbands and so forth names; women of the tribes I selected, use substitution method, replacement, and deletion or simply invent new words. I tried to give some resemblance between *Zulu*, *Xhosa*, *Nguni*, *Ndebele* women versus *Ding* women in DRC, related to the language of avoidance or respect. I concluded that it is critically therefore, that much research as possible should be carried out in this field of sociolinguistics (women's language of avoidance/respect) before this practice dies out completely. The examination of *hlonipha*, its use and life expectancy forms part of an expanding area of investigation into the broader field of sociolinguistics.

It is worth mentioning that, avoidance was specifically designed to silence feminine voices. While *isihlonipha sabafazi* may have stemmed from a system intended to pay respect to the ancestors, what remains of it today is a cultural

custom that serves to aggravate the inferior position of women in society. In a report submitted to the World Health Organization, Popay et al (2008:94) list the low cultural status of women as being one of the key contributors to a gendered pattern in HIV infection rates. If women have no voice, they cannot protect themselves from sexual abuse, rape, STDs and unwanted pregnancy demonstrates how the rules of *Hlonipha* regarding 'sex talk' that is imposed on Sotho women, potentially contribute to the gender bias in the legal system. She discusses how unequal access by women to sex discourses due to the *Hlonipha* custom constrains their testimonies and ultimately serves to maintain the dominant patriarchal hegemony in place in the socio-legal system' (Rudwick, 2009:68).

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