



## Language and Xenophobic Sentiments in South Africa

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**Abstract.** Cities are often subjected to external influences due to mass migration of people in search of better life. The migrants are sometimes faced with rejection by the host community, as they (the migrants) are often seen as competing for limited resources with their hosts. The xenophobic sentiments have motivated research on the problems encountered by immigrants in South Africa, which may include the impact of language of the media. This is because language is an embodiment of culture and an easy resource to access the community, as well as disseminate information. This study is set to explore the impact of language on xenophobic sentiment in South Africa with focus on Sesotho people in Bloemfontein. The exploration of the impact of language on anti-foreigner sentiments would help to identify the hidden power of the press in the dissemination of information in the society and how this information steers one's mind and directly or indirectly controls it. The data for the study were collected through face-to-face interview, and the analysis of some selected news extracts that relates to xenophobic sentiment in South Africa. A total of 54 people were interviewed. The study reveals words used to refer to foreigners and that these words do not contribute to xenophobic sentiments in South Africa. Rather, xenophobic sentiments are caused by competition of limited available resources, theft, poverty, drugs related crimes, prostitution and human trafficking attributed to foreigners, as well as competition in the area of businesses.

**Keywords:** Xenophobia, sentiments, attacks, discourse analysis, Sesotho, foreigner, negative attitude

### 1. Introduction

As the world economy becomes increasingly competitive, people move from one place to another for various reasons: business, education, sports, tourism, politics and better health care among others.

These movements lead to contacts between people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In other words, all societies and cultures are subject to external influences due to mass migration. South Africa has been a melting pot of Africa since the end of apartheid and people from far and near troop into the country for different purposes. In 1994, South Africa experienced the challenges of a multicultural and multilingual society more than ever before. With the inception of democratic rule in 1994 and Blacks as the holders of power, expectations were that racism, discrimination and intimidations will vanish in South Africa. However, not only that some group continue to resist transformation and continue upholding discrimination agenda, xenophobia is thus included in the list of social vices.

Xenophobia and racism seem to be used interchangeably, although they can have wholly different meanings. Xenophobia is a fear for a stranger or foreigner, but not necessary mean from other countries, but also other culture and belief. Webster's ninth new collegiate dictionary (1983:1364) defines xenophobia as a fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or anything that is strange or foreign to the person. The person has fears and his consciously attack is targeted only towards the strangers or foreigners. Ditsheko (2007) claims that "xenophobia is a fear that comes from a real-life experience, where nearly every artisan and other non-skilled jobs are given to foreigners, who either do not mind inhumanly low wages or they just need free rent and food rations to be able to see the next day". To Solomon and Kosaka (2019), xenophobia is the fear or hatred of foreigners or strangers; it is embodied in discriminatory attitudes and behaviour, and often culminates in violence, abuses of all types, and exhibitions of hatred.

Racism on the other hand, is a belief that a particular race portrays unwanted or unacceptable features. The common thing about xenophobia and racism is on

“negative attitude” directed to “foreigners” and “other race” respectively. The ethnic “prejudices are acquired, shared and legitimated mainly through various kinds of discursive communication among members of the dominant group in the society” (Van Dijk, 1989:115). The prejudice can encourage negative sentiments, discrimination, and hatred among the minority/foreigner and the dominant groups in the society leading to xenophobia and racism.

Language penetrates all sectors and it is a key resource in all aspects of the society. It is used to strengthen inter-personal relationships as well as encourage divisions, hatred and discriminations. Any burning issue in the society, such as xenophobia and racism are expressed with language and escalated in the media. The media has a great power (both positive and negative) in steering people’s mind in the society. Thus, according to Van Dijk (1992:201), in the everyday lives of the dominant group, “conversations about minorities, immigrants, refugees or ethnic and racial affairs more generally serve to express and persuasively convey their ethnic beliefs, attitudes and ideologies, as well as their commonsense interpretations of concrete ethnic events”.

## 2. Background Information on Xenophobic Attacks in South Africa

On Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2008, violence against foreign residents broke out in South Africa. This violence began in Alexandra (a township in the Gauteng province of South Africa which formed part of the city of Johannesburg) and rapidly spread to other communities across the country. Many foreigners were displaced; they took refuge in different places of safety, such as police stations, community halls, as well as churches. Without shelter, food and other basic resources, these foreigners were trapped and many of them immediately returned to their different home countries. However, others, such as refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers and those without legal papers were unable to return to their countries or find alternative places to stay and were in need of large-scale of humanitarian relief. According to Johwa (2009), more than 60 foreigners were killed in the attacks. All the killings and lootings are attributed to xenophobia. The situation leads to tensions among foreign nationals in all part of South Africa including Bloemfontein where this study was conducted.

Bloemfontein is a city situated in the middle of the Province, and in the central area of South Africa. Bloemfontein was founded in 1846 and was the

capital of the former Afrikaner Republic called the Orange Free State. In 1909, Bloemfontein was the site for the final negotiations between the British and the Afrikaners/Boers that led to the founding of the Union of South Africa a year later (*South African Yearbook, 2006/2007*). Most of the residents of Bloemfontein are from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which include: Mozambique, Lesotho, Nigeria, Botswana, Bangladesh, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Malawi, Pakistan, Somalia, and Zimbabwe.

One of the objectives of this study is to examine if derogatory language about foreigners provides evidence for xenophobic sentiments in South Africa society. Also, the study assessed if media played roles in spreading the attacks on the foreign nationals. According to Van Dijk (n.d.), “the media plays a fundamental role in the reproduction of racism in society, by portraying minorities as well as foreigners as problematic and deviant from the country’s accepted way of life”. It is especially the significance of the power of words (whether spoken, as in conversations which could lead to verbal conflict; or written, for example the power, unfairness and unbalanced report of the press) which are significant for this study. The power of words can trigger xenophobic sentiments if the arguments are so deeply emotional, and are not controlled among the people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For Bavelas *et al.* (1985), conflict is verbal (involving unpleasant and negative words) before going physical. This kind of verbal conflicts (arguments) could result in xenophobic sentiments/attacks and stereotypes.

## 3. Previous Studies

There are some scholars who had worked or studied the power of words among the minority groups and foreigners. Some of these studies include Van Dijk (1996), with the objective to assess who controls the preparation, participants, goals, language, genre, speech acts, topics, schemata (e.g. headlines and quotes), style and rhetoric, among other text features of communicative events. Van Dijk’s study reveals that the portrayal of illegality in the press is never on the power holders (employers, business owners and all the others who exploit the minorities or immigrants and pay sub-standard wages or those who are involved in illegal hiring). According to Van Dijk (*ibid*), the immigrants and minorities have limited or no access to the press and are dominated and controlled. In this case, anything that goes to the press is *mostly* in favour of the majority or people in power. Measures of discourse access may be rather

faithful indicators of the power of social groups and their members. Van Dijk enumerates different groups and their power holders:

- In education, educators control the communicative events and distribute speaking turns among learners.
- At home, parents control not only the manner of the children's communication, but also what they read or watch, especially on television.
- In the journalistic world, editors and news reporters control the news headlines. They have free access to how the topics should appear in the papers. They (editors and news reporters) also control the style of the texts and the pictures which directly or indirectly control the mind of every reader.

Media according to Van Dijk (n.d.) plays a fundamental role in the reproduction of racism in society by defining minority groups as well as foreigners as problematic, deviant or criminal. These negative attitudes to foreigners/minorities are summarised by Gotsbachner (2001; see figure 1).

In another study, Van Dijk (1988a) examines the manner in which ethnic minority groups are portrayed in the European press. According to him, if ethnic news (news on minority groups) is prominent at all in the media:

it is usually negative or presented in a negative form such as crime, violence, riots and demonstrations; and

If the news is *not* negative, it tends to be highly stereotypical. In other words, the minority groups are described as:

- living in ghettos or poor inner-city neighbourhoods,
- are on welfare,
- do badly at school,
- are unemployed,
- make constant demands,
- never satisfied; and
- cause difficulties to the society.

Van Dijk (1996) summarised the role of media in biased and unequal reporting: "most immigrants can do any kind of job for any wage, even working for a pittance which also implies that they out-compete white British workers". According to him, such a situation supports the familiar racist conclusion that immigrants are taking away the indigenes' jobs. Van Dijk states that the emphasis in the newspaper articles has never been that most white British people no longer want the odd jobs. Since the focus of the article is on minorities or foreigners, the writers never

mention that the desperate minorities (or foreigners) are under-paid and over-worked. Also, the negative attitude of the British people towards immigrants is evidenced from the newspaper headlines which were in bold capital letters and attention-seeking bullets depicting various forms of deviance, violation and crime attributed to immigrants or foreigners. These include lies, fraud and not paying taxes (Van Dijk, 1996). The analysis explains how the British press have preferential access to the public definition of immigration and minorities, as well as to the derogation of people as criminals, fraudsters, radical assassins and as people invading armies. The articles at the same time present the British people as tolerant, tough and valiant as well as victims. The news of this sort has never been balanced, because the access to media and its contents are in itself never balanced.

The study by Pillay (2008) discloses the negative attitudes of South Africans towards foreigners. Pillay's study reveals that 25% of South Africans want a total ban on immigrants, 45% supported strict limitations on the number of immigrants allowed into South Africa. According to him, a large percentage of respondents opposed offering African non-citizens the same access to a house as South Africans. Pillay's study further reveals that 54% felt that immigrants put additional strains on the economy. In addition, 65% of black respondents said they would be "likely" or "very likely" to take action to prevent people from other countries operating a business in their areas. According to Pillay (2008:21), xenophobic sentiments can be of "social" than "linguistic". Language penetrates all sectors of the society, and even when the xenophobic sentiment is "social", it is expressed with language. The reasons or causes of xenophobic sentiments in South Africa, as revealed by Pillay (2008) are based on three factors: poverty, feelings of virtual deprivation and a widespread perception in South Africa that foreigners are generally involved in high-level organised crime.

Igglesden (2008) evaluates the humanitarian assistance provided to people who were displaced by violence, mainly targeted at foreign nationals with focus on Gauteng and the Western Cape. Field research was conducted from 1 June until 31 September 2008. According to Igglesden, account of the humanitarian response to the crisis following attacks on foreigners gives a sense of the complex and fluid nature of the partnerships and cooperation mechanisms in both regions (Gauteng and Western Cape) of organisations that participated in the delivery of humanitarian assistance to internally displaced foreigners. The account clearly

demonstrates the extent to which lack of communication impeded the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs). Confusion about responsibilities, lines of communication, norms and standards of provision and overall objectives whilst trying to plan and strategise mid-crisis the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance meant that officials often had neither channels, mandates nor appropriate information for communication. A further profound effect of the lack of communication was conflict and intransigence - most notably amongst IDPs (but not entirely limited thereto) - as frustration, alienation and, for some, further traumatization increasingly took their toll.

Solomon and Kosaka (2019) look at why xenophobia has pervaded South African, what has contributed to enemy images of foreigners, and how, such images can be removed from the national consciousness and better the current situation. The study also looks at xenophobia from the perspective of those who experienced it through qualitative research conducted in Mbekweni, Paarl, Eastern Cape and Bloemfontein, Free State in 2013. The most important reasons behind the prevalence of xenophobia in South Africa according to Solomon and Kosaka (2019) are economic and the tendency to criminalise foreigners. Proclamations from politicians coupled with media reporting on drug syndicates, prostitution and human trafficking, all feed and in turn feed off a popular perception that migrants are bad for South African society and its economy. It is easy for the media and the government to blame immigrants for crime, unemployment and housing problems which can be detrimental for the economy, culture, society and international image of South Africa. Solomon and Kosaka (2019) outlined eight suggestions which media must play as a vital role in educational process. They are:

- The curriculum for journalism education should be re-examined to determine how best journalists can be trained to help create an environment that is more conducive to effective intercultural communication, understanding and harmony;
- Tertiary institutions that offer courses on communication and journalism should incorporate information on refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in learning modules;
- Editors should spell out a clear and deliberate editorial policy for coverage on refugee and migrant issues;
- Stakeholders and experts on refugees, asylum seeker and migrant issues should

- publish a catalogue of possible sources to be used by journalists in covering these issues;
- Sensational and criminalising language should be dropped completely;
- Journalists and editors should pay attention to how they report immigration statistics they receive from 'official sources', there should be critical assessment of the source;
- The media should individually and through collective bodies actively seek ways of ridding their pages, bulletins and programmes of harmful racial stereotypes;
- Journalists, trade unions and other professional media forums should develop a media network against xenophobia that will define a code of conduct and spearhead campaigns for its implementation as common practice;

Apte (1994:4349) states that "a stereotype is intertwined with strong positive or negative attitudes, and the concept of stereotype primarily focuses on the knowledge of other socio-cultural groups, especially factual or putative racial and ethnic characteristics and their behaviour". Apte further states that stereotypes of a group may be based on some factors, such as occupation, sex, age, social or and economic status. According to Coates and Cameron (1988:8), "stereotyping is most often suffered by minority groups, who are socially subordinate and/or stigmatised in a society". These stereotypes, which result in stigma and subordination, are expressed through language and are often escalated in the media.

All the studies show the negative portrayal of ethnic minority groups and immigrants/foreigners in the European press. One common feature of Van Dijk's work is his attention on the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in different social and political contexts.

#### 4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework employ for the analysis of the data is critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Semantic fields in discourse about foreigners (Gotsbachner, 2001). Critical discourse analysis began as a programmatic development in European discourse studies spearheaded by Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Teun van Dijk and others (Blommaer & Bulcaen, 2000:447). The root of CDA, according to Wodak (2004), lies in the concepts of rhetoric, text linguistics and sociolinguistics, as well as in applied linguistics and pragmatics. According to

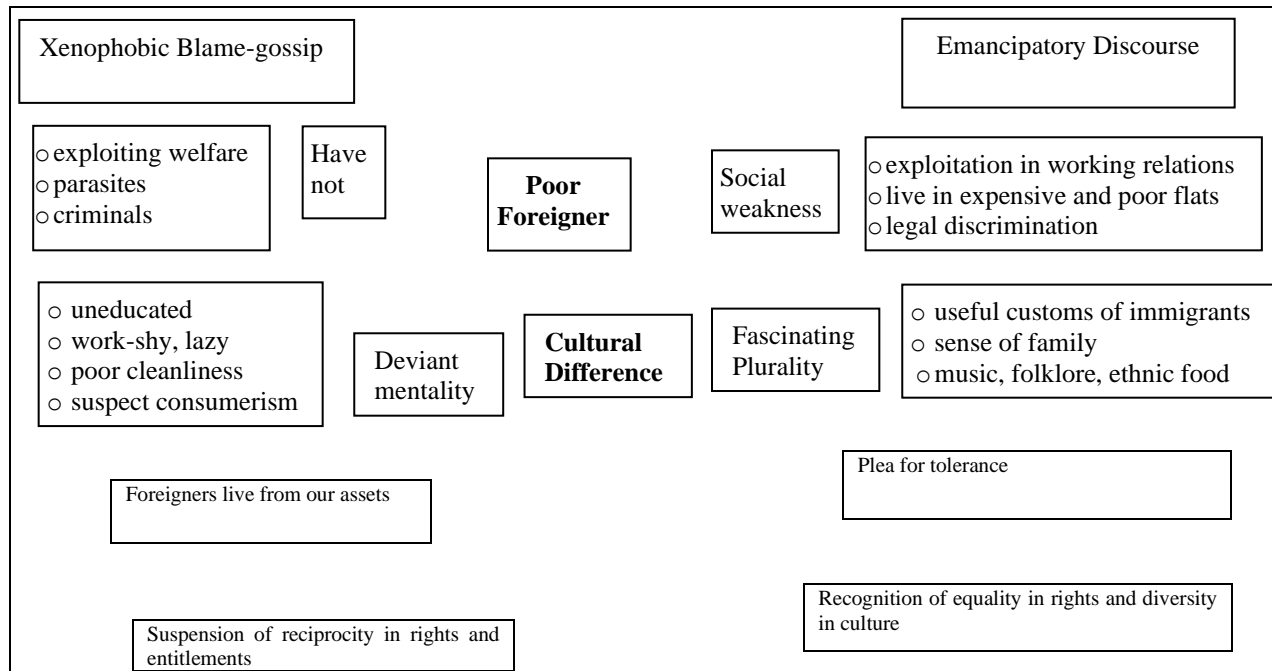
Wodak (Ibid), the CDA network emerged in the early 1990's, following a symposium in Amsterdam where she (Wodak), Van Dijk, Fairclough, Kress and Leeuwen discussed the theories and methods of DA. The early interest in systematic DA was essentially a descriptive and structuralist enterprise, mainly at the boundaries of linguistics and anthropology with interest primarily involving indigenous or popular genres, such as folk tales, myths and stories as well as some ritual interaction form (Van Dijk, 1985). Just as many sociologically-oriented conversation analysts analyse interactions in the hope of gaining insight into how people succeed in forming a community or society, the critical discourse analysts see discourse as an instrument to gain insight into societal problems (Renkema, 2004). According to Van Dijk (1996), one of the crucial tasks of CDA is to account for the relationship between discourse and social power. The analysis of which according to him should describe and explain how power abuse is enacted, reproduced or legitimised by the text and

talk of the dominant groups' institution in the press. Fairclough (1989) states that the elements of discourse are text, interaction and social context. Their corresponding distinctions are the description of text, interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction and an explanation of the relationship between interaction and social contexts. According to Fairclough (1992), every discourse instance has three dimensions:

- it is a spoken or written language text, and an interaction between two or more people;
- involving processes of producing and interpreting the text; and
- is part of a piece of social action.

The second framework employs in this study is semantic fields in discourse about foreigners by Gotsbachner (2001). Semantic fields in discourse about foreigners is organised around two topics: xenophobic blame-gossip and emancipatory discourse as shown in the following figure.

**Figure 1: Semantic Fields in Discourse About Foreigners**



Gotsbachner (2001)

Xenophobic blame-gossip and emancipatory discourse according to Gotsbachner (2001) have been identified as focal concepts of discourse about foreigners. To talk about “poor foreigners” or about “cultural differences” can vary in meaning from differently oriented people, either emancipator as “social weakness” and “fascinating plurality” (as represented in the right side of the figure); or

xenophobic as “have-nots” (do not have anything) and “deviants’ mentality” (as represented in the left side of the figure). The different representations (positive and negative perception of the foreigners) are concluded under the bottom line. “Emancipatory discourse” plea for tolerance and recognition of equality in the rights and diversity in culture of all the foreigners, while “xenophobic blame-gossip” is

legitimation of why immigrants need not be treated as having equal human rights like the citizens. The above figure shows that, in any country, the attitudes towards the foreigners is either positive (tolerance and recognition of equality in their rights and the diversity in culture of all the foreigners) or negative (marginalisation, deprivation and unequal treatment).

## 5. Research Methodology

Data for this study were obtained from primary and secondary sources. From the secondary source, we consulted a number of South African Newspapers with focus on themes relating to xenophobic attacks or sentiments. Some of the newspapers consulted include:

- Daily New
- City Press
- The Star
- Sowetan

The primary source of data collection was interview, which was done through face to face interaction. The interview was used to gather facts, opinions and personal views from Sesotho people (representing South Africa) and foreign nationals residing in Bloemfontein. A total of 54 people were interviewed. Unstructured questions were used for the interviews. The interviews were conducted in different locations such as University of the Free State, restaurants, shops and some of the respondents' homes. The foreign national interviewed were from different countries. They include; Mozambique, Lesotho, Nigeria and Botswana, Bangladesh, Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Malawi, Pakistan, Somalia, and Zimbabwe.

## The Findings and Discussion

In this section, the data collected for the study were presented and analysed. On question, *Do you have words used to refer to foreigners?* (The question was addressed only to Sesotho people.) Almost all the participants (99%) ascertained that they have words used to refer to foreigners. When asked to mention the words used to refer to foreigners in Sesotho language, the participated gave the following words as shown below:

- Lekwerekwere/Makwerekwere
- Mazwanzwiri
- Lekomfere
- Matswantle\*
- Siya thengisa
- Bomokgotsi\*
- Magrigamba

Apart from "iv" (matswantle) and "vi" (bomokgotsi) which are followed by an asterisk, all are negative

words used to refer to foreigners in Sesotho. The words with asterisk are mostly used positively to refer to foreigners. Even the words in "iv" and in "vi", are sometimes used negatively to refer to foreigners, depending on the tone of the person's voice, according to one of our respondents.

Some of these words, such as "*lekwerekwere*", "*makwerekwere*" "*magrigamba*" and "*mazwanzwiri*" according to the Sesotho participants are the negative words generally used to refer to African foreigners.

"*Lekomfere*" means someone from afar in Sesotho and is often used negatively to refer to foreigners.

"*Matswantle*" is a Sesotho common word for foreigners; it is never used negatively in any context.

"*Siya thengisa*" is an isiZulu phrase meaning "we are selling". But the Sesotho people use this phrase negatively to refer to foreigners, especially the foreigners who sell things from house to house (the hawkers).

"*Bomokgotsi*" is a Sesotho word, meaning "friend". Since some foreigners tend to address them (the Sesotho) as "friend" probably because they do not know or remember their names, in return, the Sesotho equally address foreigners with the word; this is not meant negatively.

In responding to the same question, "*Do you think that foreigners like words used to refer to them?*", majority of the Sesotho participants (61%) said that *foreigners* do not like such words.

On the question, "*If you are being referred to with such words, would you be happy?*" Eighty seven percent (87%) of the Sesotho that participated in the study believed that they would not be happy if they were addressed or referred to with such words. It means that anybody who uses the words to refer to foreigners has a negative attitude towards the person she or he is referring to. According to Van Dijk (1998), negative attitudes or prejudiced attitudes show both in discriminatory actions and are communicated to other group members of the society through unbalanced media reports. Negative attitudes towards others may result in xenophobic sentiments.

## 6. Results on Language Use in Newspapers

With regard to question which elicits if the participants read newspapers, almost all the participants 99% ascertained that they read newspapers. In responding to question on the frequency with which the participants read the newspapers, the results from both the foreign nationals and the Sesotho participants reveal the high frequency with which the participants read newspapers. Eleven percent (11%) and 89% of the foreigners always and often read the newspapers, respectively, while 19% and 78% of Sesotho

participants always and often read newspapers respectively.

With regard to the question “*Does the language use in South African newspapers portrays foreigners negatively?*”, the participants’ responses indicate that 89% of the foreigners and 69% of the Sesotho participants are of the opinion that the language used in South African newspapers portrays the foreigners as negative. Earlier study reveals that many foreigners (53%) married men have South African women as their wife (see Ideh, 2010), the marriage did not rule out the negative perception of foreigners among the South Africans. According to Pillay (2008), there is a widespread perception that foreigners are involved in high-level organised crime, in particular drug trafficking, which draws in young people as partners to this crime and has led to an escalating problem of addiction and drug abuse.

### Extracts from Newspapers

The news headlines with regards to xenophobic violence and sentiments were ambivalence. While some newspapers report the attacks on the foreigners as xenophobia, others report it as criminal acts. The following are some of the extracts from some selected newspaper focusing on attacks on the foreigners.

#### Extract 1

They wanted to chop me with an axe but I moved away. They took all my belonging”. He stated further that he and other foreigners were beaten by about 20 or 30 men and forced them to handover their belongings before the bar was ransacked (Foreigners; Daily News, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008, page 1)

#### Extract 2

African migrants who have been the targets of the xenophobic violence cannot be blamed for unemployment in South Africa and they often create jobs themselves Deputy President told the city press. The Deputy President had earlier officially apologised to foreigners for the pain they had endured since hate attacks broke out across South Africa. It is not acceptable that we say foreigners are taking our jobs. We recruit people from other countries to come and help us in our skills shortage. On that high level, people come and fill positions that by and large we cannot fill ourselves. At the grassroots levels in townships, most of these people are traders who create jobs, we can’t punish people for their creativity and ingenuity. They are prepared to walk the extra mile to start that business (Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka, a former Deputy President of South Africa, City Press, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2008; page 12)

#### Extract 3

I now feared for my life because things are getting worse, things like this are happening in Johannesburg. I believe what happened here is related to xenophobic attacks in Gauteng (Foreigner and the owner of one bar in Johannesburg; Daily News, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008, page 1)

#### Extract 4

I think this attack was more criminally motivated than xenophobic in nature because these guys looted the place.

Police were called out to Pine street where a group of local vendors and saloon owners had gathered, ordering foreign nationals to vacate the shops. The locals accused the foreign businesses of putting them out of business and said tensions had risen in recent weeks (Khoza, a South African, Daily News, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008, page 1)

#### Extract 5

In Warwick Triangle area taxi drivers apparently gathered and started beating street vendors and those who have small businesses near the Claremont taxi rank. Witnesses said while the foreigners were being beaten, those in support of the attackers were shouting out that the foreigners must leave the country as they were not welcome here, “we are doing this to support our brothers in Johannesburg, we do not want these people here, they must go back to their countries” (Daily News Reporter, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008, page 1).

#### Extract 6

“We are not happy with the way South Africans are treating us. They call us *kwerekwere* and it makes me feel bad. When the attacks happened last month, I was so scared I couldn’t go outside my house. I have been here with my husband and two kids for six years, and we work very hard. There are no jobs in Maputo, so we can’t go back home. I want South Africans to treat us like they treat everybody else. In the salon where I work, there are some nice people; the South Africans here are my sisters” (Foreigner from Maputo, Mozambique; The Star, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2008, Page 13).

#### Extract 7

The IFP has pledged to cooperate with the authorities to help stop the xenophobic violence threatening to engulf Durban. This comes after a group from Dalton men’s hostel attacked a City Pub-restaurant owned by a foreigner (Mhlaba Memela, Sowetan, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2008, Page 8)

The extract one does not only portray xenophobic attack but also jealousy leading to day-time robbery in South Africa. In other words South Africans were envious of foreigners' possessions and achievements, they gang up against them, beating and looting their wares. The poor foreigners were helpless and totally depend on the government to help them stop the attacks.

From the News extracts, we can say that the xenophobic experienced in South Africa was not supported by South African government. For example, we deduce the following from extract two:

- African migrants cannot be blamed for unemployment in South Africa
- African migrants create jobs themselves
- African migrants endured pain since hate attacks broke out across South Africa
- It is not acceptable that we say foreigners are taking our jobs
- South Africans recruit people from other countries to help them in their skills shortage
- South Africans are not supposed to punish people for their creativity and ingenuity
- African migrants walk extra mile to start their own businesses

This report supports Pelser (2008:12) that foreigners are not taking South African's jobs, rather "South African government recruits people from other countries to come and help South Africa in the skills, in which there were shortages". He adds that most foreigners who are trading are very creative, as they go extra miles to set up their shops and create jobs, even for South Africans.

Extract four is an example of the power of press. Xenophobic attacks started in Gauteng and spread to other parts of South Africa with dissemination of information through media. The media in this context create a platform on which sentiments are recycled and, thus, fills people's minds with negative feelings towards foreigners where it is not necessary. The locals recreate what they have seen happening in other province. Extract four also reveals that South Africans were afraid of competition. The phobia exhibits here is that they are not a match to foreigners who does the same business as they do. It means that the businesses of the foreigners are prospering more than theirs. In other words, the foreigners out-compete locals leading to their jealousy and finding a way of eliminating the foreigners' businesses. However, the study reveals that some lootings that were done doing the xenophobic attacks sometimes extends to the businesses of South Africans. But what was not clear is that if the attackers (South Africans)

know that some of these looted businesses are not for foreigners alone but includes their own brothers and sisters.

Extract five shows that South Africans are hostile to foreigners; they gang up and beat the foreigners who have struggled and established small businesses on their own. Extract five and six report the same issue of the predicament of the foreign nationals. Some South Africans attack foreigners and loot their shops simply because according to them foreigners are "putting them out of business".

Although the majority of the participants ascertained that words used to refer to foreigners do not contribute to xenophobic sentiments in South Africa, these words from extract six shows that South Africans have phobia of and experience negativity towards the foreigners. There is no evidence from the current study that the negative words used to refer to foreigners contribute or fuel xenophobic sentiments/attacks in the country in any way. However, the words (negative words) brought negative feelings. The words can also breed hatred of South African from foreigners. From the extract six, the foreigner live, accept South African as their own but reverse is the case from South Africans who attack their neighbours and wish they leave their country and return back where they come from.

## 7. Causes of Xenophobic Sentiments/Attacks

In responding to the question, *Do you think that words used to refer to foreigners contribute to xenophobic sentiments in South Africa?* Ninety two percent (92%) and 67% of the participants (foreigners and Sesotho participants respectively) believed that such words do not contribute to xenophobic sentiments in the country. The foreign nationals' opinion on the reasons for xenophobic sentiment was that South Africans are lazy, greedy, envious, jealous, and hatred towards the foreigners. According to one of the respondents, "These South Africans do not want to do anything, yet they want all good life, they are jealous of foreigners that are making it in their country. Often they call us all sort of bad names, and belief that all crimes here are committed by foreigners, some foreigners may be bad, but not all".

On the side of Sesotho participants, xenophobic attack was as a result of the foreigners who are engaged in different kinds of crime like theft, prostitution, drug and taking jobs meant for South Africans, as well as human trafficking. One of our respondents stated that "these foreigners take our jobs and our women; we are fighting with them to get what rightfully belong to us". These findings support

Pillay (2008). According to him, “the causes of xenophobic sentiments in South Africa are perception of a relative deprivation (a general sense of feeling deprived of something to which a person or groups feels entitled to), poverty, and levels of inequality”.

Although all the reasons or factors that lead to xenophobic sentiments are social, they are expressed through language and sometimes escalated in the media. According to Van Dijk (1988b) people often let media account for their knowledge, beliefs and opinions about ethnic minority groups: including the foreigners. The media often portray the minority and the foreigners negatively in terms of problems, whether as causing problems of different types (in immigration, crime, employment, housing or welfare), or as having problems and in need of help. In this way, the media reproduce a dominant consensus, often pre-formulated by different political, social or academic elite, but also produce their own focused, stereotypical picture of minorities/foreigners, thereby contributing to and confirming the prevailing prejudices in society at large (Van Dijk, 1988a). According to Pillay (2008), anti-foreigner sentiments expressed uncritically in the media or through official channels can however contribute indirectly to the creation of an enabling environment within which anti-foreigner sentiments/attacks can flourish in the popular discourse.

## 8. Conclusion

South Africa has been shaped and reshaped by the influx of people from different countries of the world. Since 1994 with the opening of the South African borders, there has been a mass drift of people from different countries to all the cities in South Africa, including the townships. These movements lead to contacts between people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and a need for them to communicate, live and work together. However, there is need for tolerance among different groups. On the issue of language stereotypes and xenophobic sentiments, the study investigated the words used to refer to foreigners and if such words contribute to xenophobic sentiments in South Africa generally and particularly in Bloemfontein. The study reveals both positive and negative words used to refer to foreigners. Sesotho have seven words used to refer to foreigners, namely “*lekwerekwere/makwerekwere*”, “*magrigamba*”, “*mazwanzwiri*”, “*lekomfere*”, “*siya thengisa*”, “*bokokgotsi*”, and “*matswantle*”. Among all these words, only two: “*bokokgotsi*” and “*matswantle*” are not used negatively. The majority of the participants ascertained that these words used

to refer to foreigners do not contribute to xenophobic sentiments in South Africa, but the words show that South Africans have some negativity towards the foreigners. The most important reasons behind the prevalence of xenophobia in South Africa are the feelings that foreigners are competing with South Africans with limited resources, theft, poverty, drugs related crimes, prostitution and human trafficking. The findings which support the earlier study conducted by Pillay (2008). The government faces a pressing need to find a way for citizens and foreigners to live peaceably together and to tackle the problems associated with xenophobia. Perhaps the most important point to realise is that these misguided feelings of hatred, bitterness and resentment are based solely on the perception of economic hardship and scramble for limited resources. Enlightenment programmes should be organised on the need for foreigners and their status in the country. In other words, the primary focus for the government must be education and to correct misperceptions about the foreign nationals.

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