

SALT in South Africa: needs and parameters

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This article highlights some of the most pressing educational and language communication needs in the Republic of South Africa and emphasizes the urgency for accelerated programmes for teaching and learning. It further outlines and explains specific initiatives that have been started with in response to the needs described and it suggests an approach for the possible wider application of SALT in South Africa.

Hierdie artikel belig 'n aantal van die dringendste opvoedkundige en kommunikatiewe behoeftes in die Republiek van Suid-Afrika. Die noodsaklikheid van versnellingsprogramme vir die onderwys word beklemtoon. Verder omlyn en verduidelik dit spesifieke inisiatiewe waar mee begin is as antwoord op die bestaande behoeftes. Ten slotte word gesuggerer dat SALT in Suid-Afrika nog veel verder uitgebrei kan word.

Desperate needs

The need for inter-cultural communication

The population of South Africa totalled 28,6 million in 1980. (All the figures quoted in this document are based on information obtained from the Institute for Futures Research, University of Stellenbosch, with one exception: The figures on teacher qualifications are based on information in the *Main Report of the HSRC Investigation into Education* [HSRC 1981]. It should further be pointed out that for the purposes of this article the figures for the so-called Independent National States [Bophuthatswana, Venda, Ciskei and Transkei] have been included.)

The major languages spoken by the almost 30 million people are Afrikaans, Arabic, Dutch, English, French, German, North Sotho, Portuguese, South Sotho, Telegu, Tsonga, Tswana, Urdu, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu. There is a growing realization that there is a desperate need for accelerated intercultural communication and understanding, especially between Black and White. It is being regarded increasingly as an essential prerequisite for harmonious development towards a healthier society in South Africa (e.g.: Increasing numbers of

White primary schools are introducing an African language.)

The need for language training in industry

The importance of effective language communication in industry in South Africa has recently been emphasized *inter alia* in the *Main Report of the HSRC Investigation into Education* (HSRC 1981). On page 147 the reader finds the following quotation from Jupp (1975):

Industrial training should include language teaching as an essential component.

No appointments at senior levels, no promotion, no effective negotiation is possible without efficient language communication skills.

A quick glance at some of the considerations should suffice to bring us to the formulation of the next set of needs.

Swart (1981:46) points out that by the turn of the century, only 7% of the new recruits into the labour market will be Whites. The country will therefore rely more and more on *trained* and *trainable* Black

employees to fill situations traditionally occupied by Whites.

If we further consider that probably more than 90% of the Whites in the formal economy are not capable of communicating effectively in an African language, and that 58,12% of the 4,8 million Blacks employed in all sectors of the formal economy in the year 1982 were functionally illiterate (the Institute for Futures Research, University of Stellenbosch, defines the functionally illiterate person as one with five or fewer years of schooling), we get some perspective on the enormous need for:

- literacy training
- upgrading of communication skills in Afrikaans and English (i.e. the two official languages in South Africa) for Blacks in industry
- developing courses in African languages for Whites.

The need for training and in-service training of teachers

The figures given below highlight some of the country's most serious inequalities and needs in education.

Table 1

Black school children

Pupils

1980	2000 (projected)
4,8 million	9,1 million

Table 2

Teacher population

	1980	2000
Blacks	102 000	450 000

(This figure is not a projection but is normative in the sense that it indicates the number of teachers needed for a ratio of one teacher to twenty pupils, which would equal the 1980 ratio for Whites.)

Whites	51 000	41 000
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Table 3

Pupil-teacher ratio

	1980	2000
Blacks	1:47	1:20
(Again, this is a normative figure.)		
Whites	1:20	1:20

Table 4

Qualifications of teachers in 1978

1 Without teachers' diploma

	White	Black
Degree	34,33 %	2,45 %
Grade 12 (Standard 10)	65,67 %	15,09 %
Grade 10 (Standard 8)		62,90 %
Grade 8 (Standard 6)		18,56 %
Total	100 %	100 %

2 With teachers' diploma

	White	Black
Degree	32,18 %	1,43 %
Grade 12	67,82 %	13,90 %
Grade 10		84,67 %
Grade 8		
Total	100 %	100 %

Two disturbing conclusions can be drawn from tables 1-4:

- An enormous backlog in teacher training and in-service training exists in Black education. If the ratio of one teacher to twenty pupils is considered as ideal, the backlog in 1980 amounted to

138 000 teachers. In 1978 more than 80% of all the teachers in Black schools had not even completed their own high school education.

- It is estimated that the number of Black schoolchildren will increase by 4,3 million or 90% from 1980 to 2 000.
- With equal educational standards in view, 17 400 teachers for Black education will have to be trained every year up to 2 000, starting in 1980. In 1982, only about 8 000 teachers were trained.

Over and above these alarming facts, all these Black teachers, apart from those solely responsible for the first few grades, are expected to teach through the medium of one of the two official languages, Afrikaans or English (mostly English). That means they have to communicate through a language *which is a foreign language* to most of them and for which most of them have not been suitably equipped.

It therefore becomes clear that there is a great need for

- an acceleration of existing training and in-service training programmes for Blacks
- strong emphasis on the requirement of communication skills in the official language that the teachers need as a medium of instruction.

The search for unconventional solutions

Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe
(H.G. Wells).

There is indeed a chilling relevance to the South African situation in Wells' judgement about the need for accelerated education.

The reason why South African educators are motivated to look at methods and technologies which can improve the quality of teaching and learning and at the same time accelerate the process, should be evident by now. It should be clear that educators in South Africa are *desperately* in need of solutions to problems that could create a catastrophe.

Hypotheses about SALT and CALI (Computer-assisted language instruction)

In any discussion of possible contributions towards

meeting some of the needs outlined above, the applications of Suggestopedia/SALT should be considered.

In doing so, we hypothesize that the quality and accelerative effect of Suggestopedia/SALT, where it could be utilized in training centres, can benefit by integrating some of the attributes that computer-assisted instruction has to offer

- individualised instruction
- pretesting of students/trainees to determine the need for certain assignments
- immediate feedback
- effective learning management of large student/trainee audiences
- facilities for research on the effectiveness of testing and teaching.

We further hypothesize that the computer could become more effective as an instructional tool, if one could constantly consider the suggestopedic principles and utilize

- to a greater extent the possibilities offered by neurolinguistic programming
- guided phantasies, supported by Ericksonian techniques
- concerts
- to a greater extent SALT-related games and activities (Hofstetter [1982] focused attention on different studies indicating that computer-assisted instruction leads to acceleration of teaching and learning, better motivation and improved results:)

In doing so, the computer or microcomputer could become a far more effective instrument for teaching trainees and students in a country with such an acute shortage of skilled and qualified people.

Because of scepticism and resistance well-known in suggestopedic circles, a pragmatic approach should be adopted. We shall look for opportunities to convince educationists, decision-makers and ourselves that Suggestopedia not only works, but that it can work in South Africa in a very anti-suggestopedic environment. We shall also regard such opportunities as pilot projects that could indicate further possibilities for implementation as well as problems or weaknesses that need attention and assets or attributes that need further emphasis or research.

The Stellenbosch SALT programme

In co-operation with and with the support of academics representing five Black universities in South Africa, the plans for a pragmatic SALT programme have gained momentum, especially since three of us attended Lynn Dhority's 1983 workshop in Ames, and since a contract was signed with South African Airways and 14 lecturers were trained for three weeks by Charles Schmid at the beginning of 1984 in Stellenbosch.

The Stellenbosch programme which started at the beginning of 1984 consists of the following coherent components, some of which are discussed in greater detail by other authors in this issue with specific reference to problems resulting from starting SALT in an anti-suggestopedia environment.

- An analysis of available reports on projects and experiments with Suggestopedia in Language Teaching
- An analysis of Suggestopedia from the perspective of established disciplines like neurolinguistics, neurology, psycholinguistics and educational psychology, as well as an analysis of the practical application of SALT in the German Department, University of Stellenbosch, for two experimental beginners groups
- A SALT course in Xhosa for beginners in the Department of Bantu languages, University of Stellenbosch
- A SALT course in German for beginners in the Department of German
- A SALT working or brainstorming group that meets regularly for psychological and academic support

- A project for South African Airways with SALT and CALI components.

Conclusion

Although we see positive indications (*vide* other articles in this issue on SALT activities in South Africa) that SALT/Suggestopedia could be useful in improving the quality of education in South Africa as well as in accelerating teaching and training, it is clear that a very careful pragmatic approach is needed. We should strive, in co-operation with the international SALT community, to build a strong team. In doing so, we can create the scientific foundation without which, we believe, Suggestopedia/SALT will have little lasting effect.

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Nam tua res agitur, paries cum proximus ardet. (It is your own interest that is at stake when your next neighbour's wall is ablaze.)

— Horace