'WHERE ART THOU SESOTHO?': EXPLORING THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF WITS UNIVERSITY

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The article seeks to examine if the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits)'s language policy on paper is visually reflected on the linguistic landscape of the institution. The objective of this policy is to promote multilingualism, especially the status elevation of Sesotho to become a medium of instruction alongside English and a field of academic study and research. Masoke-Kadenge and Kadenge (2013) note that conceptual flaws within the policy, financial constraints and lack of political will were some of the challenges that militated against the successful implementation of this policy. Today, twelve years after the adoption of this policy, Wits is largely monolingual. This article adopts an expanded view of language policy and explores the linguistic landscape of Wits with the goal of providing invaluable insights into the sociolinguistic situation at the institution. The main focus is on language visibility on public signage in the form of names of buildings like libraries, lecture venues and laboratories, warning notices and directions, among others, and important documentation like employment contracts, e-mails and newsletters at the Braamfontein East campus. The analysis also extends to the university's website. The findings from this study show that the linguistic landscape of Wits is largely a reflection of the failed institutional language policy. It symbolically reproduces an old language ideology of a monolingual – English-based – university, which goes against the spirit of the National Language Policy Framework (Department of Arts and Culture, 2002) which compels South African universities to transform and develop language policies that accommodate linguistic, cultural and racial diversity.

Keywords

African languages, language policy, linguistic landscape, language practices, Wits University

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE, LANGUAGE POLICY AND LANGUAGE PRACTICES

Language is ubiquitous in textual form, as it is displayed on moveable and immovable surfaces such as parking bays, street lights, public bins, traffic signs, advertising boards, posters and bill boards, among many others (Gorter, 2006: 1). These textual forms constitute the linguistic landscape (henceforth LL) of a community. Most of the time people do not pay attention to the LL that surrounds them (Gorter, 2006).

The notion of LL has often been used for the description and analysis of the language situation in a particular community or for the presence and use of many languages in a larger geographical area. A LL analysis provides an overview of languages that are spoken (Gorter, 2006). Thus, the notion of LL is closely related to concepts such as language visibility, linguistic market, linguistic ecology, diversity of languages and linguistic situation. It implies the use, in speech or writing, of more than one language and thus of multilingualism. It also

reflects the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs. As noted by Landry and Bourhis (1997: 25), 'the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration'. Similarly, Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara and Trumper-Hecht (2006: 7) note that 'linguistic landscape refers to the linguistic objects that mark public space'. An important characteristic of LL is that it is comprised of both 'private' and 'public' signs: signs issued by public authorities (like government, municipalities or public agencies) on the one hand, and signs issued by individuals, associations or firms acting more or less autonomously in the limits authorised by official regulations (Shohamy, 2006). As Negro (2009) observes, 'similar to other manifestations of language, LL is both the mirror of sociolinguistic norms (bilingual signs mirror a bilingual community), and an important component of sociolinguistic structures (that is, bilingual signs contribute to construct a bilingual community)'. Shohamy (2006: 110) makes an important observation concerning language in the public space and says:

> the display of language transmits symbolic messages as to the legitimacy, relevance, priority and standards of languages and the people and groups they represent. The public space is therefore a most relevant arena to serve as a mechanism for creating a de facto language policy so that the ideological battles that are taking place in the new nation-state can be turned into practice.

Against this background, this article presents an empirical analysis of the LL of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), with the aim of shedding light on the covert language policy of this institution. The study of LL is new in the context of Wits, though there is a lot of work that has been done on other South Africa rural and urban communities. The term LL is used in this article to refer to languages that are visible at public spaces at Wits's Braamfontein East Campus. The spaces that are focused on in this study include notice boards, directions, names of buildings and written communication. The broader objective is to empirically contribute to the growing board of literature on this emerging branch of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics.

This article looks at LL in relation to language policy. It is the contention of this paper that the LL of a community is largely informed by the written (overt) or unwritten (covert) language policy of that particular community. A language policy is an official decision made by authorities concerning the use and promotion of language(s) in a specific social or geographical context. It contains decisions, rules, regulations and guidelines on the status and use of languages (Crawford, 2000). According to Kamwangamalu (2001), language policies are transitional tools that facilitate the move from old language functions that need to be discarded to new language functions that are aspired. During the apartheid era, English and Afrikaans were the only official languages in South Africa and universities were divided into English- and Afrikaans-medium institutions. Wits was, and still is, one of the English-only universities. However, the new dispensation of political freedom in 1994 accorded official status to 11 South African languages, namely Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, siSwati, English and Afrikaans. The position of English, which Alexander (2001: 7) describes as 'contestably the global language', at Wits has remained unchanged. It dominates official and unofficial communication. This is a general trend in Africa, as Bamgbose (1991) illustrates that former colonial languages remained the sole official or co-official languages, together with selected African languages.

However, the *National Language Policy Framework* (Department of Arts and Culture, 2002) compels South African universities to develop language policies that accommodate linguistic and racial diversity. This policy framework requires institutions of higher learning to address the following issues:

- languages of instruction;
- the future of South African languages as fields of academic study and research;
- the study of foreign languages; and
- the promotion of multilingualism in policies and practices.

The *Language Policy for Higher Education* (Department of Education, 2002) emphasises that universities have the mandate to develop African languages as fields of academic study and research; promoting them to function beyond their traditional domains of the home, family and immediate community.

In response to the *Language Policy for Higher Education*, South African universities devised language policies which promised to promote the status elevation and development of African languages. However, there is often a gap between policy intentions and practice. Policy implementation is said to be the link between policy formulation and policy practice (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry, 1997). The implementation of a policy is normally affected by three factors, namely the clarity of policy goals, the complexity of the implementation process and the extent or otherwise the resource commitment of the policy (Rein, 1983). Beukes (2009: 21) is of the opinion that 'language policy and planning in South Africa have become trapped in a gap between "intention" and "performance"'. The challenge of implementing language policies is not unique to South Africa but is common in Africa (Bamgbose, 1991). Wright (2007) argues that the question of language policy implementation has to be analysed in light of the sociolinguistic complexities that underpin language policy and its successes on the ground.

The motivation for policy implementation normally determines the success or failure of the implementation of a language policy. Language policies that intend to promote indigenous languages require a concrete assessment value of the languages in question. Kamwangamalu (2001), for example, argues that market forces determine whether there is substantial demand for multilingual skills in the African languages for academic, administrative, economic and employment purposes. This suggests that the allocation of resources is critical for any language policy implementation plan (Madiba, 2010). Fishman (1987) emphasises that there is no serious language planning without a budget allocated to the plans. Hence, the observation that provision of resources distinguishes between language policy implementation and mere window dressing (Masoke-Kadenge & Kadenge, 2013).

PREVIOUS STUDIES ON THE WITS LANGUAGE POLICY

Very few studies have been done on the Wits language policy. Most studies have focused on national language policy documents from the Department of Education. These are the official documents that inform the South African national language policy. Foley (2004), for example, discusses the *Language Policy for Higher Education Document* as background to the analysis of the Wits language policy. He focuses on two main thrusts of the document: the need to develop (South African) African languages as academic/scientific languages for use in instruction; and the need to develop student proficiency in the currently designated language(s) of tuition, namely English and, to a lesser extent, Afrikaans. He identifies

political, social, linguistic and economic reasons why South African indigenous languages cannot be developed and elaborated as academic/scientific languages to the point where they are able to function as media of instruction in higher education. Foley (2004: 59) notes that:

> Politically, there seems to be no really proactive determination on the part of the general population (in marked contrast to Afrikaners) to bring about and sustain the necessary development and advancement of the indigenous languages, certainly for higher education purposes. Nor has language ever been seen as a priority by the present government.

He further notes that, socially, however, there seems to be little sense of the need to broaden the scope of the home language beyond the primary social functions. Instead, for the purposes of more general communication, advanced learning and education, formal economic involvement, and so on, the acquisition of English is seen as a necessity. From a linguistic perspective, Foley (2004) notes that lack of standardised forms or well-established written forms of South African indigenous languages has the potential to impede the development of these languages as media of instruction. Huge financial and human resources must be dedicated to this enterprise if it is to be successful.

Foley (2004) presents a brief critique of how Wits responded to the *Language Policy for Higher Education* and notes that to select only Sesotho to be developed as a medium of instruction undermines the very notion of language equity and the promotion of multilingualism. He asks: Why should the university effectively choose to serve the interests of only 11% of the student population? Is Wits going to be perceived as an institution that favours Sesotho speakers over others? In this regard, he concludes that far from greater inclusivity, the policy as it currently stands would seem ironically to be perpetrating a new and even more divisive system of linguistic discrimination. At the very least, Wits should accept the dominant language – isiZulu – as the medium of instruction in order to provide a more fully multilingual teaching and learning environment (Foley, 2004: 66). For Foley, the real solution to language politics in South Africa lies partly in developing indigenous languages, but more urgently in providing quality access to English proficiency throughout the education system, and indeed throughout the society generally.

Masoke-Kadenge and Kadenge (2013) sought to examine the progress made and the challenges faced in implementing the Wits language policy. They interviewed three administrators (the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic, a Head of School and a Strategic Planner) who were involved in formulating the policy, and three lecturers in the Department of African languages who, by virtue of their profession, are responsible for the implementation process. While the Wits language policy recognises Sesotho as an official language of the institution, there were no initiatives to ensure compliance with this policy requirement (Masoke-Kadenge & Kadenge, 2013: 33). Conceptual flaws within the policy, financial constraints and lack of political will are some of the challenges that militated against the successful implementation of this language policy. They further note that, even though the Wits language policy is intended to develop Sesotho, contextual factors, especially demographic facts, dictate that isiZulu is the more dominant language within the institution; hence, the implementation tends to be inclined towards the development of this language.

Nothing stops Wits from developing isiZulu, because the *Language Policy for Higher Education* never requires universities to abstain from choosing languages that are being

developed by their counterparts, nor does it say each university should choose one language; it says a university should choose at least one language to develop. So Wits could choose isiZulu as well and could choose to develop it alongside Sesotho as another dominant indigenous language. Such an approach is in the offing at Rhodes University where the long-term plan is to accommodate Sesotho alongside English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa (Masoke-Kadenge & Kadenge, 2013).

Conduah (2003) discusses the attitudes of selected groups of staff and students at Wits to the introduction of an African language alongside English for teaching and learning purposes. A large proportion of the interviewees anticipated negative social and cultural effects such as disunity among students and violation of some students' linguistic rights if any one of the African languages were selected as the language of teaching and learning. Others felt that this would lower the standard of English at the university. However, Heugh (1995: 88) is of the opinion that 'African languages must be promoted as valid languages of learning/media of instruction' alongside English to ensure students' equal participation in the learning process.

Nyika and van Zyl (2013) revisited the issue of language attitudes and practices at Wits with a view to drawing insights into the matter of language policy in higher education, and in particular, the place of African languages. The majority of the respondents expressed the view that Wits did not need to channel scarce resources towards any multilingual initiatives, but rather to focus solely on using English for teaching and learning. They note that prominent among the considerations cited by these respondents are the issues around globalisation and the international stature of English as overriding concerns in deciding on the question of the role of the different languages and their place in the university. In sum, they observe that there is continued strong support for English as the language of learning and teaching and isiZulu as the preferred language – where an African language is supported.

That Africans can learn better if taught in their mother tongues is not debatable. Mazrui (2000), for example, makes an important observation when he says that no country has ever ascended to first rank technological and economic power by excessive dependence on foreign languages. Japan arose to dazzling industrial heights by 'scientificating' the Japanese language and making it the language of its own industrialisation. Likewise, Prah (1993: 75) notes that

> African development cannot mean the relegation of African languages to disuse, stagnation and death. The real and only basis for sustained and realisable socially emancipatory development for Africans, hinges on the usage of African languages, as the instrumental premises of African scientific and technological development.

It is against this background that this study reflects on the failure by Wits to implement its language policy through the analysis of its LL. In doing this, this article adopts an expanded view of language policy, which, according to Shohamy (2006:54), 'should not be limited to the examination of declared and official statements. Rather, the real policy is executed through a variety of mechanisms that determine de facto practices'. The mechanisms include rules and regulations, language educational policies, language tests and language in the public space, as well as ideologies, myths, propaganda and coercion. This article pays special attention to language in the public space at Wits. The section below presents the principles of the Wits language policy as background to the analysis.

THE WITS LANGUAGE POLICY: AN OVERVIEW OF ITS OBJECTIVES

The Wits language policy was adopted by Council on 14 March 2003. It was developed to promote multilingualism at the institution, especially the status elevation of Sesotho to become the medium of instruction alongside English and a field of academic study and research. The policy document explicitly states that 'the University commits itself to multilingualism and the phased development of Sesotho as a language that can be used as medium of instruction together with English' (University of the Witwatersrand, 2003: 2). It indicates that Phase 1 of the policy was to be completed by 2010 and Phase 2 was to begin in 2011. In 2011, the University was going to consider the time frames for Phases 3 and 4, based on the national language landscape at the time. In order to achieve this, the University needed to do the following (University of the Witwatersrand, 2003: 2).

1. **Support multilingualism by**
   - allowing the use of all official languages for interaction on the University campus;
   - translating key documents such as contracts, rules, application and registration forms into official languages of the province;
   - providing interpreting services where necessary, for example, disciplinary hearings;
   - including multilingual and multicultural practices at ceremonial gatherings, for example, graduations and inaugurations; and
   - providing a major in at least one foreign language.

2. **Develop the Sesotho language by**
   - researching and developing language teaching resources, materials and courses for staff and students;
   - researching and developing language teaching resources, materials and courses in Sesotho for primary and secondary education if this is financed by government; and
   - playing a role, alongside government, in the development of the Sesotho language for use as a medium of instruction in higher education.

3. **Develop the linguistic abilities of staff by**
   - requiring full competence in English by all academic staff by the end of their probation period;
   - providing courses for all administrative and support staff to acquire the English competence needed to perform their jobs, and requiring this competence within two years of their appointment;
   - providing courses in English as a foreign language for foreign staff;
   - providing courses in Sesotho or isiZulu for academic, administrative and support staff who wish from 2011;
   - requiring staff who do not speak any African language to become communicatively competent in Sesotho or isiZulu;
   - paying for courses in Sesotho or isiZulu that staff wish to take prior to 2011, provided that these courses are approved in terms of the skills development levy; and

- paying for staff who wish to take courses in any other African language, provided that these courses are approved in terms of the skills development levy.

4. **Develop the linguistic abilities of students by**
   - requiring all students to achieve full competence in written and spoken English by the end of their first degree by providing the necessary support for academic literacy in English within the disciplines and in credit-bearing courses in English language and literacy;
   - requiring foreign students who cannot demonstrate full competence in English to complete a non-credit bearing course in English as a foreign language, appropriate to their level of study;
   - requiring students who do not speak an African language to complete two-credit bearing modules in basic communicative competence in Sesotho or IsiZulu. These modules will be required for all qualifications from 2011; and
   - providing a major in Sesotho or isiZulu using newly researched materials (the former having been developed at Wits).

It is noteworthy that Wits is in the process of revising this language policy. In preparation for this revision, it carried out a large-scale survey which was intended to (University of the Witwatersrand, 2014: 26):

- find out which indigenous language(s) the University stakeholders (students, academics, non-academic staff and contract staff) would prefer as a lingua franca for University business, research and educational programmes;
- understand how to redress the language policy inequalities that currently exist in the University and encourage respect for and development of indigenous African languages;
- establish considered views on means through which preferred languages could be developed and mainstreamed;
- propose an implementation strategy which will guide how the preferred language(s) can be placed at the centre of the academic and business enterprise of the University; and
- inform the work of the Language Policy Task Team by developing an awareness of the need for the university to play a leading role in honouring the constitutional imperatives for multilingualism.

According to the University of the Witwatersrand (2014: 26), the study looked for responses to the following research questions:

- What is the preferred African language for inclusion in the official language policy at Wits?
- How should such a language be used for educational, research and business purposes?
- How should that language be developed for business and scientific use within the university?

The survey made the following key findings:

- The university needs to keep English as its main medium of communication. This view was supported by 80% of staff; 95% of students, and 31.25% of workers in outsourced services.
- The view that Sesotho should be replaced by another language was confirmed by the choice of isiZulu as the preferred language to be used officially with English and developed for wider use in the University. This was the case in all clusters of respondents (40.40% of staff; 58.64% of students and 37.95% of employees in outsources services).
- Sesotho achieved second place as the preference of staff at 26.20%; third place among students at 8.73%; and third place among employees in outsources services at 12.82%.

These findings strongly suggest that Wits stakeholders would want to have English, isiZulu and Sesotho as the official languages of the institution. These findings should feed into the revised version of the Wits language policy, and hopefully these languages will be used for public signage on all campuses. A critical discourse analysis of these findings is left for future research. This article pays special attention to the Wits language policy of 2003 and how it is reflected in the current LL of the university. It is hoped that this study will shed light on the current sociolinguistic situation at Wits and how this can be changed to ensure the promotion of multilingualism, especially the use of isiZulu and Sesotho alongside English.

DATA SOURCES

Methodologically, LL analysis relies on photography and visual analysis. Consequently, the core data gathering method is to engage in photography (Hult, 2009: 90). The majority of the data for this article comes from photographs taken at Wits's Braamfontein East campus. The data are in the form of photos of documents, public signage and notices that were taken from various locations, buildings and noticeboards at Wits in 2014 and early 2015. This is the LL in which the Wits students, staff and visitors find themselves, which are the visual representations of dominant language ideologies (Abongdia & Foncha, 2014; Kress, 2006). The images were examined in terms of the languages in which they are written. This is crucial mainly because the presence or absence of languages in public space communicates symbolic messages about the importance, power, significance and relevance of certain languages or the irrelevance of others (Shohamy, 2006). In analysing the pictures, the focus was on the presence of South African indigenous languages like Sesotho and isiZulu, among others. The LL of Wits reveals a lot about the sociolinguistic situation, especially language practices at the institution.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data to be analysed below are from two main sources, namely the Wits website and public signage. Language use on the website is critical because it is the main means through which Wits projects itself to South African stakeholders and the world at large. The public signage has the same function but is mainly intended for locals, Wits staff and students. The section below presents a descriptive analysis of language use on the Wits website.

THE WITS WEBSITE

Like any other institution, Wits communicates with its stakeholders (staff and students) and the world at large through its website. Unlike other institutions that have multilingual websites, the Wits website is monolingual; it is in English only, as shown in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: The Wits website

That the Wits website is monolingual contradicts the institution's commitment to multilingualism which is expressed in its 2003 language policy. Since the policy recognises Sesotho as an official language of the institution, one would expect the website to be packaged in this language too. There is nothing which stops the university from having a website that has an option for translating materials into indigenous languages that are dominant at Wits, namely isiZulu and Sesotho.

Even the profiles of the African Languages and Linguistics departments, which should be at the centre of promoting multilingualism and actualising and implementing the Wits language policy, are presented in English only. Their course models and staff profiles are all presented in English. This serves to show how English dominates intellectual and sociocultural life at this university. The policy has not been implemented, as the main languages of the institution are not represented on its communication channels. In other words, at Wits, the policy on paper does not match actual practices (see, e.g., Masoke-Kadenge & Kadenge, 2013). Shohamy (2006: 51) rightly notes that 'language policies are mostly manifestations of intentions while less attention is given to the implementation of policy in practice. It is often the case that even when policies are stated explicitly it still does not guarantee that the language policy will in fact turn into practice and there are situations when the use of languages are in opposition to declared policies.' This is exactly the situation at Wits: policy objectives are not reflected on the institution's LL and everyday practices.

Interestingly, other South African universities, with progressive language policies, allow for multilingual websites. A typical example of this is the North-West University website, which is available in English, Afrikaans and Setswana, as shown in Figure 2 below:
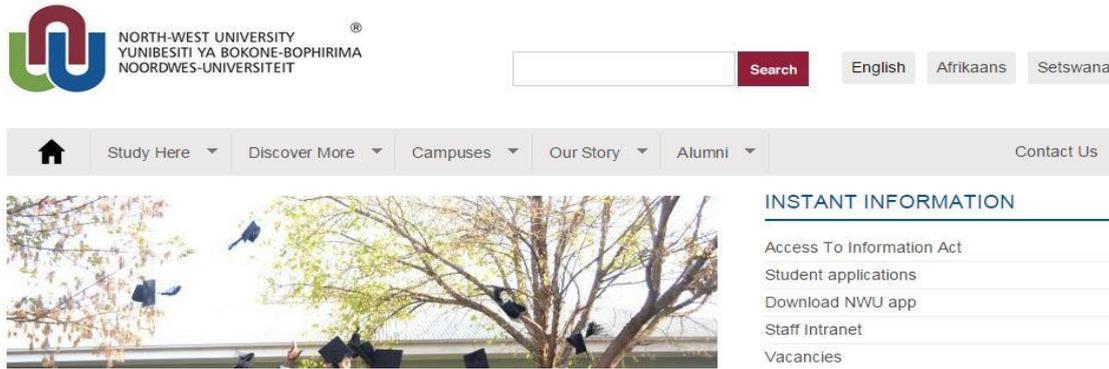
Figure 2: The North-West University website

The North-West scenario signifies the University's quest for promoting multilingualism. This is also evident in the public signage at the institution which appears in these three languages – English, Afrikaans and Setswana. It is hoped that the implementation of the revised Wits language policy will include the construction of a multilingual website.

PUBLIC SIGNAGE

While the Wits language policy advocates multilingualism, the public signage at this institution is largely monolingual. It is mainly in English. Although the policy underscores the importance of African languages, especially Sesotho, the LL of Wits shows limited use of this language or any other indigenous South African languages. Negro (2009: 208) correctly charges that 'probably nothing is more symbolic for a community than its own name[s]'. At Wits, names of building, lecture venues, directions and notices are in English, except for one notice which prohibits smoking inside buildings and has Tswana/Sesotho and isiZulu translations. Names express the cultural values and sensibilities espoused by a community. Figure 3 below shows some of the names of major buildings at the Wits campus. What do these names symbolise in relation to Wits identity?
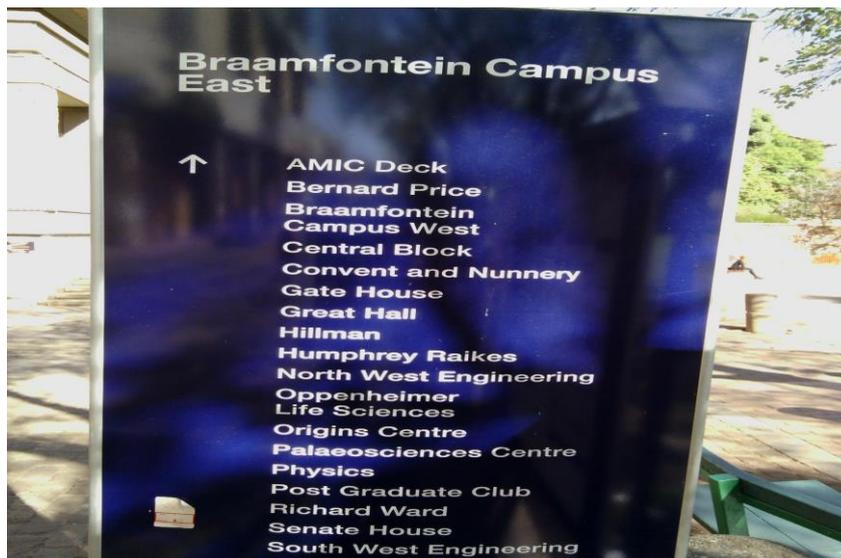

Figure 3: Names of buildings

The main buildings at the Wits main campus are the Central Block where the Great Hall and other departments like Philosophy, Maths, History, Politics, International Relations, Anthropology, among others, are housed and the Senate House which has the Vice-Chancellor's office and many other central administration offices. The names of the buildings and their venues are all in English. Other names of lecture venues at the Wits Braamfontein East Campus are:

- John Moffat;
- Biology Building;
- Humphrey Raikes Building;
- Central Block Exams Hall;
- First National Bank Building;
- Gate House;
- GeoSciences Building;
- Oppenheimer Life Sciences;
- Physics Building;
- Richard Ward Building;
- Wartenwelier Library, etc.

The only building that has an indigenous name is *Umthombo*, which houses the School of Humanity and Community Development. *Umthombo* is a Nguni word which means 'a well or fountain'. Close to this building is a lecture venue with a Nguni name known as *Emthonjeni* which means 'from the well or fountain'. Beukes (2010: 196) observes that, at most, African languages have been afforded (limited) socio-symbolic significance on some campuses through the use of multilingual signage. At Wits, very little has been done to create a truly multilingual environment, which has resulted in the visibility of indigenous languages being low. Directions to buildings and venues are all given in the English language as shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Directions

Directions are meant to communicate with Wits stakeholders like visitors, students and staff, some of whom may not have a good command of the English language. Since Wits regularly hosts ceremonies like graduations, open days and sports that are normally open to the public, it is important that its signage, particularly directions, notices and warnings, is presented in official languages, namely English, Sesotho and isiZulu, which are the main languages of the province.

Warnings are meant to convey important information to the public. The best way to communicate would be in the languages that the public understands. At Wits, most warnings, except one, are in English. Examples of important warnings that appear in English only are given in Figures 5 and 6 below:

Figure 5: Warning

Figure 6: Warning

Important notices on Wits culture and identity are also presented in English. These notices are about values and sensibilities that are tolerated and those that are not tolerated at Wits. Human rights violations like racism, xenophobia, homophobia and religious intolerance are not tolerated at this institution, like at any another institution in South Africa. These important issues are conveyed to the public through one language – English – as shown in the poster in Figure 7 below:
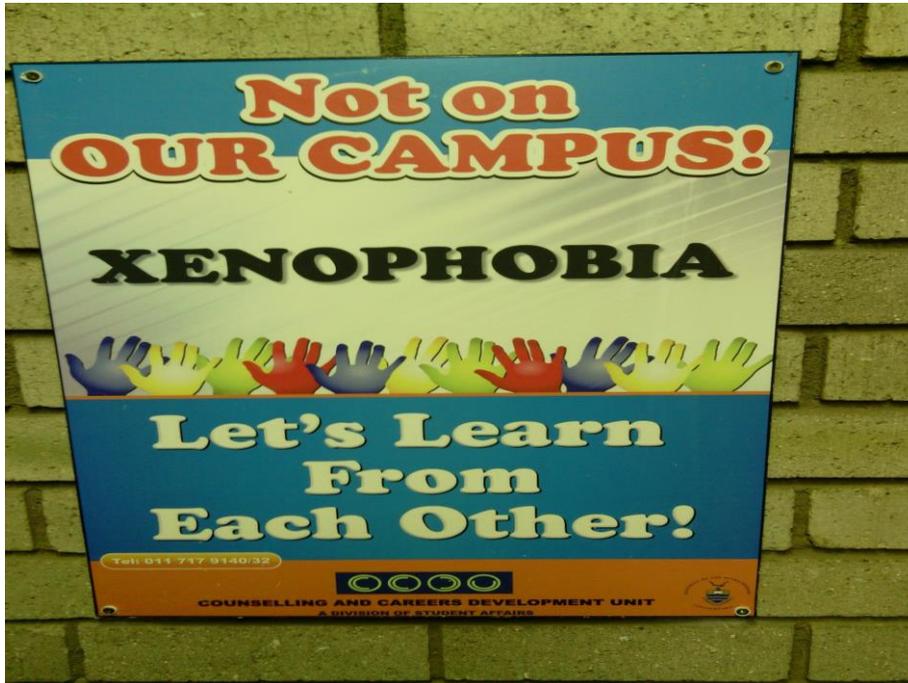

Figure 7: Poster on xenophobia

As mentioned earlier, at Wits, there is only one notice that appears in three languages. This multilingual notice is about the prohibition of smoking inside buildings.

Figure 8: A multilingual warning on smoking

The notice above is exceptional in that it is the only one that is multilingual at the Wits Braamfontein East Campus. It appears in English, Tswana/Sesotho and isiZulu. The use of these languages could have been motivated by the seriousness or importance of the issue at hand. Either active or passive smoking is dangerous, and for this message to reach a wider audience the Wits authorities chose to use languages that are dominant at Wits. This indicates that the authorities at Wits are aware of the demographics of people that visit this institution and the languages that are dominant. They just do not have the political will to reflect this on the public signage of the institution. Because the LL is directly observable, it is a place in which the relative power of languages (and groups of speakers), as well as language ideologies, are indexed (Negro, 2009: 215). Clearly, the LL at Wits shows that English has more value and power than indigenous languages at this institution. Most signs have a practical function, which is to convey relevant information and they have to do so in the most effective and economical way to reach the expected addressees (Negro, 2009). In a context in which the majority of speakers use an African language, the most effective and economic way of communication would be in an African language.

DOCUMENTS

The Wits language policy acknowledges that it is important for students and staff to understand all documents that are contractually binding on them, such as application forms, registration forms, acknowledgements of debts, loan agreements, rules and regulations. Employment contracts and letters of appointment could also be in the official languages of the institution. At Wits, these documents are provided in English only. In fact, all formal communications at Wits, including emails and newsletters like the *Wits News* and *Vuvuzela: A publication of Wits Journalism* are all in English. Figure 9 below shows a typical Wits application form which is presented in English only.

APPLICATION FOR THE STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMME/OCCASIONAL STUDIES AND EXCHANGES

Notes:
This application form should be accompanied by

- A letter motivating why you want to study abroad at Wits,
- Original or certified copy of most recent academic transcripts in English (if not in English, the transcripts must be translated into English by a sworn translator)
- TOEFL / IELTS results (this applies to students whose first language is not English and/or who have studied in a language other than English).
- 2 passport sized photographs

Figure 9: Application form

At Wits, Sesotho does not feature in formal domains. If its official status was really official, we should be seeing it in the official documents of the university. These observations suggest that there is no link between the Wits language policy and what is happening on the ground in terms of the sociolinguistic status and usage of the Sesotho language.

CONCLUSION

This article set out to reflect on the LL of Wits. It sought to parsimoniously examine if the Wits language policy (2003) is reflected on the university's public signage and important documentation. It is evident from the findings that Wits is largely monolingual. Notices, names of buildings and venues, directions, documents and website are monolingual – presented in English only. This suggests that English is considered the most important and only official language of the institution. IsiZulu and Sesotho have a very limited presence at the University. These languages are still underdeveloped in respect to research and study, and the status quo is not likely going to change anytime soon. This reveals a mismatch between the policy on paper and the actual practices at the university. I am of the view that Wits must take a radical step and invest in the promotion and development of indigenous languages, especially isiZulu and Sesotho because they are dominant at the institution. This should also be reflected in the LL of the institution.

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