

LANGUAGE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES VIS-À-VIS THE SPEAKERS OF INDIGENOUS AFRICAN LANGUAGES' PERCEPTION

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After the demise of apartheid in 1994, South Africa adopted a new constitution that bolstered the image of indigenous African languages through a multilingual language policy scenario. Indigenous African languages were further boosted by the National Language-in-Education Policy Acts that were propounded subsequent to the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996 and the Languages Bill that was promulgated in November 2012 (Mutasa, 2014). Given these developments, one would have hoped for changes in terms of perceptions and language use in universities where the traces of the vestiges of the colonial legacy were still apparent. The aim of this article is to highlight the extent to which the language choices of universities and perceptions of academics and students impact on the process of implementing the multilingual language policies in universities.

Keywords

African languages, language policy, universities, education, policy implementation

INTRODUCTION

Realising the importance of all the country's languages, South Africa's post-apartheid government set out to create an environment conducive to the development, promotion and continued existence of those languages. In this environment, languages are maintained both through being taught as subjects and, where practical, being used as media of instruction in basic and higher education. This recognition of South Africa's languages by government is the most tangible manifestation of language revival in the country – and one that will lead to language survival. This bold step formed part of the South African Constitution, Act 108 of 1996. The Constitution itself is explicit that, 'All official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equally', while section 29 (2) of the Bill of Rights stipulates that, 'Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable' (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The ideal situation was eloquently captured in the Constitution in the following words: 'Recognising the historically diminished use and status of indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate and advance the use of these languages' (Republic of South Africa, 1996). These words were translated into policy by the Department of Education and the then Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. Despite the gravity of this milestone in terms of decisions and policies, it has proven difficult to shake off the vestiges of the colonial legacy. It is certainly a challenge to implement educational policies which promote mother-tongue education and the use of

indigenous languages in other domains. Government's bold step notwithstanding, African languages appear to be under siege in tertiary institutions in spite of the commitment demonstrated by universities in their language policies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research behind this study is grounded on Ruiz's (1984: 16) two theoretical orientations of language planning, namely language as a right and language as a resource. Ruiz (1984:16) proposed the concept of orientations as a heuristic approach to language planning. He defines orientations as 'a complex of dispositions toward language and its role, and toward languages and their role in society'. The theory of language as a right postulates that every human being has the right to use and learn in his or her language. This approach to language planning focuses on the sentimental aspects of language – those which deal with individual and group emotions, beliefs, convictions and values (Mutasa, 2004). It carries the notion that every individual has the right to participate in all domains using his or her language. The theory of language as a resource promotes the idea that every language is valued as a precious possession and a quintessential aspect of our humanity – one that ensures achieving or fulfilling social, economic, governmental and educational objectives. 'This approach can enhance the status of subordinate languages and thereby implies that all language groups can contribute substantially to the development of a country through the use of their languages' (Magwa, 2008: 32). This is premised on the assumption that any language on this planet – be it dialect, in the minority or in the majority – is equally important. Any language, then, has the right to live and, like any other language, also has the right to transform and die when circumstances so demand. For any group, a language is a fundamental right that enables its people to function fully as members of the linguistic group into which they are born. Language is a pivotal and worldwide phenomenon and a source of strength in all human communities. It is for this reason that South Africa adopted multilingualism as the most appropriate approach (Alexander, 2001).

RESEARCH METHOD

For this research study, the most suitable research approach was deemed to be the survey as this involves collecting data through interviews. In addition to this, the survey is one of the more popular approaches in social sciences when data are to be collected from a section of society.

For this study, a questionnaire was administered to randomly selected university lecturers in South Africa. University students were also interviewed so as to establish what transpires in institutions of higher learning with regard to the implementation of the multilingual language policy. The research involved analysing and evaluating the language policies of universities and, in addition, the researcher relied heavily on observation. The findings, discussion and conclusion are presented in the subsequent sections. As alluded to earlier, the research is aimed at highlighting language use and perceptions of language use in institutions of higher learning vis-à-vis the multilingual language policy.

UNIVERSITIES' LANGUAGE POLICIES VIS-À-VIS THE USE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN EDUCATION

This section is an analysis of the language policies of universities in South Africa and is intended to establish the level the universities have attained in their endeavour to implement

the linguistic diversity principle proclaimed in the Constitution with regard to the development and use of all languages in learning and teaching. It is essential to acknowledge at this stage that individual universities have their own language policies. The fact that this is the case is a clear indication of their commitment to promoting multilingualism in the academic environment. An analysis of the language policies in place in 2012/2013 at some of the universities in South Africa follows.

The University of South Africa (UNISA)

UNISA (2010) is committed to functional multilingualism with the main objective of promoting linguistic diversity in the university. The policy document will guide and inform the university community on language use in all 'aspects of communication that include, tuition, public, internal and external communication' (UNISA, 2010: 10).

The functional multilingualism that UNISA has adopted is defined as the choice of a particular language in a particular situation on the basis of the context in which it is used – that is, the function for which it is used, the audience at which it is aimed, and the message that it is intended to get across. The context of the communication, the resources available and the target linguistic group determine the choice of language or languages to be employed. This means that not all languages spoken by the university community are accommodated, because some may not command a big enough audience to be eligible for selection.

In terms of implementation, the university is determined to promote functional multilingualism. The language policy propounded is a significant step in the right direction. However, a step-by-step implementation plan is conspicuous by its absence from UNISA's language policy.

University of the Western Cape

The University of the Western Cape is a multilingual university that takes cognisance of internal, African and international contexts. It is committed to adhering to and maintaining the linguistic diversity of South Africa. However, the university mandates that its faculties determine the languages they will use in accordance with the multilingual policy of the university. In terms of teaching, that is, 'setting tasks, assignments, tests and examinations, three languages, English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa should be used where it is practicable to do so' (University of the Western Cape, 2003: 1). However, for academic and professional discourses, English takes precedence for 'all students will have access to entry-level courses aimed at strengthening their English oral and aural communication skills and improving their academic literacy in English' (University of the Western Cape, 2003: 2). Needless to say, when one language is revered above others it will be an insurmountable challenge to end the hegemony of that language.

University of the Witwatersrand

The University of the Witwatersrand (2003) adopts linguistic diversity as its language policy. The university acknowledges linguistic diversity as a resource for creativity and cognition that should be protected. However, the multiplicity of languages in Johannesburg is the most virulent challenge and impediment to decisions on language policy for the university. This is due to the fact that 76 home languages are spoken by staff and students at the University of the Witwatersrand. This complicates the decisions that the institution must take as regards which language(s) to develop and use as no choice is likely to meet the needs of all staff and

students. However, owing to the prevalence of isiZulu and Sesotho in the immediate environment of the university it would be ideal and conducive to promote and support the development of the two most widely-spoken languages. On the other hand, the university commits itself to the promotion and development of Sesotho due to financial constraints and as isiZulu is catered for in institutions in KwaZulu-Natal, namely the University of Zululand and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. English will remain the sole medium of instruction until Sesotho has been developed enough to be used together with English.

While the University of the Witwatersrand acknowledges the use of African languages as languages of learning and teaching, it rejects the use of dual-medium instruction where some subjects would be taught through the medium of Sesotho and some through the medium of English. It does so because students need access to international literature in English. The university also rejects the use of parallel-medium instruction where lectures would be repeated in each language, as this would be costly and also likely to divide students on the basis of language. The rejection of these two approaches to multilingual education renders mother-tongue education in indigenous African languages impractical and an insurmountable challenge at the University of Witwatersrand (University of the Witwatersrand, 2003).

University of the Free State

The language policy of the University of the Free State upholds linguistic diversity and is guided by the stipulations of the Constitution. It also adheres to the Ministry of Education's (2002: 11) Language Policy for Higher Education which stipulates that 'that currently and in the foreseeable future, English and Afrikaans remain and will continue to serve as the dominant languages of instruction in higher education and; that a medium-to long-term strategy to promote multilingualism, with specific reference to the development of other South African Languages for use in instruction, be accepted' (University of the Free State, 2003).

The University of the Free State acknowledges its multilingual and multicultural nature and is committed to promoting multilingualism sought within the context of the two main languages, Afrikaans and English, but also including the phasing in of Sesotho. Hence, the University of the Free State does not currently implement mother-tongue education based on the inclusion of any of the indigenous African languages of South Africa. Sesotho, the main indigenous language in the Free State, remains on the periphery (University of the Free State, 2003).

University of Pretoria

The University of Pretoria acknowledges linguistic diversity and its ramifications as enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa, namely that there are eleven official languages, that individuals have the right to receive education in their own languages and that indigenous languages should be allowed space to develop. Afrikaans and English are adopted, used and developed as the languages of teaching and official business of the university. Developing and imparting knowledge in other languages is accepted if there is a demand for 'such courses and that such courses are academically and economically justifiable' (University of Pretoria, n.d.). By implication, education through other languages is seemingly not in the best interest of the university. The university focuses on academic excellence and rigour achieved through established and developed languages that have stood the test of time – and those languages are English and Afrikaans. What this implies is that

indigenous languages will, for some time, remain on the periphery at the University of Pretoria.

University of KwaZulu-Natal

The language policy of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (2003) adheres to the stipulations enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa. The university is committed to the promotion and use of IsiZulu, the dominant indigenous African language of the region, as medium of instruction and administration. However, the university will continue to use English as its primary academic language. Based on the endeavours of academics in the IsiZulu section of the university to promote the indigenous languages, IsiZulu has made some strides in the right direction through staff and student activities. Nonetheless, a lot is still to be accomplished in terms of mother-tongue education.

Stellenbosch University

The core of the language policy of Stellenbosch University (2002) is commitment to the use and sustained development of Afrikaans as an academic language in a multilingual context. The university makes use of English for communication and access to information and knowledge because of its international status and function, and because of the sizeable number of English speakers in the institution. The university also recognises isiXhosa as one of the official languages spoken in the region and, hence, commits itself to the development of isiXhosa as an academic language. One deduces that Afrikaans will dominate the academic activities of the institution and that isiXhosa will, for the time being, remain as a subject and not a medium of instruction for content subjects.

North-West University

North-West University (2006) is committed to transforming itself into a genuine functional multilingual institution. It has undertaken to promote the practical implementation of functional multilingualism at different levels of operation in a manner that will have a positive impact on socio-economic development. However, English and Afrikaans are used as the primary languages of tuition at the North-West University. Other languages are used at different campuses as a way of enhancing and facilitating access to higher education through single-medium teaching, through parallel- and double-medium teaching, and through provision for interpretation services. The North-West University is indeed committed to promoting multilingual education as, evidenced by an implementation plan/framework that it has formulated in its language policy document (North-West University, 2006).

Rhodes University

In its policy declaration, Rhodes University (2005) acknowledges English as its primary language of teaching and learning. In its policy objectives, the university commits itself to multilingualism and sensitivity to language use and choice, and recognises the academic viability and status of three official languages, namely Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa. In addition to these three languages, Rhodes University undertakes to promote and teach South African Sign Language. The policy is plausible; unfortunately, it does not elaborate its commitment to the development of isiXhosa for future use as one of the languages of learning and teaching. Although the document may not articulate commitment to the promotion and use of isiXhosa, Russell Kaschula, one of the exponents of mother-tongue

education has, in his deliberation at conferences, vehemently articulated the university's commitment to multilingual education.

University of Cape Town

The University of Cape Town (2003) commits itself to promoting both multilingualism in the university through language awareness campaigns and proficiency in other languages in addition to English. English is the primary language of learning, teaching and examination, except in the departments of languages and literature where a language being taught is also used as the medium of instruction. English is also a prerequisite for admission to the university. Unfortunately, the policy does not elaborate with regard to the development and promotion of isiXhosa in education as observed in the university language policy document.

Tshwane University of Technology

Tshwane University of Technology (2005) has adopted English as its primary language of learning and teaching, communication, and documentation. The university has also committed itself to the promotion and development of Setswana as the primary indigenous language for academic, scientific and communication purposes. SiSwati is also being developed as the secondary language for academic, scientific and communication purposes. The university may use any other languages for communication and teaching purposes where it is reasonably practical. As in other universities, English takes precedence and, although there is a commitment to the promotion of indigenous languages, there is no clear language policy plan or framework in place.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Although, functional multilingualism underlines the language policies of some universities, namely the University of South Africa, North-West University and Rhodes University, conspicuous in the language policies of these universities is the lack of clear and elaborate language plans and timeframes that spell the way forward in terms of implementation (Mutasa, 2014). Respondents to the survey used for this research called for clear language plans and realistic timeframes which cannot be interpreted as deliberate avoidance and a clear lack of commitment. Indeed, the timeframes should stipulate when and how African languages will be accommodated in the teaching and learning of content subjects. According to Berthoud and Ludi (2011: 483), institutions should 'have ... an integrated communication plan framework'. Such a framework would serve as a linguistic guide for an institution.

Some respondents also argued that English dominates in all aspects of life in universities, including Stellenbosch University where, in addition to English, Afrikaans is also a primary language. They point out that English is a prerequisite for entry into universities, that it is the primary medium of instruction in all the universities surveyed and that there are no plans to counter its hegemony.

THE SITUATION IN UNIVERSITIES WITH REGARD TO THE TEACHING OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Indigenous African languages are struggling to survive in universities where student numbers have continued to dwindle over the years, resulting in some departments having to redeploy staff or close down. Statistics obtained from the University of Limpopo and UNISA in 2004 showed a drastic decline in student registration – by as much as 90% – in indigenous African languages in the five-year period from 1997 to 2001. During this period, the University of Limpopo offered five African languages, namely Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Tsonga, Setswana and Venda, while UNISA offered eight of the nine African languages of South Africa, as well as the Zimbabwean language Shona. While a total of 2 006 undergraduate students registered for one of five African languages offered at the University of Limpopo in 1997, only 30 did so in 2001. At UNISA, the comparable figures are 25 461 in 1997 and 3 031 in 2001. From 2001 to 2008, the numbers continued to decline to a point where UNISA had only 800 students registered for indigenous language studies in 2008. In 2002, the University of Limpopo's management decided to discontinue the teaching of Sesotho and Setswana because it was too costly to maintain them.

TABLE 1: Statistics of undergraduate students registered in African Languages at the University of Limpopo (Statistics provided by Prof S Louw, the former Director of the School of Languages and Communication Studies)

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS REGISTERED AT UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO							
UNITS	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
N Sotho	1342	708	283	125	20	27	15
S Sotho	8	3	1	2	-	-	-
Tsonga	562	324	104	39	5	2	-
Tswana	67	32	11	7	5	2	-
Venda	27	10	6	3	-	-	-
Total	2006	787	405	176	30	31	15

(The table indicates that student numbers in African Languages were dwindling.)

TABLE 2: Statistics of students registered in the Department of African Languages at UNISA (Statistics were provided by Prof RHM Moeketsi, the Dean of Human Sciences at UNISA)

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS REGISTERED AT UNISA						
UNITS	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
N Sotho	6841	6450	4033	1797	967	
S Sotho	1059	879	462	278	127	
Shona	224	250	105	108	49	
Swati	985	670	303	130	50	
Tsonga	1667	1617	978	331	295	
Tswana	1922	1630	954	545	325	
Venda	1564	1047	553	187	108	
Xhosa	3773	3615	1970	856	338	
Zulu	7426	5279	2705	1303	772	
Total	25 461	21 437	12 063	5 535	3 031	1 740

(The table indicates that numbers of students studying African Languages were dwindling.)

There are grounds to support the view that the same situation exists in other tertiary institutions. The *Report on the development of African languages as mediums of instruction in higher education* released in March 2005 observes that '[d]epartments of African Languages are closing down because the student numbers have fallen drastically' (A Report compiled by the Ministerial Committee appointed by the Ministry of Education, 2005: 6).

While the situation remains critical, matters have improved recently at UNISA owing to recalculation and reinvention that saw the introduction of new modules, that is, new study material that has attracted students from other departments and colleges in the university. Nonetheless, the fact that at third year level, student numbers range between only 30 and 100 per module is a matter of concern and an indication that indigenous African languages are still under siege at the university. The modules are offered in English in order to attract students from diverse backgrounds, illustrating that the type of recalculation adopted was a strategy for survival, since the university thrives on subsidies based on student throughput. Thus, while the government and other stakeholders continue to advance the quest for justice in terms of language policy implementation, on the ground the reality is different as negative attitudes towards the study of indigenous languages continue unabated.

INTERVIEWS WITH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

To confirm student attitudes towards indigenous African languages, the researcher conducted interviews at UNISA. From one interviewee who was a student, the researcher elicited the following excerpts of a conversation between students studying at UNISA. The students are preparing for the November examination and they converse:

1. O ngwala eng?
(What are you going to write?)

2. Ke ngwala Sepedi.
(I am going to write Sepedi.)
3. What! O ngwala Sepedi ko University ya South Africa!
(What! You go to the University of South Africa (UNISA) to learn and write Sepedi?)
4. Bothatha keng ka Sepedi?
(What is the problem with Sepedi here?)
5. Otlala ba eng vele ka Sepedi?
(What will you be in order to earn a living if you study Sepedi?)

In utterance 3, the speaker belittles a fellow student by equating the studying of an indigenous African language, Sepedi (Northern Sotho), at a mega-institution like UNISA with a waste of human potential. This is one of the clearest manifestations of the negative perceptions that students have towards indigenous African languages. This case does not apply to this individual only, but to multitudes, as the respondent confirmed. The respondent reported that his fellow student claimed that it was a ‘waste or under-utilisation of brains’ to study an indigenous African language. With regard to this scenario, Kamwendo (2010: 278) gives an account of similar experiences in Malawi where, as he puts it, ‘it is not uncommon to find students of African languages at the university being laughed at...’ An incisive example that he presents is where a student is asked, ‘You came all the way to the university simply to study Chichewa poetry?’

With regard to the UNISA student, the college mate’s view is that the student should obtain a qualification based on accounting or economics – subjects that he deems fit for job prospects. It is also a perception that, by virtue of their being university students, they are expected to ‘pursue the more challenging subjects like physics, chemistry and mathematics’ (Kamwendo, 2010: 278).

In utterance 5, the speaker is more concerned with job prospects. He does not see the value of studying an indigenous African language. To him it reduces job possibilities. Such an argument is based on questions raised regarding the practicality and benefit of mother-tongue education (Kembo-Sure, 2006). A Xhosa-speaking student interviewed recalled similar experiences where he had been emphatically told that isiXhosa would not take him anywhere. The interviewee averred that this perception has existed since time immemorial. In addition to this, the perception among students that mother-tongue education would thwart them from going and residing in America featured prominently among respondents. However, what respondents are ignorant of is that America is home to many who are not proficient in English, such as those from Latin America and China.

One observation at UNISA is that, if a Bachelor of Education student fails a major such as accounting or geography, he or she will resort to an indigenous African language on the pretext that it is easier than and not as challenging as other subjects regarded as content subjects. Hence, to society, the perception is that an indigenous African language is a home language that no one should fail at school or at university, and that it is there simply to add module numbers for a complete certificate. Parents and the youth view an indigenous African language as not worth studying and not worth spending time on when preparing for examinations. What members of the community do not understand is that, when an indigenous African language is in the classroom, it is a subject like any other and it is science worth studying and researching.

By implication, what it is purported here is that the language campaigns conducted over the

years by the Department of Arts and Culture have been in vain, thus confirming the notion that attitudes are difficult to change. With regard to this, Triandis (in Okombo, 1999: 591) observes that, 'We have the technical knowledge to change the world, but we do not have the attitudes that bring the change'. Indeed, with the right attitude people can achieve anything – including the language situation in educational and administrative domains. Indubitably, people are active factors in changing or influencing their own circumstances.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST OF ACADEMICS

With regard to the attitudes of academics and proponents of language revalorisation in South Africa, certain respondents, themselves lecturers, stated that while academics speak vehemently in support of the promotion and use of indigenous African languages as languages of learning and teaching, inadvertently and deep in their hearts and minds, their perspective is the opposite of this. Indeed, academics or proponents of mother-tongue education do not practise what they preach. It is evident that they preach about the importance of indigenous African languages at conferences and on other platforms, but they do not show much enthusiasm, largely because they are not used to doing business in indigenous African languages. They converse not only among themselves in European languages, but also with their children whom they send to schools where European languages are the languages of learning and teaching. Owing to this unfortunate approach to language, Kembo-Sure (2006) in the concluding remarks advances the view that the elite should change and start conversing in indigenous African languages at home with their children and pay more attention to African languages by writing about and in them.

Other respondents averred that most children of lecturers do not study an indigenous African language, especially in schools where an indigenous African language is not one of the compulsory subjects. The implication then is that lecturers conceptualise learning and teaching in indigenous African languages with the children of the poor in mind, and not for their own children.

DISREGARD FOR INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES BY CONTENT LECTURERS

Content lecturers are lecturers who teach subjects other than languages – such as mathematics, accounting, history and geography. Disregard for indigenous languages is not uncommon among lecturers of content subjects who view content as different from language. Sixty per cent of lecturers of content subjects see it as anathema to use indigenous languages in the teaching of their subjects. One of the content lecturers responding to a questionnaire wrote that 'those who want to learn in African languages should register in departments of African Languages' (Mutasa, 2014: 15). This is one of the clearest manifestations of people's perceptions of teaching in indigenous languages. What it suggests is that it should be the sole responsibility or prerogative of people in departments of African languages to revere African languages and implement mother-tongue education. In the same vein, Kamwendo (2010) cites the case of a professor of African languages who was chastised by colleagues and accused of undermining English simply because he presented a paper on the role of indigenous languages in national development.

Concerning the implementation of mother-tongue education involving indigenous languages, content lecturers suggest unrealistic timeframes. They argue that it should be implemented after 50 or 100 years, meaning that their suggested timeframes are indubitably out of reach. What this insinuates is that implementing mother-tongue education in universities is an

insurmountable task owing to crippling challenges, the odds being stacked against them, the negative attitudes of academics and speakers of languages, and a lack of vision as to how to put mother-tongue education policy into effect.

INEVITABILITY OF SUCCUMBING TO ENGLISH IN SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS AT PRESENT

Generally there is scepticism about the effectiveness of teaching content subjects through indigenous African languages. For this reason, parents and students have reason to opt for English. The situation exists not only in South Africa, but also in countries such as Tanzania, as observed by Kembo-Sure (2010: 3), where in spite of the level of development of Kiswahili, the elite send their children to Kenya to receive education in English. In addition to this, Tanzanians who apply to the Minister of Education to register private schools advocate English as the medium of instruction. Hence, the gaining of traction for mother-tongue education in a multilingual context is a mammoth task.

It is essential to point out that, as alluded to earlier, parents see English as the answer to their problems. Undoubtedly, wherever they go, buildings glitter with English names and business is conducted, in most cases, in English. Products on shelves bear English names and descriptions and their manuals are in English and other non-indigenous African languages. In addition to this, parents see the quality of education that the products of former Model C schools in South Africa receive and, when they listen to these people speak, or present the news, or host shows on television and radio, or watch them act in television dramas, they are mesmerised. They also observe that the majority of former Model C school graduates receive preferential treatment in the job market based on their proficiency in English and on their accents – derogatorily referred to as ‘coconut’.

Given these perceptions – and what transpires in different environments and economic circles – it is essential to acknowledge the importance of English in a multilingual context. The choice of English in schools, as well as in academic and other institutions, should not be bedevilled by emotional attachments to language, misinterpretations of language policies, the politics of fear or the failure to understand the complexity of reality. It is of essence to uphold Davidson’s (2013: 2) contention that the ‘support for English ... is in the context of multilingualism that we wish to promote, not English as a dominant or domineering language’. Needless to say, English is currently like a baobab tree that thrives among other trees which, by virtue of their species, cannot grow thicker than the ecology would wish.

As Davidson (2013: 2) avers, ‘High quality education is essential for any nation wishing to build a knowledge economy, encourage international trade, improve public health, or increase equity’. These goals cannot be achieved without a well-resourced education system and without highly-developed and sophisticated languages that can carry philosophical and scientific discourse to unprecedented heights. Hence, indigenous African languages should be developed first to the level where Afrikaans, Swahili and English are today. This can be achieved, in most cases, when a society has ascended to the kind of dazzling economic heights that Japan and China have achieved and when jargon in use has ceased to be about service delivery and eradicating poverty. The option, for now, is as a first step to introduce indigenous languages as subjects for, without so doing, a nation cannot implement or administer mother-tongue education to students who cannot speak and who did not learn their own mother tongue or home language in school. For those students from disadvantaged communities who are not proficient in English because their parents could not afford high-

quality education in former Model C schools, universities should establish departments that teach writing skills. Universities should establish linguistic benchmarks or targets towards the ability to use English proficiently. However, this should be done in a multicultural and multilingual context so that English is not used to the detriment of indigenous African languages. This brings the discussion to an essential aspect of language revalorisation, that is, preservation.

PRESERVATION OF LANGUAGES THROUGH TEACHING THEM

It is essential to preserve indigenous African languages through teaching them as subjects in all universities and to use them as languages of learning and teaching on a pilot study approach. Intergenerational transmission of languages through education is the most effective strategy for and indeed the most far-reaching factor in their survival. In his research, Diallo (2011: 222) also established that, if students learn their own languages as subjects and also learn through the medium of their own languages, 'there is cultural and linguistic reinforcement in the home' and other domains. This is essential because indigenous languages have many roles to play apart from communication; for example, in depicting an individual's identity. In this regard, language is a reflection of its speakers. This is summed up in the 1978 National Day Rally Speech by the Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Lee Kuan Yew (Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Singapore, n.d.), who propounded that:

A person who gets deculturised, who loses his language, loses his identity and self-confidence. He suffers from a sense of deprivation. For optimum performance a man must know himself and the world. He must know what he stands for. I may speak the English language better than the Chinese language because I learnt English early in life. But I will never be an Englishman in a thousand generations and I have not got the Western value system inside; mine is an Eastern value system. Nevertheless I use Western concepts, Western words because I understand them. But I also have a different system in my mind.

Speakers of indigenous African languages have their own value systems embedded in their languages, and these are worth upholding. African students who communicate in English, and the children of academics who do not learn an indigenous African language, are deprived of their culture and value system. With regard to this, Bourdieu (1977) contends that a language is worth what those who speak it are worth. Hence, if a speaker is misguided and thinks his/her language is worth nothing, and then he/she too, is worth nothing. However, the researcher hopes that the introduction of indigenous languages as subjects in all universities and their application in all domains will yield positive results in the long run when pronouncements in support of indigenous languages in education are propounded from the top, the cost is budgeted for and negative attitudes are dissipated.

THE WAY FORWARD

Based on the findings in this study, it is recommended that:

- a) universities should formulate clear implementation plans with timeframes;
- b) content subject lecturers should form a joint aegis with language teachers in developing the meta-language;
- c) content subject lecturers should be encouraged to attend conferences organised by indigenous language lecturers, especially those conferences on mother-tongue education; and

- d) universities should dissipate negative attitudes in their communities.

CONCLUSION

All universities have a role to play in transforming the linguistic landscape of the country. By advancing or implementing some of the stipulations in their language policies, and by formulating clear and watertight development and implementation plans subject to realistic timeframes, they are more likely to achieve multilingualism of one kind or another. In this way, universities can eliminate traces of the remnants of the colonial legacy. Elimination of the colonial legacy and the resultant elevation of indigenous languages will subsequently impact positively on the minds of university communities and the speakers of indigenous languages at large. When this is achieved, indigenous languages will be able to take their rightful place in the state and in the world and will be assured of their existence in the language ecology. In this way, the nation (and universities in particular) will be promoting the rich tapestry that an all-inclusive language policy brings, and they will be doing so without eliminating English.

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