

Knowledge Production in What Language? The Hegemonic Use of English as a Language of Commerce and Industry from a South African Perspective

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Introduction

Language stands at the nexus of the individual, his/her cultural heritage and society (MacMillan, 1998:17). Sapir in MacMillan (1998:17) suggests that this interrelationship is best understood through emphasis on the symbolic impact of language on group life. Sapir argues that "the mere fact of a common speech serves as a peculiarly potent symbol of the social solidarity of those who speak the language". He points out that language has profound psychological significance for the individual member of a group. Language is an ever-present badge of membership, reinforced in the subtleties of linguistic styles. One would expect its significance to be stronger as the boundaries between languages become more obvious. The process of using one's language to express solidarity involves evolution and maintenance of both group and individual identities. Therefore, language is surrounded by an emotional intensity and an irreducible quality that signify its status as one of the 'primordial bonds' of group identity. Language is critical in defining individual identity, culture and community membership.

A voluminous literature has emerged on various aspects of human rights with special emphasis on the epistemological grounding of human rights. Arguments for human rights, however, must still be couched within a framework of discourse about rights (MacMillan, 1998:18).

Cranston (1967 in MacMillan, 1998:17) defines a human right as:

a 'universal moral right', something which all men everywhere, at all times, ought to have, something of which no one may be deprived without a grave affront to justice; something which is owed to every human simply because he is human.

Equality of language rights in South Africa is guaranteed by the fact that these rights fall under individual human rights. These individual rights ensure equality for all and non-discrimination against any person wishing to exert those rights.

Since the democratic election of 1994 in South Africa, people have been grappling with the issue among others, of the financial costs of using more than one official language in commerce and industry but without giving due weight to the fact that South Africa is a multilingual country except to say that using several official languages in parallel would be contingent on practicality and expense. It seems now that what really happened after 1994 is that most higher education institutions, parastatals, statutory bodies and some industries, irrespective of what their language policies prescribe, have shifted from bilingualism towards monolingualism. Alexander (2000:10) maintains that unless the practical assertion of language rights extends to the indigenous use of African languages in all walks of life the real empowerment of black South African will remain in the realm of mere rhetoric.

Heugh (1995:331) elicits that the *status quo* of the dominant high-status *versus* low-status languages has not changed in South Africa. She argues that a *laissez-faire* approach to human rights is adopted, whereby all languages are accorded equal status in a declaration of policy which is not accompanied by an effective strategy to implement the rehabilitation of the status of African languages (the leveling of the field) or the implementation of the policy being entrenched in a statutory body that seems to many to be "a toothless bulldog".

MarkData commissioned by PanSALB conducted a national survey on language use and the issues arising from the lack of a multilingual situation in South Africa. The results of the survey were as follows (PanSALB, 2000):

- South Africans have a high level of commitment to their home language and language of identity. This is evident in their views on language policy, on language use in education and on their choice of language in the media, where that choice exists.
- The extent to which the languages are accommodated in the bureaucracy, civil society and the economy has only an approximate relationship to the degree of concern about language policy.
- A central concern is that major institutional structures and processes are unresponsive to the interest and commitment portrayed by the people of South Africa towards their languages. The radio has the highest listenership of African languages but the printed media, communication by politicians and language policy in schools are among the more prominent examples of failure to accommodate the language preferences of millions of South Africans.

Problem Statement

Webb (1999:110) maintains that a crucial (non-negotiable) requirement for the construction of a multilingual state administration in South Africa is the extensive use of the African languages. However, various objections are generally raised to the use of these languages in government functions. Three of these are that:

- indigenous African languages do not have the status (prestige) that they require to be used for higher functions;
- they lack the necessary technical terms and registers in the administrative domain; and
- civil servants have not been trained in the use of indigenous African languages for administrative purposes.

Besides the above assertions, a complaint lodged by PanSALB is that it has become evident from its interaction with organisations involved in developing language policies that a policy of English monolingualism is being followed in practice. This is occurring despite preambles in policy documents advocating a commitment to multilingualism. PanSALB therefore recognises the need for guidelines on language policy development and has developed a set of general guidelines on language planning and policy development. These include a blueprint for a language policy document that directs PanSALB's position on language planning and policy development. These guidelines serve as a standard reference for parties seeking advice and information on language planning and policy development (PanSALB, [n.d.]).

Besides those mentioned above that have prompted this study, there are several other challenges:

- The first is the non-use of Northern Sotho for higher functions such as commerce and industry, since the effective use of a language is dependent on the appropriate development of that language.
- Secondly, Northern Sotho lacks systematic terminology development for the purposes of commerce and industry. This means that Northern Sotho is not used effectively, or sometimes not at all, as a formal language of commerce and industry.
- Thirdly, there is a vacuum in terms of the business register when mother tongue speakers of Northern Sotho want to converse or communicate with other speakers of Northern Sotho, especially if they are not conversant with the English or Afrikaans concepts.
- Fourthly, challenges are posed by language policies in commerce and industry. Most of these sectors advocate the exclusive use of English for their communication and businesses. Some do not have language policies at all to regulate language use in the workplace. Hence, English and Afrikaans play a hegemonic role at the expense of Northern Sotho and other indigenous African languages in these settings.

Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of this study focuses on the specific needs of business people who want to use Northern Sotho as a communication medium among themselves when dealing with their clients or

between themselves and their business counterparts, colleagues or subordinates when conducting their day-to-day business in commerce and industry and for Northern Sotho to become the language of a 'product'. The main aims of the study are:

- to explore and describe the disposition of mother tongue speakers of Northern Sotho towards the prospect of using the language in commerce and industry;
- to investigate the feasibility of using Northern Sotho as a resource for economic development, especially in the Limpopo and Gauteng provinces and in other areas where Northern Sotho is spoken;
- to determine the need to use Northern Sotho as a language of marketing, advertising and business, as a language for acquiring entrepreneurial skills and as a language of commerce and industry (functional elaboration);
- to investigate the existence of language policies in commerce and industry, especially; and
- to determine whether commerce and industry can provide a conducive atmosphere and construe multilingualism and cultural pluralism and diversity.

Methodological Strategy

To answer the research question, a qualitative, explorative, descriptive and contextual design is used. The investigation is characterised by a two-pronged approach to data collection: a questionnaire survey and focus group interviews. A wealth of data was produced by these means. The data from the first phase were captured and encoded in categories set out in frequency tables. The categories were reduced to thematic constructs. Data from the second phase were captured and encoded in transcripts that were later decoded and reduced to themes, categories and sub-categories. Although the research design is qualitative rather than quantitative in character, some variables had been easy to cast in quantifiable terms. The qualitative method is very important, as it provides an opportunity to solicit the opinions, feelings and attitude of participants. Face-to-face interviews and nine focus group interviews were conducted with 60 respondents who were invited to the focus group interviews. The questionnaire survey was based on a multi-stage, stratified, probability sample of 201 carefully selected groups, using a randomising grid technique. The respondents chosen were professionals working in different industries and some were running their own businesses. The themes were isolated as follows:

- The exclusive hegemonic use of English or Afrikaans experienced as a communication barrier in commerce and industry
- Socio-economic background of respondents
- Existence of language policies for workers in commerce and industry
- Dispositions of mother tongue speakers of Northern Sotho and other languages towards the prospective development and use of Northern Sotho as a language of commerce and industry
- Feasibility of developing Northern Sotho lexicography and terminology for the purposes of commerce and industry

The question is 'How does one determine feasibility?' Before this issue could be addressed another important and sensitive matter had to be considered: to determine whether native speakers of Northern Sotho and other languages are favourably disposed towards the prospective development and the use of Northern Sotho as a language of commerce and industry. The notion is based on PanSALB's (1998) language policies guideline. The relevant passage reads as follows:

This orientation is consistent with the principle of *interdependence*, where different communities/languages are seen to coexist interdependently. The value of each language and its speech community is acknowledged as part of the whole. Language as a resource includes the notion of language as a right. The view that each language is a resource to the nation carries with it the notion of the instrumental use of languages or *functional multilingualism*.

The results of the questionnaire survey were supplemented by the focus group interviews. Since the study deals with acquisition of a new register/language (a business language) for use in commerce and industry concepts pertaining to language planning are discussed.

The Theoretical Framework

In view of the unprecedented globalisation wave sweeping the world today, the sophistication of local black languages should be significantly stepped up from their normal range of mundane discourse to an economic discourse so that mother-tongue speakers can take charge of their languages and compete locally in terms of being generally innovative and competent in the domain of business, assuming that a new-found confidence will expand their language use and make knowledge readily accessible for trade and business purposes. Knowledge production is inaccessible to most indigenous people of South Africa but accessible to a few who are proficient in English. The use of indigenous languages will enable these ordinary people to grasp economic concepts and demonstrate what they have mastered intellectually in a language that they are familiar with.

Language Planning in South Africa

In South Africa, language planning (cf. Ruiz 1984:10) proceeds on the premise that a language is a resource and policy statements are used to preserve, manage and develop languages through cooperative efforts of political, educational, economic and linguistic authorities.

The decision making in status planning involved negotiations, compromises, trade offs and bargaining i.e. the entire usual political process whereby political authorities arrive at the final resolution. The South African National Language Policy is regarded as the most advanced language policy in the world.

A newly emergent polity such as South Africa found that it had to designate, *de jure*, to a whole range of languages as 'official languages'. Later it was found out that the designation not only failed to solve social and political problems but rather created whole ranges of new ones (e.g. how to 'modernize' the chosen languages to connect with the global reality. South Africa adopted a combination of languages (e.g. languages with a wider communication and the indigenous languages). The indigenous African languages have been rehabilitated from their vernacular to being official status, mainly to redress issues that were neglected in the past such as language equity, language as a resource, literacy, language as a medium of instruction, language in the public service, heritage languages, sign language and language development. The policy stance is based on persuasion, encouragement and incentives rather than coercion in the highly sensitive area of language practices and language usage. In South Africa, for example, multilingualism and the establishment of eleven official languages is seen as a vital prerequisite for political participation and cultural pluralism.

Issues and concerns

Before 1994 language planning issues were a bone of contention. In view of the catastrophic events of June 16, 1976. South African language planning must be distinctly and demonstrably progressive, inclusive and responsive to the needs of the people of South Africa. This is why all eleven main languages spoken in South Africa were accorded official status. Unfortunately the following problems emerged in the process:

- how to adjust the educational system to deal with the newly declared linguistic reality;
- how to create a corpus of material in the newly declared 'official' languages for their elaboration;
- how to adapt, develop and use some of these languages in the domains of science and technology and for wider communication (in this study for commerce and industry).

The targets that the Language Policy document had sets for the government subject to periodic audits (e.g. government publications shall be issued in the language/s of the target audience) and by the year 2005, any of the eleven official languages as required will be used in all legislative activities, including Hansard publications, as a matter of right, provided that in the case of provincial legislatures, regional circumstances will determine the language/s to be used. According to Reagan (2002:450) the Language Policy document is one of the several policy documents that had been developed to counter the effect of predominant use of English. The above has not as yet materialized to its fullest. This has been done in a haphazard manner.

Another major concern is the proliferation of random coinages. The official status given to indigenous African languages was no doubt well-intentioned, but no appreciable effort has been made to ensure that these languages take their rightful place as official languages. The decision was not followed by active cultivation of these languages to which end a fully inclusive mechanism and systematic process would be required to fast-track and facilitate their development. It seems that the hold-up is blamed on a lack of a sound theoretical foundation for language planning (cf. Edwards 1985:89). The problem

here is lack of will to implement the planning. The emphasis of language planning in South Africa is on the 'policy approach' and not on the 'cultivation approach'. According to Neustupný (1970) in Wright (2004:183) a 'policy approach' to language planning, treats matters such as national and regional languages, etc. whereas, the 'cultivation approach' addresses issues such as lexical development, appropriateness of linguistic registers for specialized functions, language education issues, identification and easing of constraints impinging on language competence and so on. Wright (2004:183) reports that this type of planning is associated with modern industrial societies.

What Is The Current Language Situation in South Africa?

English in South Africa currently occupies the *de jure* status as a national and international language of commerce and industry, followed by Afrikaans. With such *de facto* dominance, the unassailed position of English commands respect and power.

The 44,8 million people living in South Africa speak an estimated 25 languages. The 2001 census revealed that Afrikaans (14.4%) and English (9%) are widely spoken in all provinces. Although English is generally understood across the country, it ranks only fifth as a spoken home language. Other unofficial European languages spoken in South Africa are the six immigrant languages:

Dutch (7.89%), French (4.26%), German (27.05%), Greek (11.28%), Italian (11.15%) and Portuguese (38.36%). The communities speaking the languages that occur in South Africa tend to be geographically localised, that is, South Africa is typified by languages of limited diffusion. A breakdown of numbers of speakers according to the census of 2001 places Zulu first with 9,2 million L1 speakers in 1996, increasing to 10,7 million in 2001 (i.e. 22,9% of the population spoke it in 1996, increasing to 23,8% in 2001). This was followed by Xhosa, spoken by 7,2 million in 1996 and 7,9 million in 2001 that is 17,9% in 1996 and 17,6% in 200 (note that in 1996 the total population was 40 million). Afrikaans was third at 5,8 million, increasing to 6,0 million in 2001. Then came Northern Sotho, fourth at 9,2% of L1 speakers overall in 1996, which grew to 9,4% (4,208 980) by 2001. The lowest number of L1 speakers was recorded for Ndebele, which was spoken by 587 000 in 1996, increasing to 712 000 by 2001. The nine official indigenous African languages were spoken as home languages by 76,5% of the population at the time of Census '96, increasing to 77,9% at the time of Census 2001. Afrikaans and English together were spoken as home languages by 23,1% of the population in 1996, decreasing to 21,5% by 2001. The percentage of Afrikaans speakers decreased from 14,4% in 1996 to 13,3% in 2001, while that of English speakers decreased from 8,6% in 1996 to 8,2% in 2001. Almost a quarter of the total population reported Zulu as their home language. A criteria used to describe a dominant home language according to Statistics South Africa (cf. census report 2001), is when one population group constitute more than 50% of the total population of the municipality; or between 33% to 50% of the population group. In South Africa there is no population group that is above the 25% figure. In Limpopo, while more than half the people speak Northern Sotho (Sepedi) as their first/home language (52,1%), a relatively large proportion speak Tsonga (22,4%) and Venda (15,9%) while in Gauteng L1 speakers of Northern Sotho constitute 10,7% of the total population and is the same figure of 10,8% in Mpumalanga. The Limpopo Province is not at all a monolingual as it is perceived, but consists of different ethnolinguistic groups. As De Klerk (1996:9) aptly puts it:

No ethnic group is neatly defined, and language boundaries are notoriously fluid, with groups overlapping rather than dividing neatly.

Concurring with De Klerk's notion is Chick (2002 in Mesthrie, 2002:263) and he acknowledges that ethnic boundaries do not exist, and therefore justifies what he calls pan-ethnic divisions:

I nevertheless decided on such labelling for a number of reasons: because it is on the basis of pan-ethnicity or race that groups in South Africa were segregated; because it would be relatively easy for research assistants to identify such ethnicity without having to ask potentially embarrassing questions; because researchers such as Erickson and Schultz (1981) have found some evidence to show that sociolinguistic diversity patterns along pan-ethnic lines; and because, however regrettable, these identity labels still seem to have salience for South Africans.

The indigenous African languages of South Africa comprise four distinct groups and made up as follows: the Nguni languages (Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, and Swati); the Sotho languages (Northern Sotho, South Sotho and Tswana); and finally Venda and Tsonga. The Nguni group is the largest with about 18 million speakers, followed by the Sotho group with a little over 10 million speakers, the Tsonga group

with almost 2 million speakers, and the Venda with nearly a million speakers. Whites constitute 10.9%, Coloureds constitutes 8.9% (these are people of mixed race); Asians (2.%) and unspecified/other estimated at 0.9%. (The figures are derived from the *People of South Africa Population Census* report No. 03-02-11 2001).

South Africa is currently occupying a precarious position within a framework of globalisation and internationalisation where cultural and linguistic pluralism prevail. There is divergence between South Africa's multilingual language policy on the one hand, and its language practices on the other. The language policy promotes multilingualism, or what Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996:429) term an 'ecology-of-language paradigm', while the language practices promote monolingualism in English or what linguists may term the 'diffusion-of-English paradigm'. With regard to the language practices in commerce and industry, education, the media and other higher domains it remains true that in South Africa the diffusion-of-English paradigm is gaining momentum in virtually all of the country's institutions. Heugh (2000:466) blames this situation on global societies and the knowledge economy which is being built upon an information highway infrastructure. She argues that the hegemony of the Western free-market economy is such that it influences the economies of developing countries. Western economies tend to be characterised by linguisticism, which accords privileged status to English, and a lesser position to other languages. Western aid packages to the developing world have impacted, and continue to impact, on the implementation of language policy. It is important to look at international trends in language policy and their relation to political ideology and free-enterprise economics to assess the implications of implementing new language policy options for business in South Africa.

Gellner (1983, in Edwards 1985:91) asks the global society to consider how important language is, compared to other social factors. Backing this view, Lamberton (2002:14), who is more concerned about the 'language divide' in global society, asks whether language is a matter fit to be explored as a part of economics.

Sectors in which organic financial growth depends on the speakers of African languages (e.g. financial institutions), function primarily in English. Lack of terminology and funding, as stated previously are cited as the cause of non-use of the indigenous African languages in South Africa. According to SAIRR (1998:40), 75% of black South Africans are not proficient enough in English to use that language as an effective instrument of economic activity. It would seem economically sensible for banks to implement multilingualism in their everyday activities and accommodate regional languages.

The results of a MarkData survey conducted on behalf of PanSALB pertaining to languages used by unemployed adults for survival and job-seeking activities are represented in the following chart (PanSALB, 2000):

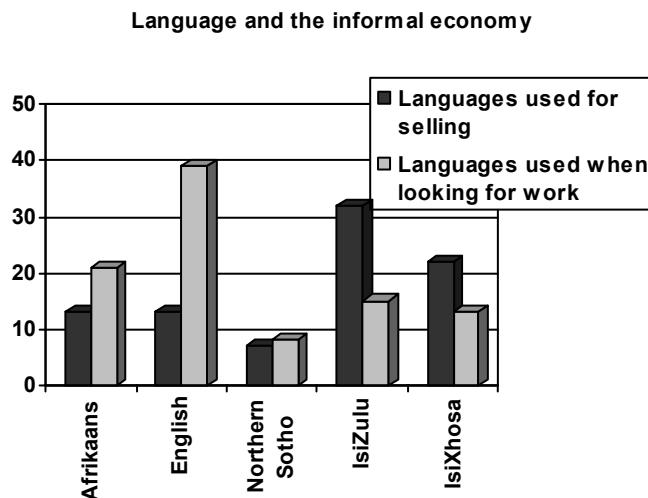


Figure 1: Language and the informal economy (in %) (PanSALB, 2000:73)

Coulmas (1992:22 in Strauss et al. 1996:3) cautions that unless we understand the economics of language we cannot understand the development of the linguistic map of the world. On the other hand, a proper understanding of economic development is dependent upon recognising language as an

economic factor. This statement has obvious implications for the Northern Sotho speech community in the present context. Grin (1994:39 in Strauss et al. 1996:4) advocates that in future more should be done to employ concepts from environmental economics and to apply cost-benefit analyses to language planning. According to Ozolins (2003:67) economic approaches to language are at odds with the field of language policy/language planning as a result from deficiencies in the literature of both fields. He attributes this misfit to a number of reasons of which the following four are examples:

- where: economic illiteracy has prevented the recognition of benefits that can flow in some language professional fields (e.g. interpreting)
- economic justifications dominate the rationale for particular language programmes but these programmes struggle to realise their economic claims (e.g. programmes promoting language study for economic purposes)
- economic issues pertaining to language use arise in international affairs (e.g. international organisations and the regulation of trade)
- speaking another language is automatically equated with economic disadvantage and analysed accordingly (e.g. costs-benefits analyses of multilingualism and majority/minority languages).

Grin (1994:34 in Strauss et al. 1996:3) on the other hand states that people who want to do business with one another need to be able to communicate. An emphasis on language as a tool of communication and a means of exchange has suggested to some economists that there is an analogy between language and money. One area where economic benefits have often not been recognised has been that of interpreting, particularly in its commonest form, which is liaison interpreting in situations of contact with indigenous or deaf communities, where language minorities' persons and the institutions that serve them need a means of communication. Social systems around the world have acknowledged the need for language services, but what is regarded as an adequate service differs widely, and such services have often developed haphazardly. Where governments have assumed a leading role in language planning activities (e.g. South Africa) the onus of such languages services should lie within the auspices of government or its agencies. In conclusion, the results of most studies show a positive correlation between language and socio-economic, particularly in South Africa.

Language as an economic resource

The perception that language 'rights' are about the redress of the past wrongs as mentioned before has had negative effects on efforts to gain broad public support for the teaching and maintenance of languages other than English. The language as-resource orientation (Ruiz 1984: 27) is considered as an alternative to a language rights approach. Black people in South Africa assume that business is equated with the English language. A perception that Lo Bianco (1996:4) refutes and argues strongly that all nations will have to accommodate the fact that the bulk of economic power in the world no longer resides in English-speaking centres but in Northern Asia and Northern Europe and regards language as an economic resource. The approach of viewing a language as a resource or as an economic resource underlines the importance to the nation of conserving and developing all its linguistic resources. The ideas mooted by Lo Bianco (1996:5) above are idealistic and serve as an inspiration for the survival of languages like Northern Sotho. Although a shift in economic power may be in progress, English seems to be gaining wider currency and becoming part of the power equation particularly now that countries like China and India are showing a decided preference for English. Grin (1994:39 in Strauss et al., 1996:4) advocates that in future more should be done to employ concepts from environmental economics and to apply cost-benefit analyses to language planning.

Language acquisition in this study

Language acquisition is integral to language planning where (due to the multilingual nature of the South African society) everybody is expected to be competent in at least three languages, depending on the province. In any case, most provinces have at least three official languages. This type of planning is aimed at increasing the number of speakers of a language, writers, and/or listeners. The point here is that acquisition planning can be designed to make the language concerned easily accessible to non-speakers, which is critical for this study and for those who can speak the language as L_1 and L_2 . What is important in this type of planning is the goal, overt and covert and the methods employed to expand the vocabulary and correct styles and pattern of languages usage. By formulating these kinds of aims,

planners hope to enhance communication between various language groups. Cooper (1989:33) distinguishes types of acquisition planning on the basis of the overt language planning goal, and list namely as follows:

- acquisition as a second or third language- which is a case in point for Northern Sotho
- reacquisition of a language (Northern Sotho) which is rehabilitated from a vernacular status to an official language.

Reacquisition in this article entails the introduction and development of new registers in Northern Sotho for specific purpose (NSSP) in commerce and industry.

Typology of language functions in the industrial setting

Reagan (1986:11) states that there are two general kinds of 'special language' use: communicative use and classificatory use. He identifies seven distinctive language functions that take place in an industrial setting: explanative, informative, directive or regulative, interrogative, evaluative, negotiative and ritualistic or phatic. He notes that each of these seven functions can be seen as operating in two distinct, albeit related and overlapping spheres: the work-related and the social. These are not discussed since they are studies on their own. Halliday (1973:32, as quoted by Reagan, 1986:8) argues that we must first distinguish between language 'use' and language 'function.' He follows a more pragmatic approach to the question of language functions. He applies his theoretical model to actual situations by breaking down the language along the lines of the instrumental, regulatory and interactional functions. What is happening here is that the ideational and interpersonal macro-functions are being divided into more specific categories for understanding a discourse in commerce and industry. This is exactly the sort of pragmatic division that will be necessary to devise a model for understanding the functions of language in industry. His model is shown in Figure 1.2 below:

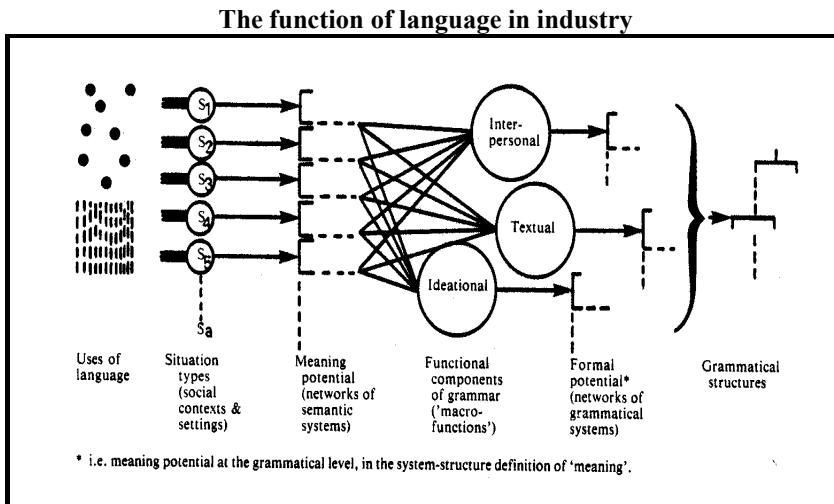


Figure 2: A typology for understanding and classifying the function of language in industry (Reagan, 1986:43)

The function of a text may serve to inform its audience, can give a directive or may be used to convey emphatic language functions. On the factory floor for example, a supervisor may explain or give directive pertaining to procedures and processes of the firm by using an appropriate language to address his or her audience. In terms of the sociolinguistic underpinnings for this study its object is not to concentrate only on the macro-functions of language use but plus on the communicative function as well, which is concerned with conveying or gathering of information. Then there is the instrumental function which involves the organisation of people and getting tasks to be performed successfully; as well as the participatory function which allows people to interact and establish social or institutional groups, and finally there is a persuasive language for developing a group spirit and ubuntu principles. For this type of exercise you need words that will persuade your audience to listen or read what you have to say. Marketing gimmicks are used to pursue audiences or readers. Actually, as indicated, the

focus in this study is language use that extends beyond the limit of social interaction, to higher functions and settings in commerce and industry. Webb (1999:110) points out that the two aspects of verbal communication that are directly relevant to economic activity, namely conveying or obtaining information, must be kept in mind. He argues further that:

The first step is that a simple 'knowledge of language' is not enough to be able to participate meaningfully in economic life. One also has to know 'the discourse' of the field, that is, one needs to be 'economically literate'. In the case of economic activity it means that one must be fully acquainted with concepts and the terms that refer to these concepts such as 'profit and loss', 'budget investment', 'balance sheet', 'income statements', 'debtors', 'creditors', and so on.

It is important that the Northern Sotho speech community concerned here thoroughly internalise an economic discourse in Northern Sotho so that they will be at ease with it in conveying and transmitting an economic thoughts and concepts for specific purpose (e.g. in conversation and in written communication and in their thinking).

The Research Findings

The question whether native speakers of Northern Sotho and other languages are favourably disposed towards the prospective development and the use of Northern Sotho as a language of commerce and industry was determined. A negligible percentage of respondents expressed negative sentiments in this regard (cf. outcomes of focus group interviews). A distinct majority (64,7%) of respondents who filled in questionnaires were not favourably disposed but a significant minority (35,3%) were positive. However, it should be noted that the questionnaire was not designed to reveal explicit allegiances; hence responses in this regard are somewhat open to interpretation.

The first step towards determining the feasibility of Northern Sotho in the role of a language of commerce and industry was to determine the current situation in this regard. English and Afrikaans were naturally found to be dominant in commerce and industry while Northern Sotho was used among friends and colleagues in informal situations. Only 3% of the respondents to the questionnaire survey indicated that they used Northern Sotho in commercial and industrial settings, while 46,8% reported using a smattering of Northern Sotho in a variety of situations.

When determining the effects on the hegemonic use of English or Afrikaans as languages of commerce and industry, it was found that most respondents reported that a lack of proficiency in English prevented them from performing well in their jobs in commerce and industry and some reported that it had been a significant impediment to their efforts to secure employment. In most instances they had no option but to use English to interact with potential employers because it was the only language in common use in commerce and industry. A view expressed by Basel (2004:370) after evaluating and assessing a group of unemployed adult learners involved in an Ikhwelo Project. English was used as the medium of instruction to teach this group of adult learners entrepreneurship and micro-business skills. The writer holds that language and cultural behaviours are often a hidden obstacle to learning for second-language speakers. Her reflections on the use of English as a medium of instruction was that individual learners needed good communication skills in order to play an active role in society and participate in the country's economy. Given South Africa's current high unemployment level, education must help learners to think like entrepreneurs and to debate economic issues. It is difficult, however, to think and debate in a language that learners only hear or use in the classroom. The results of the project revealed that at six Ikhwelo centres educators acknowledged that learners had had difficulty understanding the content of theoretical classes and felt that mother-tongue instruction would have improved learners' results. Both groups of researchers were of the opinion that fluency in English was not a prerequisite for enabling unemployed adults to establish sustainable micro-business ventures in rural areas where English is seldom encountered or required. Wright (2004:177) agrees that there are South African communities that are indeed living in deep rural some proximity to a traditional language-in-ethno-culture, refuses to accept the fact that these communities are not insulated from important aspects of modernity.

To determine whether the respondents were proficient in Northern Sotho it transpired that 68% of the respondents had no command of the language while some reported that they were still learning it. This could be the contingent of 17,8% referred to above since 50,2% reported that they never use Northern Sotho in commerce and industry. A study called 'Critical mass', commissioned by the South African Broadcasting Corporation, crudely measured the percentage of adults' level of comprehension

on three competency levels as demonstrated in using a particular language (Van Vuuren and Maree 1994 in Webb (1999:42). The percentages with regard to Northern Sotho and Zulu are given in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Differentiated language proficiency (Van Vuuren and Maree, 1994, in Webb, 1999:42)

	Afrikaans	English	Northern Sotho	Zulu
No understanding	41%	31%	52%	35%
Up to basic level	25%	2%	1%	2%
Up to intermediate level	12%	21%	2%	13%
Up to complex level	21%	47%	44%	49%

Although the linguistic test used in this investigation yielded the above values, the results were branded as superficial by other linguists. According to Webb (1999:43), it is highly unlikely that 47% of the total population of South Africa can use their English skills for any meaningful task beyond 'BICS' (basic interactional skills), such as higher educational development ('CALP': Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) and for access to the higher domains of life.

The researcher also conducted a survey to establish the existence of language policy documents in commerce and industry. The results of the questionnaire survey revealed that 42 respondents are familiar with the language policy or language of the company in their place of work. This was in contrast to all the respondents (in the focus group interviews) who seem not to be aware of whether such policies exist in their places of work in commerce and industry.

The issue concerning the need to develop and extend targeted/dedicated lexicographic and terminological resources for the use of Northern Sotho in commerce and industry was also investigated. The results reveal that most of the respondents were in favour of the idea of developing Northern Sotho terminologies and orthographies for use in higher functions. They suggested that Northern Sotho should borrow words from English and use them as loan words instead of starting afresh.

The next step was to look for a model of language acquisition that would suit the communication needs of anyone who wished to acquire a command of Northern Sotho for use in commerce and industry. A model was investigated and recommended.

Corpus Development of Economics and Commercial Terminologies for Use in Commerce and Industry

In South Africa language development has three objectives, that is, the development of standard orthography, spelling systems and the modernisation of vocabulary of the language and the creation of new registers for a particular purpose. Corpus planning in this context has to take place in a socio-economic context. It is not enough to have linguists or language specialists only as planners since whatever language development they propose whether is spelling rules or lexical expansion, this has to be confronted by issues of implementation and acceptance of such forms by the 'target group.'

If the planning excludes the above stakeholders and concentrate on the socio-political type of planning then it becomes difficult and, according to Fishman (1974:117), is often conducted within a tension system of changing and conflicted loyalties, convictions, interest, values and outlooks. That is, modernity versus traditionalism (or authenticity versus indigenisation) will always confront corpus planners.

Lexical modernisation

In the Final Report of the Language Plan Task Group dated 8 August 1996 recommends that:

In developing the vocabulary needed for the expansion of functions possible in the new language dispensation, allow the use of loan words; recognise and promote the words already in use among speakers of the language rather than artificially create words from the words and morphemes existing in the language.

According to Cluver (1992:44), lexical modernisation is a process of mapping out planned creation of new terms or the semantic adaptation of new words. Part of language modernisation could be to rename new concepts in a new language into which concepts have been borrowed. This is necessary when

language modernisation occurs too fast for natural naming processes to function — a problem that is intrinsic in Northern Sotho and that has been considered in the conceptualisation of the study.

Creation of registers for special purposes

The aim of this study is to investigate the feasibility of developing *corpus* vocabularies and terminologies for commerce and industry, and to explore the prospects of developing the Northern Sotho lexicography and terminology as a jargon used in commerce and industry; therefore, the prospects and the principles of creating a register for use in commerce and industry are critical.

Language modernisation also encompasses development of registers and styles for various domains or fields. In this study, the domain envisaged is commerce and industry or the workplace. Suddenly the indigenous African Languages have open access to all South African society, communities and economic activities in which they have never been used before. The question is: "What approach should be adopted for the corpus development of Northern Sotho?" The approach that should be followed for the development of Northern Sotho should be neither puristic nor anti-puristic, but apuristic. The apuristic approach is informed by the prevailing realities in the context in which the language is used. It has been established by other linguists that puristic indigenous methods are slow, and that it takes time for such terms to be disseminated to the target users (Madiba, 2000). Loan words should be incorporated into the target language with minimum modifications. However, where loan words are adaptable to the linguistic structure of the language, it is advisable that these be incorporated with modification wherever possible.

Conclusion

The African language native speakers believe that African languages are inherently lacking in the capacity to serve as media of communication for the purpose of higher learning, economic activity, social mobility or any other serious public business. Their only use, they suggest, is as instruments of personal social interaction and cultural expression. According to Heugh (2000:467), the functional use of the African languages will never be fully realised while a colonised consciousness prevails and until their potential in economic terms is unmasked. No proponent of multilingualism or local languages has ever suggested jettisoning either the use of an international language or an international curriculum from the education or economic systems of Africa. However, a reconceptualisation or recovery of what works well in Africa in terms of the following needs should be integrated into both the education and economic systems that also provide access to the outside world.

Language planning activities designed to limit the hegemony of English should discourage the faulty public perception by South Africans in English-speaking commerce and industry that the 'monolingual habitus' of English is the way to do good business. There are a number of serious problems with regard to a monolingual approach in South Africa. As stated previously, South Africans' knowledge of English, especially in the lower socio-economic strata, is inadequate to function and perform optimally in commerce and industry and participate meaningfully in economic activity. How ordinary indigenous people manage to conceptualise and make sense of the tender documents is puzzling. Webb (1999:179) warns that the exclusive use of English will lead directly to lower productivity and less efficient performance. He lists the problems associated with a monolingual approach as follows:

- The exclusive use of English will lead directly to lower productivity and less efficient performance.
- The exclusive use of English can be very costly, both directly and indirectly. The direct costs involve the money, time and energy that will have to be put into upgrading the general knowledge of English, and the indirect costs involve losses due to misunderstanding, accidents, etc. This is the same issue referred to by Ozolins (2003:73) and Grin (1994:39 in Strauss et al., 1996:4) when they note that in future more should be done to employ concepts from environmental economies and to apply cost-benefit analyses to language planning.
- English can easily become an instrument of exclusion and discrimination. The languages of a country are often embedded in the power relations of the country. South Africa is a good example of this phenomenon: Speakers of non-standard English and non-speakers of English have no power and therefore cannot become profitably involved in a globally controlled

economic system. Moreover the knowledge and skills available through the other languages of the country will be lost.

- The role of language and culture in development, including economic development, is underestimated.
- The exclusive use of English leaves the role of language attitude out of the equation in determining economic performance.

Language planning can make an important contribution to the creation of a better, more just and equitable South Africa. However, if it is to do so, those involved in language planning activities must approach these activities in a less technicist and more democratic way for the good of all South Africans.

Notes

1. Markdata: A privately owned Research Company in South Africa.
2. PanSALB: Pan South African Language Board
3. Northern Sotho: one of South Africa's official languages
4. Hansard: A parliamentary publications

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