

**SOUTH AFRICA'S NEW LANGUAGE POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE
ORGANISATION FOR AFRICAN UNITY'S LANGUAGE
PLAN OF ACTION FOR AFRICA¹**

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ABSTRACT

In this article it is argued that promoting exoglossic languages in Africa to the detriment of indigenous languages would be a great disservice to Africa and its peoples, especially from a cognitive and educational perspective, but also from the point of view of promoting African unity, identity and economic empowerment. It is also pointed out that the above will only be possible if civil society so intends. This again depends on the extent to which civil society is empowered by governments, the media and so on to make decisions concerning language issues in an informed manner.

South Africa's present language policy is discussed here in relation to the above, as well as in relation to language planning in Africa as a whole. In July 1987 the OAU Council of Ministers' Forty-Sixth ordinary session was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Here a Language Plan of Action for Africa was adopted. As yet this language plan has not received wide publicity and politicians have been reluctant to comment on its relevance for Africa. This article explores this plan in relation to South Africa's language policy and that of other African countries such as Ghana, Nigeria and Namibia.

INTRODUCTION

"The centrality of language in everyday life and its historical political exploitation within Southern Africa guarantee prominence to discussions of the role of language(s) in the new South Africa."
(Herbert 1992:8)

"...real education is impossible through a foreign medium...the vernacular medium alone can stimulate originality in thought in the largest number of persons."

(Mahatma Gandhi:1920)

This article will comment particularly on how South African governments and language planners (both past and present) have approached the language issue in our society. What challenges does the new proposed Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) face in realising the goals as set out in the constitution? Language policies in other parts of Africa will also be discussed in relation to the OAU policy document on Language in Africa, as well as Language Planning in South Africa.

South Africa is a multilingual country which presents us with multifaceted challenges when it comes to matters concerned with language planning. There are many countries which are faced with multilingual scenarios such as Nigeria where more than four hundred languages are spoken. It is also true that many European nations are multilingual. In terms of the new South African interim constitution of 1993, there are now eleven official languages, a relatively small number if one compares the language situation here with many other countries such as those previously mentioned. According to Heugh (1995a:20), it will be up to the PANSALB

"...to ensure that the promotion of multilingualism, the development of all eleven official languages and all other languages used in the country occurs. Importantly, one of its functions will be to promote the utilisation of South

Africa's language resources. No longer will language be confined only to arts, culture and education. Instead, language plans will now focus on development and economic growth."

This is of vital importance if South Africa is to succeed as a nation, both economically and as a unified country. To plan the use of language is also to plan effective economic growth, not only in terms of South Africa, but more especially Southern Africa as well as Africa as a whole. It is also these sentiments which underpin the OAU's Language Plan of Action for Africa. '

If improperly handled, language planning can easily become language oppression through manipulation and abuse, and this can lead to major conflict. This became clear in 1976 in South Africa when the government of the day attempted to force schools to accept Afrikaans as the medium of instruction for all black pupils. This resulted in the Soweto riots. It is therefore imperative to include civil society in any decision making process when it comes to language planning. Reagan, in Mesthrie (1995:322), points out that:

"Language planning is unlikely to be successful without the active support and participation of the community towards which it is directed."

He concludes (*ibid*:326) by stating that:

"What is needed, instead, is language policies devised in consultation with, and with the support and involvement of, those they are intended to serve."

Invitations have been widely extended to the public to comment on aspects of the interim constitution, including language related policy, which is to be made final in May 1996. However, educating society to make informed decisions concerning language policies will take time. For this reason a flexible policy which is able to change in order to reflect the possible attitudinal

changes in our emerging society is required. Hartshorne, in Mesthrie (1995:317), argues similarly that:

"Flexibility will prove to be the key to a broadly acceptable and legitimate language policy that will be capable of responding to the needs and wishes of a wide-ranging variety of South Africans in a diversity of language situations."

To some extent, sentiments such as these are provided for in the ministerial document issued at the end of 1995, titled "Toward a New Language in Education Policy Framework". Section 9.3 makes provision for the following:

"To conduct an awareness campaign to increase public familiarity with issues of choice in language in education, including the implications and feasibility of language choices, and attitudes towards certain languages..."

In time, such an awareness campaign could result in changes concerning the status and use of languages in South Africa.

SOUTH AFRICA'S LANGUAGE SCENARIO

According to the statistics provided by Schuring and Prinsloo in research conducted under the auspices of the Human Sciences Research Council in 1990, South Africans speak the following languages:

ZULU	(8 541 137 speakers)	- 21,93% of the population
XHOSA	(6 891 358 speakers)	- 17,69% of the population
AFRIKAANS	(6 188 981 speakers)	- 15,89% of the population
TSWANA	(3 601 609 speakers)	- 9,24% of the population
NORTH SOTHO	(3 437 971 speakers)	- 8,82% of the population
ENGLISH	(3 432 042 speakers)	- 8,82% of the population
SOUTH SOTHO	(2 652 590 speakers)	- 6,81% of the population
TSONGA	(1 349 022 speakers)	- 3,46% of the population
SWATI	(926 094 speakers)	- 2,37% of the population
NDEBELE	(799 247 speakers)	- 2,05% of the population

VENDA (763 247 speakers) - 1,95% of the population
OTHER (323 919 speakers) - This includes unspecified languages such as Portuguese, German, Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil, Greek, Italian, Urdu, Dutch, French, Telegu and Chinese in descending order of population. The figure for OTHER is based on the Central Statistical Services statistics from the 1991 census, according to which 287 729 of OTHER refer to African languages used mainly outside South Africa.

In essence this means that approximately 70% of all South Africans have an indigenous African language as their mother tongue (MT), whereas 25% have English or Afrikaans as their MT. The rest of the population which is made up of those who speak languages derived from the OTHER group make up about 5% of the population.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

In the past the white, Afrikaans dominated National Party government's response to multilingualism and language planning in South Africa was to appropriate language for furthering the ends of apartheid. After the National Party came to power in 1948, right up until the 1960s, a concerted effort was made to encourage the use of African languages in an attempt to "retribalise" Africans into separate ethnic groups. This approach has been interpreted as part of the divide-and-rule policy. Black people were not encouraged to learn English and Afrikaans in South Africa (except for the purposes of communicating in the work place) and they were categorised into ethnic groups on the basis of their language. This is explored by Herbert (1992:2-5) where he states that:

"One obvious consequence of the approach in which ethnicity is seen as strictly bounded has been the development of a myth of linguistically and culturally homogeneous communities within Southern Africa."

In this way the government justified their policy of keeping different groups and communities apart in South Africa and of uprooting many others in order to relocate them to areas where their MT was spoken.

At the same time as the National Party government was espousing separate development for the different language groups which they had identified, the late AC Jordan (1957/8) was calling for the unification of the dialects associated with Nguni as well as the dialects associated with Sotho. His suggestion was that Zulu, Xhosa, Southern Ndebele and Swati should be codified into one language, namely, Nguni, while the Sotho dialects, comprised of Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho and Tswana, should be codified into one language, namely Sotho.

This approach was also put forward and promoted by Jacob Nhlapo (1944), a prominent member of the ANC. At the time this made sense as it would have resulted in one written literature with a wide readership which would have made publishing in the African languages economically viable. It would also have served as a tool of unification amongst different communities whose spoken language is mutually intelligible. Nevertheless, this was not to be as it was out of line with the infamous apartheid system and the result is that we have a unique situation where these dialects have become entrenched as independent languages over the years. According to Herbert (1992:2):

"Indeed, the recognition of language as a central mark of ethnic identity in the region has been so vigorously promoted that language has often been used as the

primary criterion for assignment to ethnic group. Such a notion has been a key element in colonial and neo-colonial policies in the region, most notably in the South African policy of apartheid."

Furthermore, Herbert (1992:4) argues that the homelands were based on a linguistic misconception:

"Language may represent one of the cultural attributes of a politically-defined group, but it should not be taken to represent the boundary of a group..."

The issue of "linguistic rationalising" of various languages/dialects has been recently raised again by language planners such as Neville Alexander (1989, 1992) who has pursued the Jordan concept. But this revival has not met with much success and the new constitution now recognises all these dialects/languages spoken in South Africa as official languages, and it is probably safe to assume that this will remain the case for the foreseeable future.

There is, however, a strong argument which can be put forward indicating that our present language policy of recognising eleven official languages is ironically a direct result of previous apartheid policies. These led to the formation of the homelands where these so-called separate languages first became recognised alongside English as the "official" languages of those territories. To postulate unified groups with their so-called "standard" languages which are meant to portray the identity of a so-called ethnic group is often a fallacy. Van Warmelo (1974:72) as well as Herbert (1992:2) quote the Northern Sotho language as a classic example. It is in fact very similar to Tswana and it is clear that the distinction is drawn mainly for political reasons and not for linguistic reasons. Van Warmelo (1974:76) concludes that the North Sotho language is a fiction.

Herbert (1992:3) argues that:

"[M]ore recently, the differentiation of Swati and Zulu has been actively promoted as part of socio-political agendas whereas the actual structural differences between the two are no greater than the distance between two dialects of Zulu. That is, the labelling of one linguistic variety as Swati rather than, say, Kangwane Zulu is first and foremost a political act."

In more recent years it has become clear that the political strategies followed by the National Party have not worked - hence the new constitution and the recent democratic election. Because the language policy was linked to the political policy of the National Party, it too was destined for failure. Black people regarded it as an attempt to isolate them from English and Afrikaans (and by implication the ruling minority elite), as well as from the international community where English is often used as a lingua franca. Furthermore, black people regarded this policy as a way in which to separate them from one another in South Africa and thereby force them to succumb to apartheid.

It was when the National Government made it compulsory for black scholars to be taught in Afrikaans and not in English that violent opposition erupted. Afrikaans was widely regarded as the language of the oppressor and this led to the 1976 riots - the beginning of the final demise of the apartheid system. In this context, Afrikaans was seen as inseparable from its white minority ethnic group and the racist policies which had been implemented by that group.

The communication system has unfortunately come to represent its speakers. This is also visible in the recent discussions around a new language policy for the South African Broadcasting Corporation where there have allegedly been attempts to sideline

Afrikaans. One is left wondering whether this is an empirical debate informed by relevant and contemporary research data.

According to Hein Willemsse (1991) there is a need for re-historicising Afrikaans in order to take account of the contribution of black people to Afrikaans as the present "history" of Afrikaans is "essentially an invented myth". It is argued that this could lead to Afrikaans taking its rightful place, freed from unfavourable political baggage, as an African lingua franca in Southern Africa. This would also have implications for language planning, for example, in Namibia. *

The above discussion clearly illustrates that effective language planning which considers and accounts for the sentiments of the people on the ground is essential for successful government in a multilingual country such as South Africa. Any manipulation of language would more than likely not be tolerated by people in a democracy as it would lead to their disenfranchisement. Their language and their culture form part of their identity, their dignity and their humanity. Language policy is therefore an emotive issue which needs to be carefully handled by all in any multilingual society.

Historically, the promotion of a particular dialect to a "standard" language where various mutually intelligible varieties exist has led to problems in education. For example, Xhosa has many spoken varieties. A student from a specific part of the Eastern Cape who speaks Hlubi or Baca may experience problems when expected to write standard Xhosa which is closer to the variety spoken by the Gcaleka. So, even within these linguistic groups there is diversity which needs to be recognised. The way

in which such varieties occur alongside one another in South Africa makes it difficult to speak of "standard" languages, although many language educationalists still promote the development of one variety as the standard.

The PANSALB will face the challenge of re-defining the notion of standard language in such a way as to set us free from the enslavement which resulted from apartheid language boards, and also from the ensuing restrictions placed on languages which depict one dialect/variety/language as superior to another. Furthermore, the board will be able to make recommendations on legislation regarding language issues and it will hopefully have an influential advisory role within the political spectrum. In accordance with the interim constitution, this board was appointed by the Senate in March 1996.

SOUTH AFRICA'S PRESENT LANGUAGE POLICY

In terms of the new South African interim constitution of 1993, provision is made in section 3 for eleven official languages. The relevant sub-sections of the constitution state the following:

3. (1) Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, Sesotho sa Leboa, Sesotho, siSwati, Xitsonga, Setswana, Tshivenda, isiXhosa, and isiZulu shall be the official South African languages at national level, and conditions shall be created for their development and for the promotion of their equal use and enjoyment.
- (3) Wherever practicable, a person shall have the right to use and be addressed in his or her dealings with any public administration at the national level of government in any official South African language of his or her choice.
- (4) Regional differentiation in relation to language policy and practice shall be permissible.
- (6) Wherever practicable, a person shall have the right to use and to be addressed in his or her dealings with any public administration at the provincial level of government in any

one of the official languages of his or her choice...

- (7) A member of Parliament may address Parliament in the official South African language of his or her choice.
- (9) Legislation, as well as official policy and practice, in relation to the use of languages at any level of government shall be subject to and based on the provisions of this section and the following principles:
- (a) The creation of conditions for the development and for the promotion of the equal use and enjoyment of all official South African languages....

Immediately after the announcement of the above intended language policy, the opinions of two well-known South African language specialists were quoted in Bua (1993) as follows:

According to Mtuze from the African Languages Department at Rhodes University,

"[T]heoretically, something good can come out of this. Where I suspect it is going to fall flat is on the practical side. I think that we have to accept that at first we'll be making do with the *status quo* with some qualifications. It will be imperative that people who work in the government know that it is everyone's right to be addressed in his or her own language. A right not a privilege. But I recognise that the infrastructure is not yet in place for the government. I would like to see clear measures taken which would bring about implementation of the policy... We must ensure that all languages have equal status and equal dignity."

Willemse from the Department of Afrikaans at the University of the Western Cape summed up the position as follows:

"[W]hat concerns me is that the lesser known languages are going to be repressed. There needs to be stronger legal provision for the development of languages in the regions... There is not a process of empowerment built into the process, but we can't blame the politicians for that. Civil society must come together and develop a strong language lobby... Speakers of the individual languages have to take up the struggle to get the guarantees for the development of those languages."

Three years later, after much debate, South Africans are still fighting to implement this policy in a practical way. Willemse shifts the onus onto the people at large to come together and

encourage the development of an eclectic and effective language policy in South Africa.

More recently, according to Desai & McLean (1994:17):

"...responses from the public (to this policy) have been understandably critical. English speakers are typically dismissive, Afrikaans speakers often see the new policy as a trick to demote Afrikaans, and African language speakers are positive mainly about the symbolic achievement."

Desai and McLean (1994:18) then proceed to point out that the main arguments against the new policy are that it is impractical and that it is an attempt to demote Afrikaans which will then allow English to dominate. Contrary to this view, Desai and McLean (1994:19) argue that in promoting other languages to equal status with English and Afrikaans,

"...the policy does remove the exclusive privileges hitherto enjoyed by these languages. However, it does not detract from the rights of Afrikaans (or English) speakers. Conversely, the Constitution specifically states that "rights relating to language... existing at the commencement of this Constitution shall not be diminished." What the Constitution does is extend these rights to speakers of other languages."

They continue to state that Afrikaners should focus on language rights more generally rather than their own rights exclusively. In any event it would seem that language exists only in relation to the people who speak it and there are clearly many speakers of Afrikaans in South Africa which will ensure its continued survival and allow it to prosper.

One could argue that the first stage of language planning in South Africa, namely, the selection of eleven official languages as national languages, is over. The present stage is to determine the eventual spread and use of these languages both at regional as well as at national level. Heugh, in Mesthrie

(1995b:335), states that it is not a question of African languages continuing to be awarded low status in terms of any future policy, but rather, whether the implementation of the policy will be effectively carried out. The promotion of indigenous languages alongside English will require vast sums of money and expertise in the form of human and educational resources. The long term outcome, or the extent to which the above policy can be successfully implemented, is therefore dependent on financial aid from national government, as well as the international community in order to ensure the accessibility of language for the population at large.

In support of this, Desai and McLean (1994:19) state that,

"It is our view that the new language policy provides a constitutional framework for building a more multilingual public consciousness and practice, but that the substance of both the policy and practice have yet to be built. Although politicians and educationists have a responsibility to address these issues, it is ultimately ordinary people who should campaign for the wider use of languages other than English, and who could promote multilingualism in everyday usage."

LANGUAGE PLANNING IN AFRICA

In July 1987, the Organisation for African Unity's Council of Ministers' Forty-Sixth ordinary session was held in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. Here a Language Plan of Action for Africa was adopted. As yet this language plan has not received wide publicity and politicians have been reluctant to comment on its relevance for Africa. Essentially the plan is in line with the views put forward in South Africa's interim constitution. It calls for the use and promotion of indigenous African languages alongside exoglossic languages. PART 1 of the plan puts forward the aims and objectives of the plan as follows: "

- (a) To encourage each and every Member State to have

- a clearly defined language policy;
- (b) To ensure that all languages within the boundaries of Member States are recognized and accepted as a source of mutual enrichment;
- (c) To liberate the African peoples from undue reliance on the utilisation of non-indigenous languages as the dominant, official languages of the state in favour of the gradual take-over of appropriate and carefully selected indigenous African languages in this domain;
- (d) To ensure that African languages, by appropriate legal provision and practical promotion, assume their rightful role as the means of official communication in the public affairs of each Member State, in replacement of European languages, which have hitherto played this role;
- (e) To encourage the increased use of African languages as vehicles of instruction at all educational levels;
- (f) To ensure that all the sectors of the political and socio-economic systems of each Member State is mobilized in such a manner that they play their due part in ensuring that the African language(s) prescribed as official language(s) assume their intended role in the shortest time possible;
- (g) To foster and promote national, regional, and continental linguistic unity in Africa, in the context of the multilingualism prevailing in most African countries.

The debate around this Plan of Action is indeed beginning to take shape and many OAU members and academics such as Kashoki (Zambia) and Mateene (Zaire) are actively promoting it. In August 1994 the OAU voted to disband their "liberation committee" and to replace it with a "unity committee" which will actively seek to unite African countries. This is also certain to impact on the question of Language in Africa. Although many leaders and academics regard the abovementioned Language Plan as idealistic, there are countries who have moved towards implementing it. So, for example, Tanzania has consciously promoted Swahili as its national language. Ironically, the plan seems generally to lack political will. The document itself has not even been translated into any African language.

THE LANGUAGE SCENARIO IN AFRICA

What is really happening on the African continent as far as

language is concerned? Regardless of what is being planned, certain patterns seem to emerge.

Some states in Africa are endoglossic whilst others are exoglossic. The endoglossic countries are committed to developing the indigenous languages. Examples of countries which are actively involved in pursuing such a policy are: Tanzania where Swahili is the national language, Somalia where Somali is the national language, Ethiopia where Amharic is the national language, Sudan where Arabic is the national language, and Guinea where the following languages are regarded as national languages: Fula, Manding, Susu, Kisi, Kpelle, Loma, Basari and Koniagi.

Nations which do not pursue an active endoglossic policy but which have indigenous languages as national languages include Botswana (Tswana), Burundi (Rundi), Lesotho (Sotho), Malawi (Chewa), Rwanda (Kinyarwanda) and Swaziland (Swati).

It could be argued that South Africa with its eleven official languages, eight of which are indigenous, is largely pursuing an endoglossic approach. It remains to be seen whether this will be classified as an active or inactive approach, although the present policy augurs well for a combination of the endoglossic and the exoglossic language policy. Kloss (1978:21) makes the following point about South Africa in relation to the rest of Africa which is relevant even today:

"In South Africa, more qualified scholars, White and Black, are working on this 'linguistic engineering' than in all the rest of Africa. Even Swahili is well behind the South African languages in educational development, in spite of its easy lead in political status."

Even so, one is reluctant to encourage any complacency in language planning in South Africa, especially given the present

interim constitution which looks at encouraging both status and corpus planning in relation to all our languages and varieties.

Virtually all other African countries pursue an exoglossic language policy with French, English or Portuguese being used as official languages. Certain countries have both an indigenous as well as a foreign language which is used at national level. For example, in Kenya there is English and Swahili. It is believed that less than twenty percent of Africans can speak the official language in the exoglossic countries and there is no reason to believe that this will change in the immediate future (Heine 1992:27).

Another example is that of Namibia which became independent on 21 March 1990. The various groups in this country speak three Germanic languages as well as eighteen indigenous languages with a number of dialects. Although Afrikaans was widely used in the former period of South African control, the new SWAPO controlled government opted for the promotion of English as the official language. Cluver (1992:138) argues that "English will spread in Namibia as long as it has clear utilitarian value for Namibians." Linked to this the need has arisen to make English accessible to everyone in that country. Cluver (1993:273), only a year later, argues that a very large group of Namibians have become "...linguistic foreigners in their own country..." The obvious question now is: given present educational and economic resources in Namibia, can the move towards English ever be achieved and how long will it take? Kashoki (1993:148) maintains that:

"...it may be said that Namibia...missed a golden opportunity to learn from historical antecedents by directing its planning not at the evolution of a truly comprehensive language policy but somewhat narrowly at

ensuring that Afrikaans, perceived at the time as an instrument of oppression, was supplanted as an official language by English, a non-indigenous language associated with democratic attributes and global communication."

In Nigeria there are over four hundred languages, though three are dominant, namely, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. It would seem that the disunity which is experienced by Nigerians is largely accounted for in terms of language/cultural differences rather than in terms of economic or political exploitation and so on. The government has therefore declared Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba as Nigeria's national languages along with English which remains the effective official language. It is hoped that national unity will be encouraged by reducing the indigenous languages to three. According to Elugbe (1994), Nigerian pidgin could also be developed further in order to enhance national unity. What is happening in Nigeria seems contrary to the OAU's Language Plan of Action which determines that minority languages should be developed at regional level for educational purposes.

Uganda presents another interesting multilingual example. This is a country where English is used as the national language but there are numerous indigenous languages including approximately twenty-five minority languages. In an illuminating paper, Walusimbi (1994) from Makerere University points out that even today, English is only spoken by a small elite. Furthermore he points out that government has realised that effective socio-economic upliftment which includes family planning, agricultural development, human rights and so on are all dependent on the use of indigenous languages and not English. Walusimbi (ibid) argues that:

"...what is needed now in Uganda is to give an equal

opportunity to all indigenous languages to develop. The development and subsequent emergence of one of them as a lingua franca is only a question of time! We need not suppress minority languages in order to forge national unity. We want unity in diversity..."

He continues to point out that since English has been decided on as the medium of instruction in primary schools under the Obote government, the illiteracy rate in Uganda has risen very sharply.

Bodomo (1994) presents a similar point of view as far as Ghana is concerned. He builds a case for emphasising the study of Ghana's indigenous languages in the educational system of the country. He finds that one of the advantages of studying Ghanaian languages will be the development of appreciation in Ghanaian scholars for their own cultural set-up.

The African examples provided above indicate that language policy in these countries was, and still is, implemented by a top-down process with no input from the majority of people it affects, and with no regard to the OAU Language Plan of Action for Africa.

As far as South Africa is concerned there are probably many lessons to be learnt from other multilingual African countries. One thing is clear: no exoglossic country has so far managed to successfully implement a language policy which uses a foreign language for the purposes of everyday communication. Furthermore, the development of all languages as equal status languages in a multilingual country does not necessarily ensure unity amongst minorities.

LANGUAGE AND ECONOMY

A further important point to bear in mind is that international funders operating in Africa often encourage and

demand certain language policy decisions before any funding takes place. These policy decisions are arguably not always in the interests of the country concerned. For this reason, sound research towards what one could term an "econo-language" which would work for a particular African country should be encouraged. This is presently not the case. Heugh, in Mesthrie (1995b:329), argues that:

"There would also appear to be a correlation between World Bank criteria for aid and those of two other major donors, viz. the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and Overseas Development Administration (ODA). These, in turn, often influence the type of programmes smaller funding agencies support... English Second Language (ESL) programmes based upon subtractive bilingualism and transitional models of language in education are supported by these major funders." "

Subtractive bilingualism would be in conflict with South Africa's present interim constitution which encourages additive bilingualism (adding second and third languages whilst retaining the first language throughout the schooling process). Heugh (1995b:333-4) argues further that no provision is made in such programmes for the transfer of knowledge and cognition from the first to the second language, normally English. She points out that there is conclusive evidence that subtractive bilingual programmes impair cognitive development and that this is not true of additive bilingualism. Phillipson (1988:350) concludes that English Second Language Teaching has not succeeded because it is based on Western models and ultimately only benefits a small elite, with most children not gaining proficiency in English. They are thus unable to attain any significant levels of cognitive development and knowledge acquisition, and are unable to be absorbed into the economic mainstream dominated by an

English-speaking elite.

A further important point is that made by Lo Bianco (1995) where he argues that the world is dividing itself into three trade blocs, a dollar dominated American zone, a Yen dominated Asia and a Deutshmark dominant Europe. To see English as the dominant language of international trade would then simply be incorrect. Bianco (*ibid*) states further that multi-literacy, in terms of language and media technology, are becoming increasingly important in the workplace and that it is no accident that English speaking nations now encourage the learning of, for example, Asian languages. Heugh (1995c:23) argues that South Africa needs to

...begin accommodating the economic reality of our trading partners, especially since, increasingly, our major trading partners are other than English speaking."

They include Japan, Germany and China. Furthermore she argues (*ibid*) that South Africa needs to be looking toward the necessity of being able to trade in languages like French, Swahili, Portuguese and Arabic. This is especially true if South Africa is to become the "engine" of development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The fact that English is largely seen as an alternative to Afrikaans and that it has essentially been pitted against Afrikaans in the past may ensure that English will fare well in the future in the corporate world. This may become especially true if the emergence of an urban middle class becomes a recognisable reality, an English-speaking middle class which is linguistically homogeneous. This would however have serious long term implications for the indigenous languages which would then probably be relegated to the rural areas and result in

complicated divisions between the rural and urban populations. Hartshorne, in Mesthrie (1995:317), argues that as far as English is concerned:

"It has to become an inclusive language, accessible to all, if it is not to continue as part of the 'screening out' process. It has to be the possession of all South Africans; all have to be empowered to use it...Until that is achieved extensive use will have to be made of translation and interpretation, so that no-one is excluded from the processes of democratic decision-making."

The real question is: can this be achieved? Does South Africa, like Namibia, have the economic resources to achieve this? To what extent is it necessary in terms of developing the South African and Sub-Saharan economies? It has been pointed out above that what is required in any contemporary language debate is an attempt to define an "econo-language". Such a debate would, for example, need the input of language planners including the PANSALB, international and local economists, the World Bank and other international aid agencies. It was pointed out earlier that there is a need for a flexible policy which could adapt in relation to on-going research. An informed and well researched debate would hopefully influence the present views of the World Bank as set out by Heugh in Mesthrie (1995b:343):

"World Bank officials who visited South Africa in 1992 made it quite clear that additive bilingualism was not on the World Bank agenda and that funds would not be available to support such programmes...The implications of the relation of language policy to the larger infrastructures outside of education need to be assessed in language policy and planning proposals."

It can only be informed debate that could convince political players in South Africa to influence the World Bank and other powerful aid agencies to change their stance and thus allow the development of our own language planning policies in order to

boost the operational needs of our national economy. It is only through effective communication within the country, within Sub-Saharan Africa, and with the world community that economic growth of our regional and national economies are ensured. Another point of concern is that in the present Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) document (ANC 1994:71), there is very little mention of language and there is only a recommendation for the development of all languages, including "historically indigenous languages". According to Heugh, in Mesthrie (1995b:346):

"This recommendation does not in any way reflect an understanding of the relation between language issues and economic growth or language and national development outside the domains of arts and culture."

Research has proven that it would be a misnomer to regard English as the only language capable of fuelling this economic development, though for obvious reasons it will always play an important role, for example, in developing international links, especially in the fields of science and technology. Eastman, in Herbert (1992:98), sums this up as follows:

"One of the major problems regarding language in Africa today is to reconcile the new mixed languages of the street and the special purpose languages of business and industry with the need to make official policies with regard to language in government and education."

Heugh (1995:23) argues that:

"It is simply no longer true that English is the international language of trade. It is only one of them. It is not only foolish, it is irresponsible not to look far beyond English if we want to improve our balance of trade."

In a challenging and illuminating article, McLean, in Herbert (1992), warns against English becoming a language of the elite in South Africa. Mclean explores the use of language in South

Africa against a socio-economic background. In support of what is stated in the above paragraphs, McLean points out that access to English is regulated by class and domicile and that this works to the advantage of the middle class. McLean also supports the promotion of African languages and seem to support the "Alexander model" of standardising Nguni and Sotho. Furthermore McLean (1992:158) suggests that,

"The status of English and African languages can be addressed through teaching methodologies which encourage a difference rather than deficit view of devalued varieties, through the elaboration of the pedagogical and codified literary resources of African languages, and through a rise in the socio-economic status of African language speakers."

Alexander (1989) points out that at the same time that the use of English would be promoted as a linking language,

"...we would encourage the learning by non-mother-tongue speakers of all the languages spoken by our people... As political and economic developments in a free Azania will necessitate, more and more people will have to, and thus want to, get a sound knowledge of languages other than English... In sum, therefore, it may be accepted that if most people have a sound knowledge of a lingua franca and a sound knowledge of one or more of the other languages other than their home language, communication between the different language groups will become less and less of a problem."

The continued existence of multilingualism as a reality in South Africa is also supported by Reagan, in Mesthrie (1995:321), who states that,

"...regardless of the nature of political change...it is virtually assured that linguistic diversity will remain a feature of social life for generations to come, and that bilingualism and multilingualism will remain commonplace for many, perhaps even most, South Africans well into the next century."

This linguistic diversity must be taken into account if effective "econo-language planning" is to take place in an environment which is free of linguistic prejudice. In other words, the

realities which exist within our society should dictate the use of language in corporate and small business in order to allow everyone access to economic empowerment, rather than regarding English as a language of automatic "superiority" and economic empowerment.

In an insightful paper, Kathleen Heugh (1994) argues that an effective language policy cannot be implemented without a comprehensive strategy which encompasses all sectors of society. A multilingual policy in education can only be successful, for example, if it is supported by the implementation of a multilingual policy in government (national and regional), the economy and social services. Here she looks at education, bureaucracy, the corporate sector and civil society. Heugh (*ibid*) concludes by pointing out that the corollary is that without an effective strategy for implementation, the multilingual policy enshrined in the constitution will remain a token gesture. The ultimate effect will be that the hegemony of English will proceed unchecked.

LOOKING INTO THE CRYSTAL BALL

What seems to be emerging in South Africa is a mixed language which includes a mixture of Nguni, Sotho, Afrikaans, English and so on. It would seem that sooner or later cognisance will have to be taken of this developing lingua franca and researchers have already begun documenting this spoken lingua franca. Is it possible that a uniquely South African language could emerge which would serve to solidify the South African identity and create national integration? There is evidence that teachers in Soweto, for example, are using this language as a medium of

education as it is more accessible and acceptable to the community. Ntshangase (1995:295) points out that many students as well as teachers make use of a combination of Zulu, Sotho, Xisicamtho and English in Soweto schools.

As far as Africa is concerned it is possible that in the future the encouragement of indigenous language use, in line with the OAU policy document, may support a feeling of African unity in general. It may even facilitate effective communication between people living in different neighbouring countries. This would have positive economic effects for Africa in exoglossic countries where limited numbers of inhabitants understand or speak the national languages. These people are by implication excluded from the political and economic mainstream. McLean (1992:159) concludes that:

"Transforming the status and role of languages in South Africa toward an equitable situation therefore entails transforming class relations, and vice-versa."

In line with the approach taken by the OAU, the four languages could be used as follows: Arabic for North Africa, Swahili for East and Central Africa, Zulu or an Nguni related language for Southern Africa and Hausa for West Africa. The study of these languages should then also be encouraged in all African countries together with English, French, Portuguese and so on in order to encourage international communication. Although Tanzania have kept English, they have stated that Swahili is the more important language. Even so, the government has been reluctant to extend the use of Swahili into secondary schools. This is in spite of the fact that a 1982 government commission recommended that Swahili should become the medium from secondary school upwards.

According to NEPI (1992:53),

"Reasons for the indecision on the part of the Tanzanian government about extending Swahili as a medium of instruction beyond primary school need to be explored further."

One of the reasons for the above may well be economic. If Swahili were to be used extensively in secondary schools, then the demand for higher education would no doubt be increased. Today, Tanzania is the only African country which can boast a *basic* literacy rate of 77,6 percent (UNESCO 1985:71). But it would be important that the indigenous languages be used in the political arena in order to provide political will behind such an African language policy. African countries would then be pursuing an active combination of endo- as well as exoglossic policies.

A recent concrete example of what could be termed forward planning is the University of Cape Town's response to Education Minister Bengu's "Towards a new language in Education Policy Framework" document quoted at the beginning of this article. The university's response seems to encourage a more flexible approach to language issues which is in line with the views outlined in this article, in the interim constitution, as well as the OAU Language Plan. An approach such as this may also be necessary for effective on-going language planning which remains flexible:

1. The Committee On University Education supports the recommendation that pupils can offer more than one (but no more than three) languages, at least one of which must be an official language;

2. In terms of admission to a tertiary institution, applicants must offer, in the language of learning and instruction of that institution:

EITHER

(a) a pass in that language as part of the exemption (i.e. it would have to be one of the chosen languages)

OR

(b) a National Qualification Framework (NQF) certificate in that language, certified equivalent to the one taken at school-leaving level (Grade 12).

The subcommittee notes that:

(i) this opens up the possibility that pupils may offer languages not including English (or Afrikaans), the present dominant language in post-secondary education.

(ii) pupils may gain matric exemption with these languages (i.e. any two or three).

(iii) this proposal is flexible enough to accommodate the situation that may arise if other official languages were developed as tertiary languages of learning and instruction, as the NQF equivalents would in any event have to be developed for all languages; and

(iv) the process of developing this certificate would have its own benefits in that it would involve schools, universities and NQF staff."

This is only one tentative example of a response which will possibly encourage a transition to endoglossic languages being effectively used in South Africa, even at tertiary level. Decisions such as these will also have implications for Language Planning and economic empowerment. In terms of this response, students at UCT, a historically English speaking institution, may be able to register without having matriculated in English. Furthermore, provision is made for courses to be taught in indigenous languages if these languages were to become empowered as medium of instruction.

CONCLUSION

In this article it has been argued that promoting exoglossic languages in Africa to the detriment of indigenous languages would be a great disservice to Africa and its peoples, especially

from a cognitive and educational perspective, but also from the point of view of promoting African identity, unity and economic growth. The OAU Language Plan of Action for Africa and South Africa's interim constitution are two examples of laying the groundwork for a successful combination of both endo and exoglossic approaches.

It is argued further that the promotion of a primarily endoglossic approach can only be achieved if civil society wants it to be achieved, in conjunction with government and educational institutions. An educated awareness of the value of such an approach needs to be created through, for example, government, the private sector, as well as educational and research institutions, in order to properly inform the public. This would ensure a collective responsibility for language planning encouraged by informed debate. Much inter-disciplinary research remains to be done in order to unravel the socio-economic and political complexities of Language Planning.

This article began by quoting Mahatma Gandhi and it would seem appropriate to conclude by offering another quotation from Gandhi which is taken from *Young India* (1921). Even though it deals with the situation in India, Gandhi's argument seems relevant for South Africa and for Africa as a continent. It is also true that many of Gandhi's ideas and thoughts were fashioned during his twenty year stay in South Africa. Mesthrie, writing in Bua (1993), quotes Gandhi as having said:

"I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I would have our young men and women with literary tastes to learn as much of English and other world languages

as they like, and then expect them to give the benefits of their learning to India and to the world like a Bose, a Roy or the Poet himself [a laudatory reference to Tagore]. But I would not have a single Indian to forget, neglect or be ashamed of his mother tongue, or to feel that he or she cannot think or express the best thoughts in his or her own vernacular. Mine is not a religion of the prison-house."

NOTES

1. Certain ideas put forward in this article form part of an appendix titled "Language and Nation: 'Language checks and balances'". In Kaschula, RH. & Anthonissen, C. 1995. *Communicating Across Cultures in South Africa. Toward a Critical Language Awareness*. Wits Press/Hodder & Stoughton: Johannesburg.
2. It is envisaged that the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) will cater for the eleven official languages in South Africa. It will be made up of individuals nominated by the public and interested parties. Final selection will be conducted under the auspices of the Senate. For further information on the powers and functions of the board, see, Heugh, K. In, *Bua*. 1995. Vol. 10. No. 1. pp.20-21.
3. For further discussion on the Organisation for African Unity's Language Plan of Action for Africa and how it relates to South Africa, see Kashoki, M. In, Herbert, RK (ed.). 1993. pp. 141-162.
4. Education Minister, Professor Sibusiso Bengu, has released this as a working document. He has invited discussion from the public and educational bodies concerning this proposed model for language use in secondary and tertiary institutions.
5. Language Planning in Namibia is discussed further under the heading: The Language Scenario in Africa.
6. The full version of the Language Plan of Action for Africa appears in Herbert (*ibid*). pp. 157-162.
7. For further recent discussion on the linguistic situation in Nigeria, See, Bangbose, A. In, *Bua*. 1995. Vol.10. No.1. pp. 24-26.
8. Heugh acknowledges King as the originator of these views. They are taken from a paper presented by King, K. 1993. *Aid and Education in South Africa*. Seminar at the University of Cape Town.

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