

Language Policy and Communication in Post-Apartheid Education – Towards a Theory of “Lingocide”¹

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ABSTRACT In an attempt to capture some of the important changes that are taking place in language policy and language acquisition in post-apartheid South Africa, this paper covers some of the debates surrounding these issues. The paper developed around research that was done in previously Indian dominated schools where mainly the teachers now remain to teach African children who are trying to shift English as their second language to becoming their first language. The ethnographic information only appears towards the latter part of the paper because the contemporary discourses on Language Policy in South Africa are varying and complex. Discussion on Language Policy and the survival of African languages occupies a major part of the space here because of the varying and divergent views that are written about them. Leading from this the ethnographic information produces a perspective which demonstrates that through the increasing enrolment of African learners in urban areas, the strength of African languages will gradually erode, giving rise to a process of ‘lingocide’ i.e. eventual disappearance of the African languages through increased adoption of English as a language – for the purpose of gainful incorporation into the mainstream economy.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is about language policy and changes in South African schools, with special emphasis on African learners attending previously all-Indian schools in Indian dominated suburbs in the city of Durban. It will arrive at the pessimistic conclusion that African languages in the early part of this twenty-first century are actually at a juncture where spoken Indian languages were in the 1940s and 1950s i.e. caught up in a decisive inter-phase in which choice of language also determined the extent to which one was integrated into the mainstream economy. While people of Indian origin have all but lost their languages and dialects through absorption into the mainstream economy, Africans still have theirs to identify with. However, through increasing incorporation African masses too will gradually lose their mother-tongue languages and communicate in the country’s hegemonic mode viz. English, eventually leading to a situation of “lingocide” i.e. loss of mother tongue through adoption of the language of domination (explained further below).

Approaches to language and communication in South African classrooms vary widely - according to place and racial/ethnic group. Soon after April 1994, when apartheid met its’ demise

through South Africa’s first general election, the African National Congress (ANC) government adopted a new inclusively based multilingual policy. For the first time the nine major African languages viz. isiXhosa, isiZulu, Ndebele, Swati, Tswana, Sotho, Pedi, Venda and Tsonga were given official recognition and placed on the level of Afrikaans and English (Kamwangamalu 2000: 1). In the rural African dominated schools the respective indigenous mother-tongue is generally the mode of communication. In African dominated townships, a mixture of approaches of only English, only mother-tongue or bi-lingual teaching is done. Indian and White dominated schools have only English as their medium of communication, and in a range of White and Coloured dominated schools Afrikaans is the only medium of instruction².

Language and communication in South Africa has always been and still is an emotive, contentious and divisive force. The 1976 Soweto student uprising began around the issue of Afrikaans being imposed by the apartheid state as a medium of communication in schools – erupting to serve as a catalyst for political mobilisation and radical political change. While Afrikaans is no longer as much a source of discontent, and English has risen in status since the demise of apartheid in 1994, South Africans, particularly Africans, are

still finding their way on preferred language and communication mediums. While all of the indigenous languages and dialects are still spoken in South Africa, the demands of the global economy are gradually increasing the necessity of communication in English. In the urban areas and particularly among educated Africans, English is being increasingly spoken. However, the situation with respect to the number of speakers of indigenous languages in South Africa as well as Africa at large and the spread and entrenchment of European languages, is complex. For instance, the work by Kamwangamalu (2000), Alexander (1997) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) focus upon variations of the same theme – but also almost to the point of making divergent statements. Although referring to Alexander's (1997) pessimistic paper about the future of African languages in South Africa, Kamwangamalu (2000) provides an insight that suggests that African languages are not as threatened as many might be inclined to believe:

Whatever position one takes on this issue, research into language-in-education policies in Africa over the past four decades has shown comprehensively that despite all efforts to make the European languages available to the African masses, the efforts have been resounding failures...Research reports from around the continent bear testimony to these failures. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), for instance, it is reported that only one person out of every twenty-five Congolese can speak French correctly....In South Africa, for instance, the 1991 census statistics show that 49 percent of the Black youth between fifteen and twenty-four years of age cannot speak, read or write English (Kamwangamalu 2000: 5).

In more brisk and almost opposite fashion, Alexander (1997) addressed the issue of language policy and planning in South Africa as though it is set to further erode the strength of spoken African languages. He identified part of the problem to lie in the Anglo-centric approach of the popular political leadership that was fighting for emancipation from apartheid. They lacked for instance the fervour that White Afrikaner nationalists had in raising the Afrikaans language to the point of becoming an ideological cloak. Alexander (1997: 2) argued:

"At the critical time when Bantu education was being imposed on the Black people, the

leadership of the liberation movement across the board made a de facto decision to oppose Afrikaans in favour of English. The option of promoting the African languages while also ensuring as wide and as deep a knowledge of the English language was never considered seriously for reasons connected with the class aspirations of that leadership. In effect, therefore, the hegemony of English, its unassailable position – as Chinua Achebe calls it – became entrenched among the black people. Because it was the only other language that could compete with Afrikaans as a means to power (jobs and status) and as the only means to international communication and world culture at the disposal of South Africa's elites, it became, as in other African countries, the 'language of liberation'."

Roque (2002, p. 18), writing through the United Nations Chronicle Online edition, partially echoing Alexander's sentiments, adopted a broad and inclusive approach to the reasons for the disappearance of languages on the world stage. Roque's position is that

"...many things can lead to people abandoning their native tongue. One is the break-up or transplanting of a community when individuals or groups find themselves immersed in a different cultural and linguistic environment. Another is when individuals come in contact with a more aggressive or economically strong culture, and adults encourage their children to learn the language of the dominant culture, especially as a means to getting a job. The situation is worse when authorities systematically discourage the use of local languages in schools, local government and the media. But an endangered, moribund or even extinct language can be saved through a determined language policy."

Experts generally consider a community language to be "endangered" when at least thirty per cent of the children no longer learn it. UNESCO reports that about half of the approximately six thousand languages spoken in the world are under threat, seriously endangered or dying. According to the *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing*, languages have died out and disappeared at a dramatic and steadily increasing pace in many parts of the world, especially in the Americas and Australia, over the past three centuries. UNESCO estimates that over fifty per cent of the world's languages are endangered, emphasizes that ninety per cent are not represented on the internet and that eighty

per cent of African languages have no orthography. Because of this African languages depend upon foreign, mainly European languages to develop their orthographies. The nine recently officially recognized African languages in South Africa are no exception and are already showing signs of being endangered.

SOUTH AFRICA'S BACKGROUND

As English and Afrikaans speaking Whites challenged each other for political control in South Africa, their respective languages not only became the mediums through which their aspirations and goals were articulated but also what they should represent ideologically. While successive governments, since the early twentieth century, created the impression that they supported the survival of African languages, their real agenda was to subtly undermine and suppress them, ably achieved through the Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953. This Act was the culmination of ongoing strategies and propaganda that predated the formalization of apartheid in 1948 when the National Party won the general election on the ticket of separate existences for different racial and ethnic groups in South Africa. In 1937 the *Fedarasie van Afrikaans Kultuurvereniginge* (Federation for Afrikaans Culture or F.A.K.) stressed the following point:

"We must see to it that the Natives learn Afrikaans....If we should speak to the Kaffir [sic], what language is to be used? I believe that it should be Afrikaans. That gives us another seven million people which will make our language the strongest and the preponderating one in this part of the world. Can we let such a force be lost to us because of the false notion of our self-esteem and national pride?....If every Kaffir in South Africa spoke Afrikaans, the economic power of Afrikaans would be so strong that we should no longer need an F.A.K. to watch over our cultural interests. The native will in future be a much bigger factor in the development of our country than is the case at present, and we must shape that factor so that it serves our purpose, assures our victory, and perpetuates our language, our culture and our volk....The Kaffir who speaks Afrikaans can be our cultural servant as he is our farm servant" (cited in Kamwangamalu 2000: 9).

Throughout the twentieth century South Africa was positioned as a bilingual country -

with only English and Afrikaans as the officially recognised languages – spread across the four provinces that then made up the country. The demise of apartheid ushered in new provincial boundaries in South Africa – now constituting nine provinces and eleven recognised languages – including English and Afrikaans. Each province has its own African language or dialect and is still widely spoken by the local people. Since 1994, after the first general election, more inclusive policies recognising cultural diversity and multilingualism replaced apartheid's pillars of racial and cultural exclusivity and the two language policy of English and Afrikaans. The new "Language in Education Policy" promotes multilingualism in that it: recognises cultural diversity as a national asset, seeks to promote multilingualism and develop the country's eleven official languages, endorses an additive approach to bilingualism and gives individuals (in practice – parents and guardians) the right of choice with regard to the language of learning and teaching. According to Heugh (2002: 3):

"This policy was designed to guarantee learners the best possible access to and proficiency in another language (English for the majority of pupils alongside the language best known by pupils upon entry to school."

AMBIGUITIES AND PROBLEMS

The above makes a positive case for bilingual and multilingual education – which is amply supported by the work of Ianco-Worral's "The Bilingual School", Rama K. Agnihotri (1995) in India, and Wolff (2000: 23) on language and education in Africa. Wolff for instance concludes his study of "Pre-school Child multi-lingualism and its Educational Implications in the African Context" as: "There could be no successful and competitive national development of multi-lingual states in Africa without recognition of the big three 'M's': Multilingualism and multi-culturalism; modernisation of the mother tongues and mother-tongue education." Wolff's position is persuasive and encouraging. However, the situation in South Africa is not without its ambiguities and problems. Heugh, on implementation of the country's implementation programme notes, "The policy has not been accompanied or followed by any significant government initiated implementation plan." Instead it has been met with several objections against its implementation – effectively

being used to deflect government responsibility in implementation. This stands against the background of an ambiguous situation of assertive, confusing and misleading publications on the extent of research done on the issue of languages and education in South Africa. On the one hand many recent reports have attested to the volume of research that has been done on languages in education, yet others continue to deny this, pleading for more to be done on problems that have already been identified. For instance, Taylor and Vinjevold (1999: 211) argue that:

“Widespread consultation and debate has accompanied language policy development in South Africa in the last decade. The debates were informed, and confused, by international studies on education policy in bilingual and multilingual countries, by Pan Africanist views of language policy emerging from African countries, and by the limited amount of South African research undertaken in schools. These authors create the misperception that parents want straight for English – as they state: ‘Many parents want English language instruction from early as possible’.”

The claim, by virtue of the use of the word “many” and without substantiation of it with empirical or statistical data renders Taylor’s and Vinjevold’s (1999) position simplistic and without basis. But their aim is twofold – to give English an advantage that distances itself significantly from other languages that could provide competition, and to create arguments against bilingualism and multilingualism. Arising out of this is a degree of distortion that passes on to numerous sources i.e. that English is the norm across the country. In response, Heugh (1995a) refers to a colleague’s challenge to Department of Education (DOE) officials at a national colloquium on *LANGUAGE IN THE CLASSROOM* that was held from 9-10 June 2000, that in rural schools the real practice in foundation phase classrooms is not to communicate in English. His experience is that when he visits rural and township primary school classrooms, where African languages predominate, he hears very little English, if any at all. Not a single DOE official rose to his challenge and there was no statistical evidence to support the claim that English enjoyed popularity in these schools. However, his position can be easily misunderstood as though there is an anti-English drive in the indigenous mediums of communication – which will be inaccurate if understood in these terms.

Heugh’s position though is overstated, since at least in practice the state, through the DOE’S Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), supports, at least superficially, the notion of starting off the foundation learners through the languages in which they are most competent. However, her case for bilingualism and multilingualism finds support in Wolff’s assertion that multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception in Africa and that children are known to have mastered two, three or more languages.

Wolff’s assertion is grounded in the findings of the cognitive and linguistic advantages of bilingualism – traced as far back as the writing of Quintilian over 1800 years ago and the ability of children to distinguish accurately between two or more language systems (Wolff 2000: 18). However, the situation in South African schools vary widely, according to major population in which the schools are situated and the teachers who dominate in the areas. In African dominated residential areas school teachers are mainly African, in Indian dominated residential areas teachers are mainly Indian, and in White dominated residential areas teachers are still mainly White.

The problems of language policies in South African schools are manifold and somewhat ambiguous. Unlike other countries in Africa, when decolonization precipitated a concomitant migration overseas of the respective populations of European origin, in South Africa most chose to remain after the first democratic general election of 27 April 1994 that ushered in an African dominated government. With numbers in excess of six million, investments that cut across several generations and still in control of the economy, it was practical for such a sizable number of Whites to remain in the country. While South Africa was part of the British Empire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Afrikaner domination between 1948 and 1994 saw a rivalry between English and Afrikaans as the two major languages of domination. Afrikaans is in fact the more widely spoken language than English in South Africa (see Kamwangamalu 2000: 5). However, the demise of apartheid through the 1994 general election did not lead to an axiomatic erosion of Afrikaans as one of the languages that came to represent an exploitative era. Although it has been despised and has served as the catalyst for an intensified struggle against apartheid since the Soweto uprising of 16 June 1976, there are still

subtle but determined efforts to maintain apartheid's two official languages viz. English and Afrikaans as the main mediums of communication.

Through constant undermining of bilingualism and multilingualism, especially in the attempts to promote regional African languages as well as Indian languages in schools, numerous excuses surface to justify their lack of offering, particularly in White dominated or controlled schools³. One of the common reasons for not offering African languages in primary schools is that secondary schools only offer Afrikaans as a second language. The justification lied in the approach that primary school is a preparation for high school and that children who are not familiar with Afrikaans are likely to be prejudiced if an alternative second language is offered. This approach sets itself against the guidelines outlined in the Language Policy document in the Constitution, which clearly states that isiZulu should be the first additional language and Afrikaans the second:

All tests/examinations (except the other languages) will be in English.

- 3.1 The First Additional Language should be isiZulu.
- 3.2 It should be taught from Grade 3 to Grade 7 as required by the RNCS.
- 3.3 All aspects of isiZulu, with the emphasis on communication, should be taught.
- 3.4 Tests/Examinations should be set in isiZulu.
- 4.1 The Second Additional Language will be Afrikaans.
- 4.2 It will be taught from Grade 4 to Grade 7 as required by title RNCS.
- 4.3 In the teaching of the Second Additional Language the emphasis will be on communication.

South Africa has already made English a preferred choice of communication in classrooms, although it by no means constitute an imposition that can be equated with the enforcement of Afrikaans - either as the preferred medium of communication or as the first additional language during the heady days of apartheid that gave rise to the 1976 Soweto student unrest. Excerpts from section two of the Language Policy provides guidelines that are couched in flexible language:

2.1 In keeping with the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), the medium of instruction and the main language from Grade R to 7, should be English.

2.2 All Learning Areas/Subjects(except other languages) should be taught through the medium of English.

2.3 All learners should be encouraged to speak English during lesson time (except during the other language periods) and during the breaks.

2.4 All tests/examinations (except the other languages) will be in English.

Against the background of such a set of directions several fundamental questions arise with respect to the current status of African languages, as well as other languages such as those of Indian and Middle Eastern origin. They revolve around questions such as: "*Why is English in South Africa becoming so prominent?*"; "*Are Africans, Indians and those inclined towards the Middle East – particularly Muslims – still talking in their respective/preferred languages?*", and "*What is the future status of those languages against the dominant force that English now constitutes in post-apartheid South Africa?*"

Along with the adoption of a new language emerges the adoption of new values and social habits. Hence, together with language there develops behavioural patterns and customary practices that create the distinctiveness that separates one linguistic group from another. UNESCO's position on this is convincing:

"Languages are not only extremely adequately tools of communication, they also reflect a view of the world. Languages are vehicles of value systems and of cultural expression and they constitute a determining factor in the identity of groups and individuals."

However, the boundaries that emerge from these distinctions are not non-negotiable. Individuals realize that outside of the mind-sets that prevail in their cultural groupings communication and relationships are situational and determined by varying needs and requirements. Thomas Eriksen's (1993) discussion about the Chicago School's investigation of the city's heterogeneous population in the early twentieth century as well as other writers' discussion on individuals and their place within an ethnic group amply demonstrates this.

"As an individual moves between social contexts in the flux and transience of urban life, the relative importance of his or her ethnic membership changes. Thus an individual may have many 'selves' according to the groups to which he belongs and the extent to which each

of these groups is isolated from the others” (Eriksen 1993: 19-20).

While Eriksen is correct in endorsing the Chicago School’s recognition that identities are fluid, he fails to capture the overpowering influence of hegemonic groups and economic forces that steer less powerful and subservient people into conformity and flexibility in association. Colonialism, post-colonialism and presently globalization have each tried to foster a sense of homogeneity that reflect the needs and preferences of the world’s ruling elite. Social communication, commercialism and politics are generally communicated in the language of the powerful and are entrenched to serve as the symbol of domination. English is one of these languages.

METHODOLOGY

Ethnographic research for this paper stretched across February to May 2006. It was done with school principals’, teachers and learners who were already on the list of respondents that helped during research for other papers that were published over the last few years (see Singh 2005a,b, 2006). The focus of the earlier papers was the integration in schools, particularly in Indian dominated areas – where African learners from neighbouring informal settlements and other low-income townships were being increasingly admitted and which led to a concomitant migration of Indian learners to schools in White dominated neighbourhoods. It was the observations that began in 1997 that helped to shape and determine what needed to be recorded in the process of the transformation that was taking in South Africa at that time.

Equally important informants were the taxi drivers who bus learners into schools from neighbouring African townships. They provided information about why African parents chose to ignore their neighbourhood schools in favour of schools in Indian dominated areas – where teachers are mainly of Indian origin and teach only through the medium of English. A common and important reason according to them was that parents preferred to send their children to these schools because of their belief that more productive work is done in Indian dominated schools.

After interviewing principals and teachers about their policies on classroom communication, an arrangement was made for ten teachers in two schools to answer a questionnaire on three issues

viz. their knowledge of isiZulu, the dominant African language in the province, the schools language policy as well as the state’s language policy. From the ten questionnaires nine of the teachers were unable to speak in isiZulu and the one who could was African who was brought into the school to teach it. Eight demonstrated a zero awareness of the state’s policy on language policy. The two that did state an awareness about the policy admitted that their knowledge on it was only cursory in this respect. For instance, while the eight did not know anything about which were the first and second additional languages, the other two stated it but felt that they were still subject to correction about it. The problem was that they did not know that Afrikaans was the second additional language and that isiZulu was the first additional language. Two hundred questionnaires were distributed to parents via the school principals. Only ninety-eight were returned at the time of and after the date agreed upon to return the completed questionnaires. Despite several revisits and telephone calls to the school principals that did not return the completed questionnaires, I was unfortunate to have to contend with what was returned to me. After running out of excuses principals became evasive and stopped taking my calls to talk to me about the reasons for the delay or for a further appointment. Analysis of the received questionnaires is presented below.

TOWARDS A THEORY OF “LINGOCIDE”

Answers to the two questions above viz.: “*Are Africans, Indians and those inclined towards the Middle East – particularly Muslims – still talking in their respective/preferred languages?*”, and “*What is the future status of those languages against the dominant force that English now constitutes in post-apartheid South Africa?*”, could lie in the recognition of the above reality by parents - which inevitably influences their choices of schools and medium of communication for their children. It is in this recognition that the process of language erosion and identity loss actually began throughout the world. Language erosion occurs when individuals and eventually the population group from which they come, tend to increasingly communicate in the dominant language at the expense of their own. This growing tendency simultaneously erodes into the conventional and customary practices of the group – giving rise to new forms of communi-

cation and social practices. It radically alters their identities from what they were to what they begin to adopt socially and linguistically – leading to identity loss.

It is in these circumstances that the process of lingocide sets in. The term lingocide is derived from related concepts such as homicide, infanticide and suicide. The Concise Oxford Dictionary for the 1990s (Third Impression 1992), defines these concepts in the following words:

- Homicide: person who kills a human being (1992: 564);
- Infanticide: a person who kills an infant (1992: 605);
- Suicide: the intentional killing of oneself (1992: 1220).

Consistent with these definitions, the theory of “lingocide” is defined here as a gradual process of avoidance by the affected ethnic group and of wanton and deliberate erosion of a language in favour of the language/s of domination by hegemonic forces. Crudely, it is reference to people and their systems that intentionally destroys a language/s with little or no state driven effort to sustain those that are affected. Recognizably, the force of the dominant economic and political systems and their accompanying languages tend to overwhelm efforts to keep local indigenous languages from eroding and eventually disappearing.

In South Africa while other relevant spoken languages are given credence, English has become the medium of communication in most significant corridors of power and in most other instances below. Extracts from the Language Policy emphasizes this point:

- 1.1 In accordance with the South African Constitution (1996) the School’s Language Policy should aim to promote and respect the languages in use in the school community.
- 1.2 In keeping with the aims of the South African Schools’ Act (1996), the language policy of the school should be aimed at developing multi-lingualism.
- 1.3 The School should aim to develop tolerance for the other languages spoken in the school community.
- 1.4 The emphasis in the teaching of language, should be communication.
- 2.1 In keeping with the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), the medium of instruction and the main language from

Grade R to 7, should be English.

- 2.2 All Learning Areas/Subjects(except other languages) should be taught through the medium of English.
- 2.3 All learners should be encouraged to speak English during lesson time (except during the other language periods) and during the breaks.
- 2.4 All tests/examinations (except the other languages) will be in English.
- 5.1 Learners should be taught at least ONE of the Eastern Languages.
- 5.2 Eastern Languages should be taught mainly for communication and cultural purposes.
- 5.3 A structured programme should be followed.
- 5.4 The educators for the teaching of the Eastern Languages should be provided by the Department of Education.

It is abundantly clear from the above extract of the Language Policy that English is being touted as the language of preference. Barely twelve years into its new-borne democracy, South Africans have shifted substantially away from Afrikaans and African languages and dialects towards communication in English. When learners have to be tested or examined in English then the priority must be to improve upon skills in communication in that language. Paragraphs 2.2 to 2.4 above rubber stamps the direction in which the state wishes to proceed in its language policy at a national level. Evidence for this is already appearing on the ground in schools that are attended by mainly African learners from the primary levels.

RESULTS OF A SURVEY ON LANGUAGE PREFERENCE

In a survey among 200 African pupils in junior primary schools parents were asked to respond in the following manner to the four preferences below:

- *Cross only your preferred answer OR rate your preferences from 1 to 4, with 1 implying your most preferred choice, 2 your second preference, 3 your third choice and four your least preferred.*
- *I would prefer my child/children to be taught in their mother tongue, and another official language should be available.*
- *I would like my children to have the opportunity to learn their mother tongue as well as English equally well.*

- *I would like my children to learn through both English as well as their mother tongue.*
- *It is important for my children to learn in English than in any other languages*

Table one illustrating responses to each of the preferences listed above.

A final question:

Question 1: I would prefer my children to be taught in their mother tongue language	2
Question 2: I would like my children to have the opportunity to learn their mother tongue as well as English equally well	28
Question 3: I would like my children to learn through both English as well as their mother tongue	32
Question 4: It is important for my children to learn in English than in any other languages	32
Spoilt	4
Total	98

State why you chose this school for your child:

- Twenty one were returned unanswered
- From the seventy-seven remaining, fifty-six gave reasons such as “high standard of education” or “preference for their children learning in English” and “multi-racial”
- The remaining twenty-one responses were diverse: including responses such as “desperate”, “close to home”, “convenience”, “no other option”.

One parent wrote a lengthy response that captured the feelings of many of the parents who chose to send their children to Indian dominated schools:

- “Firstly, because they learn English and I prefer that something I did not get. That doesn’t mean that I hate my language. But when you know English, communication is not a problem. Besides, we normally speak Zulu at home – so I don’t see any problem. And if I wanted my children to learn in IsiZulu I would have taken them to my local township where most subjects are taught in Zulu because it take them there very long time to understand English.

The information that emerged from the questionnaires provides an important insight into the preferences towards which African parents appear to be venturing. Only two of the ninety-eight returned questionnaires indicated a preference for their children to be taught in an African language, while only twenty-eight of the ninety-eight preferred to have their children

taught in their respective mother tongues but to know English equally well. The third and fourth questions elicited answers that were intended to demonstrate their proclivity towards the English language. In both instances the responses were thirty-two each, with the latter intending to eke out a response that showed a virtual diversion, if not abandonment from spoken African languages. Thirty-two (question 4) out of the ninety-eight returned questionnaires placed the highest premium on English as the preferred language, constituting a percentage that is sufficiently large not to ignore. This figure correlates closely with Roque’s (2002) (UNESCO’s) estimate that a language is endangered when thirty per cent of a population no longer speaks the language. However, when viewed with the thirty-two responses to question three, the picture magnifies the increasing inclination towards English. Collectively, ninety-two out of the ninety-eight responses (four being spoilt) indicated either an equal or greater inclination towards English. While ninety-eight questionnaires are by no means a representative sample against the background of a population of forty-three million people, out of which more than seventy-five percent are Africans, they do however represent a significant indication of what is emerging among African parents who want to ensure that their children are adequately prepared to enter into the mainstream economy. An important indicator of this process is in universities throughout South Africa where there have been minimal enrolment of students to graduate in African and Eastern languages.

Urban schools, particularly in Indian dominated residential areas, are monolingual, emphasizing communication in English only. Most Indian teachers themselves are monolingual and can only communicate in English. But comparatively, formerly Indian schools in which there is a dominance of Indian teachers in a predominantly African learner environment, they are more accommodating and proactive in offering African mother-tongue languages than White dominated schools. Many such schools have chosen isiZulu as their second language over Afrikaans – which once enjoyed this status. However, White dominated schools continue to maintain English and Afrikaans as their first and second languages.

CONCLUSION

A fundamental question that emerges from

the discussion above is: *What is the future of African languages against the backdrop of a rapidly increasing interest in English?* It is universally normative that trendsetters in any country are usually the political and professional elite, as well as the successful business segment. In South Africa, all three segments, including those from the African ethnic groups, can only be conceived of as comprising of individuals who cumulatively communicate in English and meet their goals and aspirations through this medium. As its African/mother-tongue citizens venture more towards the demands of popular economic interests to meet global challenges, they appear destined to similar processes of deculturalisation and language loss – in similar ways to their Asian counterparts within South Africa as well as in places such as the Caribbean Islands, South America and the United States of America. Wolff's (2000) notion of the "TRIPLE M" in Africa is unlikely to stand the test of time in South Africa, as the process of "lingocide" continues to entrench itself. Despite the fact that post-apartheid South Africa is now a constitutionally declared multi-lingual country, the concept is more realistically a cliché than a reality. Not only is there an aversion by especially White dominated schools to promote African languages as mediums of communication, but there is also a determination by African parents to ensure that their children familiarise themselves with English communication because it is now unquestionably seen as the 'language of empowerment'. The gradual erosion and eventual demise of a language will depend upon the medium through which learners are educated, the language of commercial transactions and of political communication, as well as the choice a country makes to build a common culture and national initiatives. The choice of English has already been made in South Africa's Language Policy and the reasons for that are somewhat obvious. The cost of adoption of a single language is also touted as economical when viewed against the costs and difficulties associated with interpretations, interpreters, possibilities of sectarianism arising out of language differences and above all the benefits of integrating into the world economy through business or professionalism. Ultimately, what lies in the language policy in South Africa and how leaders communicate will determine the nature, pace and process of lingocide.

NOTES

- 1 The concept "lingocide" emerges out a colloquial reference to language usage, particularly in Indian dominated working class areas in Durban.
- 2 The medium of instruction in a school is dependent upon several factors viz. location, learner population, teacher background and parental influence over school's teaching policy.
- 3 The word 'dominated' refers to schools that have a majority of White learners and teachers, whereas the word 'controlled' refers to learners of other racial denominations but with White staff in the majority.
- 4 UNESCO – Google/URL
- 5 'Taxis' in South Africa also refer to ten-seater minibuses, usually Toyotas that have earned a reputation for overloading and poor driving.

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