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Economics of languages: The interplay between language planning and policy, and language practice in South Africa

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This article explores the argument that black South Africans identify themselves readily with their ethnic groups when it comes to activities such as listening to the radio or singing songs in their respective indigenous South African languages, but when they have to make a choice as to which language to use in the realm of business, they tend to respond otherwise. Therefore, this article seeks to investigate the nature of the interplay between language planning and policy on the one hand and language practice and behaviour of the people of South Africa on the other. In addition to this, the theoretical underpinnings of language-as-a-right in relation to language-as-a-resource paradigms are discussed. Subsequently, a succinct overview of African languages as languages of economic value is presented. The attitude of South African indigenous language speakers towards the usage of indigenous African languages in the business sector is investigated by outlining their behaviour and practice at Automated Teller Machines (ATMs).

Introduction: Background

There is general concern in South Africa that major institutional structures and processes are unresponsive to the interest and commitment displayed by the people of South Africa towards advancing their languages. While radio caters for, and is supported by, a significant indigenous African listenership on the one hand, the print media, communication initiated by politicians and language policy in schools, on the other hand, are among the more prominent examples of failure to accommodate the language preferences of millions of South Africans. The findings of a survey conducted by Markdata (PanSALB, 2000: 73), commissioned by the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB), reveals that black South Africans who speak indigenous languages are exceptionally loyal and committed to their indigenous home languages. However, this paper exposes another side of language behaviour and practice by black South Africans when they are confronted with a language requirement in the realm of business, which is contrary to the findings by Markdata. According to Phaahla (2006: 57) black people in South Africa assume that business is indissolubly linked to the English language. Another view is held by Lo Bianco (1996: 4) who asserts 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 Asia and Europe and regards language as an economic resource.

There is a divergence between South Africa's multilingual language policy on the one hand, and its language practices and behaviour on the other. Alexander (2000: 10) noted that this kind of language behaviour and practice by black South Africans will not empower them and will remain in the realm of mere rhetoric, unless the practical assertion of their language rights extends to the use of the indigenous African languages in all domains.

Most studies show a positive correlation between language and socio-economic factors, particularly in South Africa today, which is an issue Coulmas (1992: 22, in Strauss et al., 1996: 3) observes in closing his argument that a language is a bankable asset and an economic factor (Phaahla, 2006: 57).

According to Strauss et al. (1996: 3) language and ethnicity issues are gaining renewed prominence around the world today and require academics' and economists' attention. He observes further that it is understandable that more and more economists and language scholars are paying close attention to the economics of language in their analyses and policy recommendations (Phaahla, 2006: 57).

At present, South Africa finds itself occupying a precarious position within a framework of globalisation and internationalisation where cultural and linguistic pluralism prevail (Phaahla, 2006: 57). While the language practices promote monolingualism in English, or what linguists may term the 'diffusion-of-English paradigm', the South African language policy promotes multilingualism. With regard to the language practices in business, education, the media and other domains of higher functions, 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, the implementation of language policy.

Subsequently, due to the diminished use of South African indigenous languages in important domains such as government and business, the current regime promulgated

a Bill termed the Languages Bill. The South African Languages Bill requires national and provincial departments to identify at least three official languages to be used for official purposes in terms of their language policies. The Language Bill makes provision for three languages for use in domains of higher functions, two of which should be indigenous African languages. The Bill is aimed at promoting equitable use of the official languages of South Africa while taking into consideration section 6(2) of the Constitution, 1996, which recognises the diminished use of South African indigenous languages that has occurred over time. The Bill, according to the present regime, seeks to take practical and positive measures in regulating and monitoring the use of official languages, promoting parity of esteem and equitable treatment of official languages, facilitating equitable access to services and information, and promoting good language management by national departments, national public entities and national public enterprises to meet the needs of the public. This is a bold stance taken by the South African government, but whether this position will change the attitude, language practice and behaviour of the South African indigenous language speaking people remains to be seen.

In addition to the South African Languages Bill, South Africa has a Bill of Rights and these rights are protected by the Constitution. Language rights discourse has become a major force alongside the sociolinguistic situation to lobby for national identity and face the challenge of the global language in the development of the language policies of nations. South Africa is also not immune to these occurrences. Thus, the question of 'language rights' is marked by a wide range of enormously complex practical problems. In this paper, the author will not dwell too much on what rights, precisely, are intended by the notion 'language rights', be it in language practices, behaviour and language management, or beliefs of the nation. Beukes (2009: 21) derides the idea that individual rights are purportedly being protected, and argues that South Africa is 'trapped...between "intention" and "performance"', warning that it is high time to revisit the National Language Policy Framework and make it more comprehensive. While I, Phaahla (2006: 37), concur with the statement by Beukes, I also state that the issue of language behaviour and practice in South Africa is incredibly unique.

Therefore, this article seeks to investigate whether there is interplay in South Africa between language planning and policy on the one hand and language practice and behaviour on the other.

Research question

The research question this article seeks to answer is whether there is congruency between the economics of languages vis-à-vis the interplay between language planning and policy as well as language behaviour and practice in South Africa.

Literature review

Economic considerations in language policy constitute a relatively new development. Generally, according to Grin (2006: 77), discourses about language policies tend to rely on one of three main viewpoints:

...a legal one, in which language policy often takes the form of the enunciation of language rights in given contexts; a culturist one, in which languages are mostly seen as manifestations of culture, confining policy to a set of measures affecting corpus or, at best, support for literary creation or publication; and an educational one, focusing on language teaching.

Research into the economics of language planning (e.g. Cooper, 1989; Bourdieu, 1991; Coulmas, 1992; Grin, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 2001; Ager, 2001) suggests that there is a need to rethink the new language policy with a view to adopting a more pragmatic, decentralised and market-oriented approach to language planning. 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.

The term 'economics of languages' was coined by Marchak (1965, in Vaillancourt, 2002: 9) in the presentation of his thesis that over time the most efficient languages would survive and that their efficiency would be rated according to the amount of time it takes to transmit information in a given language. Of interest is that Marchak (1965, in Vaillancourt, 2002: 9) on the one hand designates the economics of languages as 'a fledgling branch of the dismal science' (Phaahla, 2006: 56), while Grin (2003: 1) on the other pronounces that 'the economics of languages' is grounded in the discipline of economics. He further asserts that the discipline displays a strong interdisciplinary alignment, which places it on the peripheries of mainstream economics. He explains further that the field concerns the ways in which linguistic and economic processes influence one another and it is also well placed to contribute to the evaluation of public policies regarding language (Phaahla, 2006: 57). Grin reports quintessentially that

[t]he concept 'economics of languages' refers to theoretical economics and uses the principles and tools of economics in the study of relationships featuring linguistic variables. It focuses principally on those relationships in which economics variables also play a part. (Grin, 2003: 1)

This definition points to the three focal lines of the inquisition in the economics of language, namely: How do language variables affect economic variables (for example, do language skills influence earnings)? How do economic variables affect linguistic variables (for example, do the relative prices of certain goods affect patterns of language use)? How do essentially economic processes (such as constrained utility maximisation) affect language processes such as language dynamics? The very notion of an economic perspective on language raises a number of epistemological questions regarding the delimitation of academic disciplines, in relation to their application to language issues. For the purposes of this article, it suffices to state that the spirit in which economics is invoked here, as noted by Grin (2007: 78), is 'sociological', 'linguistic', 'political', or 'economic' within itself; rather, almost every issue contains sociological, linguistic, political, and economic dimensions.

Despite the fact that the National Language Policy of South Africa has received such acclaim from the African continent and the world, the disposition of indigenous South

African people towards their languages is incongruent with their language usage behaviour. The questions of language rights are difficult to resolve in theory, while in practice their formal enshrinement is of doubtful value. For instance, some contemporary European initiatives on behalf of languages of 'lesser-used' status are political lip-service only, relying on those unofficial pressures to counteract words never meant to lead to real change. Another recent twist is the argument that 'in fairness' virtually all small-scale languages should be officially protected. Again, this may be a cynical thrust if such apparent protection for all means special protection for none, and the singular position of the dominant language remains unaffected. Such considerations lead us back to those very academic assessments meant to clarify just which groups deserve special treatment. This is a cycle from which it is difficult to escape. According to Edwards (2003: 569), there may be a way out of the cycle, but it has yet to be successfully delineated.

The idea of language rights is mooted by Whiteley (2003: 712), who acknowledges that the discourse of language rights is valuable, but that this paradigm has a tendency to neglect language use in the cultural, social and historical contexts of South African indigenous languages, 'especially compared to small-scale, "oral" societies'. Drawing his argument from Hopi examples, he argues that a language-rights discourse presupposes state domination, and is intrinsically counter-hegemonic. Whiteley (2003: 712) contends that a language-rights discourse rests on a reflexivisation of language and culture, enhanced by globalism; and he further maintains that an investigation of salient social and historical contexts is a critical prerequisite for an assessment of what exactly is being argued for in promoting the language rights as a case in point for the speakers of South African indigenous languages.

As noted by Edwards (2003: 552), discussions of language rights often focus on minority groups. He asserts that this tendency is hardly surprising, since examining risks and rights naturally has more poignancy under the looming shadow of the dominant group where the vulnerable minority finds itself in a precarious situation. Unfortunately, in South Africa a large majority of the black population continues to suffer acute disadvantages which correlate far more with the racial divisions than with specific ethnolinguistic groupings. The particular status of each of South Africa's indigenous language groups, despite variations, is of lesser significance. Thus, the current language situation in South Africa presents indigenous African languages as if they are minorities. According to Henrard (2006: 48):

A minority is a group numerically smaller than the rest of the population of the state. The members of this non-dominant group have ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics different from those of the rest of the population and show, even implicitly, a sense of mutual solidarity focused on the preservation of their culture, traditions, religion or language.

It is clear from the above discussion that the term 'minority language groups' has to be further reviewed. In South Africa the term implies political and economic power rather than superiority by number. Heugh (1995: 331), while concurring with Whiteley (2003: 712), contends that the rights-based

paradigm simply obscures a continued preference for assimilation and neglect, rather than strengthening a serious commitment to integration of dominant and non-dominant languages and cultures in the political and economic system. On the other hand, Whiteley (2003: 712) postulates that complications lie in the fact that language rights are predicated on the idea that languages are things in the world and that one cannot have a right to something that is not objectively identifiable. Ruiz (1984: 27) takes the contrarian view that both paradigms, namely language-as-a-right and language-as-a-resource, have strengths and shortcomings where language planning is concerned. He notes that while a resource orientation in language planning is not without its problems, a 'fuller development of a resources-oriented approach to language planning could help to reshape attitudes about language and language groups' (Ruiz, 1984: 27). Ruiz rehearses the various ways that the language-as-resource orientation helps resolve some of the conflicts inherent in the other two orientations, namely, language-as-a-right and language-as-a-problem:

...it can have a direct impact on enhancing the language status of subordinate languages; it can help to ease tensions between majority and minority communities; it can serve as a more consistent way of viewing the role of non-English languages in USA society; and it highlights the importance of cooperative language planning (Ruiz, 1984: 26).

Ruiz (1984: 26) warns that the discussion of language rights involves different groups claiming rights against each other, for example, the rights of the majority versus those of the minority, or vice versa, which could create conflict in that society. He states that the language-as-a-right orientation could be helpful if language planners were to consider it as they weigh up the different language issues involved in their respective communities. He argues further that the two paradigms describe the social and political aspects of language use in different areas, albeit not mutually exclusive. Some linguists agree with the latter point and argue that language is an instrument of nation building and disagree with the notion that multilingualism breeds disunity. Réaume (2005: 275) states that if these rights are interpreted so as to recognise only the instrumental value of the use of one's own language, the resulting protection is unlikely to contribute to the genuine maintenance of linguistic differences, whatever narrower instrumental benefits may accrue from exercising the rights.

Unlike the other language planning scholars, Ricento (2005: 349) holds a different perspective regarding language-as-a-right paradigm. He reports that the viewpoint that language 'rights' are about the redress of past wrongs has had negative effects on efforts to gain broad public support for the teaching and maintenance of languages other than English in most countries, notably the USA. The discussion of language rights involves different viewpoints, for example, the rights of the majority versus those of the minority, which could create conflict in society (Ricento, 2005: 349).

However, Ricento (2005: 349), citing the USA as an example, maintains that while efforts to promote heritage language education as a national strategic priority may result in short-term governmental support, wider and more sustained popular support for such programmes will require

significant modifications in the underlying values and ideologies of the status and role of languages other than English in education and public life (Ricento, 2005: 349).

Trudell (2007: 398) concurs with Ruiz and states that linguistic citizenship implies that language should be seen as a resource people use as needed. Local usage of languages is fluid and nuanced and cannot be captured by standardisation, and this usage of languages should be recognised and respected. Rather than the state being the organ to determine language use and rights, South African indigenous language speakers themselves need to seize power over the discourses and representation of the languages that define them.

Heugh (1995: 331) concurs with the scholars named above and maintains that a language-as-a-resource paradigm can better serve the needs of both the majority and minority communities. Instead of seeing language diversity as a problem to overcome, the people of South Africa should view language as an asset while the orientation remains a human right. Language-as-a-resource should be available for development and other policy ends. From the perspective of South African indigenous peoples, a resource-oriented approach is more likely than a rights-based approach to be conducive to their linguistic survival. Where government actively evaluates the resources that a linguistic community brings to the nation, it is likely to see the unique wealth in indigenous culture, rather than seeing it as a deficit or as an inconvenient responsibility.

Viewing language as an economic resource underlines its importance to the nation of conserving and developing all its linguistic resources. According to Ricento (2005: 363), the language-as-resource orientation is connected to particular dominant socio-political agendas, namely national security, trade and law enforcement. He further asserts that these agendas are supposed to benefit the nation as a whole, yet most nations are not neutral with regard to the interests of all languages or groups (Phaahla, 2006: 11).

The language-as-a-resource orientation has gained currency among academics who are interested in the promotion of language learning and use. This, however, requires the dismantling of the assumption that language usefulness directly equates language reach—in other words the more useful the language, the greater its international reach. Vaillancourt (2002: 10) says that economists follow three different approaches in analysing language. The first approach is to emphasise the ethnic aspect of language, namely that language is a human capital that can produce rewards similar to other types of knowledge, such as education. The second approach focuses on differences in skills as an indicator of differences in socio-economic status between language groups that exclude ethnicity, particularly that of the mother tongue. The third approach is to treat a person's home language as both an ethnic attribute and a type of knowledge, while other languages are viewed as knowledge only.

Vaillancourt (2002: 10) warns that when economists examine the determinants of the language used in a given workplace, they concentrate on the characteristics of the firms (business enterprises); they implicitly assume that—at least in industrial societies—individuals have little power in determining the language of the workplace. Hence, Breton and Mieszkowski (1975, in Vaillancourt, 2002: 13) point to

the language of the market place or the language of external communication as the main determinant of the language used for internal (work) communication. Vaillancourt (1980, in Vaillancourt, 2002: 14) puts forward a framework that transforms the demand for language skills in the workplace. He notes that the owners prefer using their home language. This is certainly true of South Africa where owners expect black workers to speak the language of the employer. In this case, language connects with economic power.

However, business is constrained by factors such as the language of the market place, the language used to operate production technology, and the language skills of the workforce, constraints also pointed out by Breton and Mieszkowski (1975, in Vaillancourt, 2002: 13). The interaction between the entrepreneur's language preference and constraints such as employees' lack of proficiency in that language makes one language, or a combination of languages, the profit-maximising solution for the firm. Vaillancourt (2002: 15) argues that the use of language in consumption activities and at work can now yield useful predictions in terms of the return to languages in a bilingual labour market.

Methodological strategies

A qualitative research design is employed in this article. The idea proposed by the article is to establish whether there is congruency between the economics of languages vis-à-vis the interplay between language planning and policy as well as language behaviour and practice in South Africa. In order to establish to what extent indigenous people make use of their indigenous African language in their essential daily transactions in banks, data from ATMs (Automated Teller Machines) was collected with permission from three different banks, i.e. ABSA, Standard Bank and Nedbank. Some indigenous African language people who were at the bank were selected at random and interviewed. They were targeted by the researcher as they left the ATM machines.

Findings and discussions

Sectors in which organic financial growth depends on the speakers of African languages (e.g. financial institutions) used to function primarily in English before 1996 (Phaahla, 2006: 54). However, in their attempt to comply with the imperatives of government language requirements, these sectors undertook to introduce a multi-language service in the indigenous African languages. In 2006, for example, ABSA was the first financial institution to introduce six indigenous African languages (i.e. isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sesotho, Sesotho sa Leboa (Sepedi, Northern Sotho), Xitsonga and Tshivenda) at auto tellers or Automated Teller Machines (ATMs). Subsequently, ABSA introduced Additional Languages (cf. 'Additional Languages on ATMs' 2008/04/03 [Version 4]) and two African languages (i.e. isiZulu and Sesotho) for telephone banking. Later, Standard Bank followed suit and offered isiZulu on its telephone banking service facility (cf. Circular 255/2004, dated 2004/04/28). It took quite a while for Nedbank to introduce a number of indigenous African languages on its telephone service.

According to the data acquired from ABSA, in February 2009, 44 551 customers, whose main language was Northern Sotho, reported that they had undertaken or executed transactions at ABSA ATMs. The number increased to 49 236 in October 2009. These figures show the bankable indigenous Northern Sotho speakers who bank with ABSA and not necessarily those who make use of the ATMs selecting Northern Sotho language as an option.

Table 1 below reflects raw data on languages used at ATMs by ABSA's customers from 01/02/2009 until the end of October 2009:

It is evident from Table 1 that only a negligible percentage of South African indigenous people chose a language other than English to perform their routine transactions at the ATM. A distinct majority chose a language that they became familiar with when required to operate ATMs initially when this banking facility was first introduced. Some indigenous African language people, who were interviewed at random for the purpose of this research, reported that they had tried selecting an African language option to perform a transaction at an ATM. To their dismay they found that the transaction had to be aborted or interrupted because some of the words used to execute commands had not been translated correctly into the South African indigenous language versions offered. They knew that the English version which they could recall off the cuff meant something else. Their usual response was to abandon the initial attempt and to switch to the familiar, and presumed safe English version. What the researcher found was that those who reported using South African indigenous languages at ATMs are actually those who were involved in the translation of the project.

A manager at Standard Bank in Fourways reported that most elderly citizens and the semi-literate clients do not use ATMs. This group of individuals would rather wait in long queues inside the bank with the aim of receiving personal service than being intimidated by technology at an ATM. Although support is available at the ABSA Contact Centre

for the four languages offered on Telephone Banking (i.e. English, Afrikaans, isiZulu and Sesotho) and the staff complement at the branches is continually being enhanced, these particular individuals seem to be shying away from the advanced technologies. According to the ABSA group (2004), the latter clients are not their target market that use ATMs and Telephone Banking as their primary channels to conduct their banking. Their target market is a group of individuals who can read and write fairly well.

When dealing with sensitive data of banks, it is never easy to obtain the relevant information one needs for research. Most of the data is confidential and cannot be used for personal gain. The data for this research was obtained by special permission for the purpose of this article.

Subsequently, the author compared the statistics in Table 1 with those of Table 2 (Foreign language usage in ABSA ATMs). It transpires that there is a vast difference in usage of ATMs between speakers of unofficial foreign languages spoken in South Africa and speakers of South African indigenous languages. This article will not compare English and Afrikaans data in the same sphere in SA. It stands to reason that the data for both languages are high, because English and Afrikaans as the only official languages were provided for on ATMs until 1996 and clients preferred to continue using these languages, even after the African indigenous languages became available on ATMs.

Table 2 highlights the raw data of foreign language usage at ABSA ATMs from 1 March 2009 until the end of October 2009.

The 2012 mid-year population was estimated at approximately 50 586 757 (cf. mid-year population estimates, South Africa: 2011 P0302 or 51,7 million in 2011 P0301.4).

It is apparent (Table 3) that the recorded usage of unofficial, European languages spoken in South Africa (0.3%) exceeds the usage of South African indigenous languages by a considerable margin. The above figure is obtained by dividing the sum total of the mid-year population

Table 1: Indigenous African language usage at ABSA ATMs in 2009 (South Africa)

Language	National multi-language stats ("Them-on-Us/Us-on-Us")									
	Jan '09	Feb '09	Mar '09	Apr '09	May '09	Jun '09	Jul '09	Aug '09	Sep '09	Oct '09
Sesotho sa Leboa		44 551	48 409	47 095	46 818	43 790	45 252	49 343	46 682	49 236
Sesotho		170 319	188 121	187 661	190 140	173 591	183 060	187 376	177 413	190 001
Xitsonga		20 642	22 238	21 346	22 158	19 118	20 566	20 976	20 649	23 050
Tshivenda		20 418	21 444	21 573	22 233	19 052	21 881	22 427	23 563	22 938
isiXhosa		90 249	97 474	98 768	100 393	92 690	98 204	99 226	95 280	104 362
isiZulu		172 129	188 749	189 484	193 422	177 169	185 902	187 788	182 021	196 969
Totals	0	518 308	566 435	565 927	575 164	525 410	554 865	567 136	545 608	586 556

Table 2: Foreign language usage at ABSA ATMs

Language	Foreign language usage March 2009–October 2009								
	Mar '09	April '09	May '09	June '09	July '09	Aug '09	Sep '09	Oct '09	Totals
French	462	4 852	5 321	4 616	5 397	11 035	12 999	13 876	58 558
German	380	3 400	3 308	2 664	3 464	4 611	5 926	8 685	32 438
Portuguese	312	4 069	6 293	7 013	8 668	9 308	8 651	8 228	52 542
Spanish	58	498	685	693	783	1 273	1 537	1 909	7 436
Totals	1 212	12 819	15 607	14 986	18 312	26 227	29 113	32 698	150 974

estimates by the $\Sigma = 1.6\%$ and multiplying it by a hundred to obtain 0.3%.

According to Statistics South Africa Census 2012, population estimates (cf. mid-year population estimates, South Africa: 2011 P0302) unofficial, European languages spoken in South Africa account for 1.6% of the total South African population. According to Statistics SA (2012) the nine official, indigenous South African languages were spoken as home languages by 74.9% (excluding sign language as displayed in Table 4) of the population at the time of Census 2011, a percentage which is lower than that of the 76.5% of the population at the time of Census '96, increasing to 77.9% at the time of Census 2001. A negligible number of indigenous South African language speakers (i.e. only 7.5%) select their home languages to conduct their banking at ATMs as their primary channels compared to 301 speakers of unofficial, European languages spoken in South Africa. If expressed as percentages the comparative superiority of unofficial, European languages spoken in South Africa becomes apparent.

Some of the ordinary users of the indigenous African languages may argue that the reasons for this anomaly become evident when emerging polities such as South Africa attempt to bridge the digital divide by introducing new concepts, scenarios and objects that are more advanced than the native languages of these polities, with the result that the languages cannot do justice to these novelties, which are therefore inadequately internalised. Attempts at inducting new terms and concepts into South African

indigenous African languages are seriously hampered by lack of resources in these languages. What happens is that practitioners (e.g. translators) therefore resort to coining the words as they wish. Translators and language practitioners are required to translate the given terms from English or Afrikaans into various indigenous African languages.

According to the information from ABSA, it would seem that the total usage of ATMs in South African indigenous languages accounts for approximately 1.5% of total usage, which is extremely low. The figures provided could not be compared with those of other banks since the information was not available.

Responsiveness of South African indigenous peoples towards their fundamental rights

The issues of language rights and language cultivation in South Africa have been raised by Dr Blade Nzimande more than once during his tenure as Minister of Higher Education. On 22 October 2010 he held a round-table discussion at Unisa in this regard, and again on 16 September 2011. On these occasions he discussed the development of African languages at South Africa's higher education institutions. He stated in his speech that it was critical that South Africans view the African languages as the future of the country's education system and also that speaking, reading and writing an indigenous African language should be considered a prerequisite for tertiary education. He lamented the slow progress in the 'development of African languages as languages of scholarship' at the country's universities.

However, his efforts to tackle the problem head-on have yet to be seen. Although something promising might be in the offing, government, it would seem, is not the only role player pursuing the idea of shaping the language behaviour and practice of South Africans through its policies and actions. There are other powerful and prominent role players in South African commerce and industry sectors. These sectors used to function primarily in English before 1996, but since 2006 the banking sector changed drastically as mentioned earlier to introduce indigenous African languages at auto tellers or Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) and for telephone banking.

Nevertheless, for these above mentioned progressive and democratic initiatives to take place in the new South Africa of the 21st century on the one hand, and government's commitment to promoting multilingualism and language rights in all spheres of public life on the other, remains to be seen. It has long been recognised that a sense of ownership and language usage is deeply personal, hinging on the very core of the individual psyche, and the basic identity of communities and nations. The issues of language rights and language policy have long displayed the potential to be emotional, divisive and prone to ideological and political contestations. These realities bestow a special significance on the current language situation in South Africa.

The indigenous African languages in South Africa are not defined as languages that government uses for its day-to-day activities or even for national symbolic purposes, as is generally expected of official languages. Perhaps with

Table 3: Unofficial, European languages spoken in South Africa

Language	Percentages
Dutch	7.89
French	4.26
German	27.05
Greek	11.28
Italian	11.15
Portuguese	38.36
TOTAL:	98.99

A sum total: $\Sigma = 331.13$, which is equal to 1.6% of the total population in South Africa

Table 4: Distribution of the population by first language spoken in SA (percentage)

Language (first)	Republic of South Africa (percentage)
Afrikaans	13.5
English	9.6
IsiNdebele	2.1
IsiXhosa	16.0
IsiZulu	22.7
Sepedi	9.1
Sesotho	7.6
Setswana	8.0
Sign language	0.5
SiSwati	2.5
Tshivenda	2.4
Xitsonga	4.5
Other	1.6
Total	100.0

the latest draft of the South African Languages Bill of 2011 in place, the situation might change.

Conclusion

Although the South African regime supports democracy through the entrenchment of eleven official languages and the endorsement of language-as-a-right (LR) as well as linguistic citizenship (LC) paradigms, only a few indigenous people make use of their indigenous African language in their essential daily transactions.

The language rights framework is not without its problems. Spolsky (2004: 119) holds the view that language practices, beliefs, and management may not necessarily be congruent to the practices and ideology of the communities they are intended for. He asserts that when one looks at the language policy of established nations, one commonly finds major disparities between the language policy laid down in the constitution and the actual practices in that society. One is therefore faced regularly with the question: which is the real language policy? Considering the extent or range of what the language situation might be, Spolsky (2004: 120) warns that in many nations, language planners are forced to choose between the complex multilingual ecology of language use and a simple ideological monolingualism of constitutionally stated language management decisions.

The question of rights, specifically language rights, is central to the development of language policies, and will have to be resolved if language policy in South Africa is to play a positive role in the emergence of a more just and humane society. The Constitution explicitly recognises and protects both linguistic and cultural rights, although important questions remain about the nature and limits of such rights. What has yet to be clarified in this regard is how such rights are to be understood and how they are to be protected in practice. These are significant questions that are far from unique to South Africa.

As noted above, the approach of viewing language as a resource or more particularly as an economic resource underlines the importance to the nation of conserving and developing all its linguistic resources. In South Africa all languages are seen as repositories of knowledge and, therefore, worthy of protection against the danger of extinction. An all-embracing linguistic strategy is needed which balances the ongoing spread of English with maintenance of linguistic diversity. To this end it is important to look at what people do and not at what they think they should do or at what someone else wants them to do. Language management remains a dream until it is implemented, and its potential for implementation depends in large measure on its congruity to the practices and ideology of the community.

The convergence between the interests of South African communities and the interplay between fundamental rights is evident from ABSA bank's ATM usage. It is apparent that although South African indigenous language speakers may want to utilise their languages, issues of development are in play. The low usage statistics at ATMs testifies to the fact that South African indigenous language speakers are not confident enough to utilise their main languages. In South Africa, the emphasis should be placed more on the

language-as-a-resource paradigm rather than the language-as-a-right paradigm, not neglecting the fact that all citizens are entitled to enjoy the rights-based language policy in a participatory democracy. South Africans should appreciate that both paradigms have strengths and shortcomings in language planning and they have to improvise.

Notes

- ¹ A member of a Native North American tribe of north-eastern Arizona.

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