'Not Leaving your Language Alone': Terminology Planning in Multilingual South Africa[1]

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Status language planning has been one of the components of post-apartheid South Africa's transformation project that has managed to attract wide-spread attention. In 1994 South Africa moved from its former official bilingual language policy to a new constitution that enshrines official status to 11 of the languages spoken in South Africa. However, 16 years down the line there is widespread disappointment with organized language planning and management by government authorized agencies. The paper gives a brief analysis of terminology development in contemporary South Africa juxtaposed with a terminology development project at the micro level which, in Joshua Fishman's words, was initiated from the perspective of 'not leaving your language alone'.

The practice of translation is an age-old activity, but translation studies is a fairly 'new' academic discipline and hence its terminology is still in its infancy. Translation studies has been taught in South Africa at higher education institutions for more than thirty years, but mainly through the medium of English and Afrikaans. The prod for this project was therefore the identification of fresh needs for terminology development in this area to contribute to facilitating the sustained development of specialized discourses in higher education. Terminology development is viewed as indispensable for creating and sustaining a dynamic environment for the use of South Africa's official indigenous languages as a medium of instruction and ultimately for scientific progress.

1. Introduction

Organized language planning and management usually take place at the level of the nation-state, more often than not through the centralized activities of government authorized agencies. However, important language management activities also take place through non-governmental decision-making at the individual or micro level when a language problem of some sorts is identified and addressed. Language planning activities are no longer the exclusive responsibility of government agencies, but also of a variety of non-governmental agencies. However, contrary to wide-spread assumption, Spolsky (2009: 259) argues that there are fewer designated language planners/managers and terminology committees than would be expected since governments often tend 'to leave language alone'. His argument echoes that of Fishman's (2006) regarding ideological agendas and challenges that terminological planning and management face. Hence, while terminology committees dedicated to government language academies or bodies are traditionally viewed as pivotal to language elaboration or cultivation, Spolky (2009: 259) points out that the impact of their work is largely 'with unknown effect'. He also refers to 'a second kind of agency', i.e. those concerned with 'not leaving your language alone'.

The aim of this paper is to explore some of the issues related to corpus planning in contemporary South Africa against the background of widespread dissatisfaction with government language policy and planning. The focus is on language development and the manner in which government's terminology planning and management have failed to address the need for specialised discourses for functional purposes. The paper subsequently reports on a case of elaboration planning that was initiated by individuals in the South African higher education domain in response to recent changes in the range of functions of the Afrikaans language and lack of access to information and knowledge in the other indigenous languages.

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[1] From the provocative title of Joshua Fishman's (2006) book on agendas in corpus planning, *Do Not Leave Your Language Alone*.

2. Language planning in South Africa

In contrast to earlier views on language planning, status and corpus planning are increasingly regarded as related activities (Kaplan & Baldauf 1997; Fishman 2006). Fishman points to the dynamic link between these two activities: 'the most common prod to corpus planning is a noticeable change … that has transpired in status planning' (Fishman 2006: 4). Status language planning has been one of the components of post-apartheid South Africa's transformation project that has attracted a fair amount of attention. In 1994 South Africa moved from its former official bilingual language policy to a new constitution enshrining official status to 11 of the languages spoken in the country.[2] Planning for the societal functions of South Africa's official languages has therefore received much priority and has largely followed the canonical or ideal model of language planning, which tends to be top-down and hence 'too much government-orientated' (Alexander 1992: 143).

South Africa's constitution affords high priority to language development, in particular the development of the historically marginalized African languages. Consequently, the South African government is charged with putting in place 'practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages' (section 6(2) of the Constitution). This imperative clearly points to the need for carefully organized language policy and planning, both status and corpus planning.

The language provisions in the Constitution were hailed by many linguists and role-players as generous, revolutionary, progressive, enlightened and the most democratic on the African continent (cf. Beukes 2004; Kamwendo 2006). Former State President, FW de Klerk, one of the negotiators at the deliberations towards a new dispensation in a democratic South Africa, believed it was one of the 'sufficient give and take and reasonable compromises' the negotiators had managed to pull off (De Klerk 1998: 287). The constitutional negotiators saw the 11-languages option as a 'route … meant to restore the dignity of South Africans whose languages had been degraded by the apartheid system' (*Sunday Times* 2004).

Language policy based on the constitutional provisions on language was initiated and formulated by government which resulted in the publication of the National Language Policy Framework (NLPF) in 2003. The policy is aimed at promoting the equitable use of the 11 official languages, facilitating equitable access to government services, knowledge and information and ensuring redress for the previously marginalised official indigenous languages, among other things (DAC 2003: 13). Notably, an important measure as regards corpus planning was put in place when the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) was established in 1996 as government's language management agency to take responsibility for language development. PanSALB's mandate, as provided for in section 6(5) of the Constitution, is to 'promote, and create conditions for, the development and use of (i) all official languages; (ii) the Khoi, Nama and San languages; and (iii) sign language; and promote and ensure respect' for all the other languages spoken by communities in South Africa. An intricate system of language development substructures were subsequently established by PanSALB, i.e.

- nine provincial language committees: one in each of the nine provinces,
- 11 lexicography units: one each for the 11 official languages,

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[2] These languages are the two former official languages, English and Afrikaans, and nine African languages: Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu.

- 13 language bodies: one each for the 11 official languages, one for the Khoi San languages (South Africa's 'first languages'), and one for South African Sign Language.

Notwithstanding these measures, language development seems to receive less emphasis and hence less resources are being devoted to it. A decade after the establishment of a range of structures designed for language cultivation and the creation of terminologies, among other things, a limited range of terminology lists have been produced. PanSALB's language cultivation role in particular is being hampered by inadequate funding by government. Thus, contrary to what is to be expected in terminology management in developing societies, there is little evidence in South Africa of the so-called 'cultivation approach' on the part of central government agencies resulting in the publication of volumes of lists of terminology (cf. Antia 2000). Notwithstanding the need for affirmative action for the previously marginalized African languages, it appears that terminology planning has fallen by the wayside.

There is widespread disappointment with and mounting criticism of the gaps and disjunctions between stated policy and the implementation thereof in practice (Kamwangamalu 2000; Alexander 2000 & 2002; Thorpe 2002; Beukes 2004 & 2008; Kamwendo 2006; Du Plessis 2006). Some experts and commentators blame government and its authorized agencies for inadequate language management and that language matters have been relegated to the back seat of the transformation agenda. Government is accused of not being committed to the implementation of its language policy, the National Language Policy Framework (NLPF), which Cabinet approved in 2003. Others relate the problem to the politics of language in South Africa, in particular issues associated with the ideology of language such as language attitudes and prejudices.

The socio-political context at the dawn of democracy clearly required that the status of the African languages should be elevated, their use revived and their value affirmed. However, the 'reasonable compromise' of 11 official languages did not altogether meet with general approval. In fact, some linguists have cynically argued that the option of 11 official languages 'was a political compromise seeking to appease everybody without satisfying anyone' (Ntshangase 1997: 18). Others argued that people at grassroots level have accepted that the use of 11 languages at all levels of society was simply not feasible (cf. Verhoef 1998). Those who relate the problem to language politics argue that there is a lack of congruence between policy and practice (Du Plessis 2006). The political negotiators and writers of the Constitution demarcated these languages according to their official status in South Africa's former so-called separate homelands and independent states which were primarily meant to be markers of ethnic identity in the apartheid dispensation.[3] The particular configuration of African language varieties chosen by the constitutional negotiators has therefore been somewhat contentious and are arguably (partially) to be blamed for the haphazard pace of policy implementation, in particular as regards the development of the African languages, these past 16 years.

The criticism and debate leveled against government and its language planning agencies have generally revolved around issues such as language-in-education matters (literacy and the use of languages other than English as languages of learning and teaching); indifference towards

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[3] In these areas the following languages enjoyed official status in addition to English and Afrikaans: Sesotho sa Leboa was the official language of Leboa; in QwaQwa the official language was Sesotho; in Gazankulu Xitsonga; in KaNgwane siSwati; in KwaZulu isiZulu; in Transkei and Ciskei isiXhosa; in Bophuthatswana Setswana and in Venda Tshivenda.

linguistic human rights; the (growing) hegemony of English; inadequate resources for policy implementation; the low esteem and visibility of African languages in public life; slow progress with regard to proposed language legislation, i.e. the South African Languages Act and the South African Language Practitioners' Council Act; the lacklustre performance of the government's language management agency, the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) and its language development substructures; and the lack of modernisation of the African languages.

Some 16 years down the line there is widespread disappointment with and mounting criticism of government's and its authorized agencies' slow progress with corpus planning. After all, in order to give concrete effect to the official status of a language and operationalise a range of functions in line with its elevated status, it is widely accepted that a core 'supply' of standardized terminology is required for success (Drame 2008). However, the situation as regards the continued standardisation of African languages has not received adequate attention from government and its language planning agencies. Although African languages have achieved a significant degree of standardisation they are as yet not adequately standardized for use at all levels of education. As a result, progress as regards corpus planning initiatives at central government level in order to create the desired 'multilingual environment' which would afford these languages their rightful place in higher education has been rather slow.

Besides the contentious configuration of African language varieties chosen by the constitutional negotiators, another reason for this state of affairs can be traced to arguably *the* watershed language planning event at the dawn of democracy in South Africa, that is, the setting up in 1995 of the Language Plan Task Group (Langtag) by Ben Ngubane, the Minister responsible for language matters at the time. Langtag's brief was to advise the Minister on the development of a language plan for South Africa that would address the country's language-related needs and priorities. In addition to the requirement that a language plan should empower all South Africans to have access to all spheres of society through a level of spoken and written language which is appropriate for a range of contexts in the official language(s) of their choice, the Minister afforded high priority to the African languages, which were to be 'developed and maintained' according to his brief to the task group (DACST 1996(a): 111).

Langtag subsequently conducted a comprehensive needs and priority analysis of the South African language landscape, but owing to vehement disagreement among participants at a first consultative workshop held by its Subcommittee on Language Development on how language development for the African languages should proceed, no further meaningful consultation on this issue took place. Important aspects related to language development such as the harmonisation of African languages and varieties were never unpacked by the subcommittee. Other than publishing the proceedings of the workshop 'in the interest of continuing the debate' (DACST 1996(b): Preface) language development issues as far as the African languages were concerned were largely toned down in the Langtag Report (cf. Chapter 2).

The main recommendation regarding language development emanating from the Langtag consultative process was that 'language development (including lexicographical and terminographical work) should be centralised (and) handled by a single body … with an appropriate expansion of resources (e.g. staff)' (DACST 1996(a): 22). Looking back, it is clear that the crucial issue of language development and coordination of lexicographical and terminographical work in aid of South Africa's indigenous languages was not adequately addressed by the Langtag process. No detailed recommendations for terminology policy and

planning based on consultative processes were provided and hence no coherent implementation strategies were considered. The Langtag process, South Africa's unique language planning initiative, failed to recognise the importance of terminology planning as an integral part of language policy and planning and, perhaps most importantly, failed to understand the critical link between language policy and planning and scientific and technological development (cf. Dippenaar 1997).

The resultant lack of foregrounding of terminology planning has led to inadequate coordination of terminology management vis-à-vis other policy and implementation measures at governmental level. Hence terminology policy and planning have not sufficiently been linked to overall development policy and therefore the urgent need for adequate resources and capacity building has not been met. This is evident from the slow progress by government's language planning agencies, i.e. the Terminology Coordination Section (TCS) and the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB). These past 16 years a mere nine multilingual terminology lists have seen the light of day. Four of these lists are part of so-called school projects based on teaching material in eight learning areas with a view to promoting the use of learners' mother tongue as language of learning and teaching in South African schools. The following school-based lists have been developed in collaboration with the Pan South African Language Board and the Department of Education:

- Mathematics Grade R-6;
- Natural Sciences and Technology Grade 4-6 for the Nguni group of languages;
- Natural Sciences and Technology Grade 4-6 for the Sotho group of languages;
- Natural Sciences and Technology Grade 4-6 for the Tshivenda-Xitsonga group of languages.

3. The changing landscape of higher education in South Africa

Like in most other societies on the African continent, language has always been a sensitive issue in South Africa, with language policy in higher education no exception. As part of government's transformation project to effect a radical break with the past and redevelop South Africa higher education was restructured during the period 2002 to 2004 following a rationalization programme in terms of the National Plan for Higher Education (2001). The restructuring process of mergers and incorporations of existing higher education institutions resulted in 36 universities and technikons (tertiary institutions with a technical focus) being reduced to 22 universities. The composition of South Africa's student population has changed so rapidly, in particular that of the historically Afrikaans universities, that these changes, from a demographic point of view, are viewed as the fastest in the world (Smit 2007). As could have been expected in such a fast-moving and highly linguistically diverse environment, the changed landscape of higher education has also impacted on issues related to languages of learning and teaching (LOLT), issues with a long history of conflict and controversy.

Language in higher education has, in fact, become a vexed issue in South Africa. The main debates have revolved around the issue of which languages should be used for learning and teaching in higher education, in particular the role of languages other than English for these purposes. The position of Afrikaans and its continued use as a language of learning and teaching (LOLT) and also as a language of science has contributed to the complexity and emotional intensity of the debate. The changes in the higher education landscape and the rapid Anglicization of the higher education domain are a result of particular socio-cultural and

political sensitivities and are perceived to impact negatively on the creation and maintenance of specialized discourses in Afrikaans.

South Africa's Language Policy for Higher Education (2002: 5) aims to create 'a multilingual environment in which all our languages are developed as academic/scientific languages'. It acknowledges the status quo in higher education where English and Afrikaans have been the sole languages of learning and teaching, but rejects the need for designated Afrikaans universities. As a result the use of Afrikaans both as a means for communicating specialized information and knowledge has dropped dramatically.

Against this backdrop, it is clear that elaboration activities and hence terminology planning, among other things, are mainly managed at the individual level with a view to addressing communication problems and ensuring the sustained development of specialized discourses in higher education.

4. Multilingual translation terminology project

In the context of government's lack of a coherent terminology plan and in view of the concomitant lack of resources for language development, extending the range of functions of South Africa's languages in specialised domains and hence supporting the terminological development of these languages falls squarely within the scope of Fishman's 'don't leave your language alone' approach. In order to facilitate access to specialised information and knowledge in education more and more terminology projects are devised and executed by individuals and working groups such as academics and teachers. Examples of such projects are the recently published Multilingual Modern Political Dictionary – 1000 core terms and definitions in English, Afrikaans, Northern Sotho, Zulu, Tswana and Xhosa by the Centre for Political and Related Terminology in Southern African Languages (CEPTSA) (Venter 2009), the Centre for Legal Terminology in African Languages (CLTAL) that are compiling multilingual legal terminology lists in English/Afrikaans/Northern Sotho, and the South African Science and Arts Academy and disciplinary experts at the University of Pretoria (SAAWK) who are working on a multilingual chemistry project.

This paper will subsequently report on another project by discipline specialists at the University of Johannesburg who teach translation studies to revise and translate a terminology list into Afrikaans and two African languages for the training of translators and interpreters in higher education.

Although the practice of translation is an age-old activity, translation studies is a fairly 'new' academic discipline and its terminology is therefore still in its infancy. Translation studies is in essence an inter-disciplinary field, drawing on a variety of other (traditional) fields such as linguistics, communication studies, semiotics, cultural studies, and so on. Because of its inter-disciplinary nature, it is important that the metalanguage of translation studies be delineated systematically, avoiding a profusion of terms and synonyms. In developed societies such as in Europe and much of the English-speaking world, e.g. the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States where translation studies is well-established and characterized by a proliferation of literature, journals and translation courses, good progress has been made with translation terminology development. In South Africa, where translation studies has been offered through the medium of Afrikaans at both under- and postgraduate levels for more than thirty years, very little work on terminology has been done in Afrikaans and the other indigenous languages.

The project is based on the ground-breaking work done by the International Federation of Translators (FIT). In 1999 FIT's Training Committee, in collaboration with the Conférence internationale permanente d'instituts universaires de traducteurs et interprètes (CIUTI), compiled and published a four-language base list, Terminologie de la traduction/Translation Terminology/Terminología de la traducción/Terminologie der Übersetzung, with 200 concepts in English, French, Spanish and German used in the training of translators and interpreters (Delisle et al. 1999). FIT's aim was to focus primarily on terms from general linguistics concepts, the cognitive aspects involved in the translation process, procedures related to language transfer and specific speech acts that could be used for training purposes instead of compiling an exhaustive list of translation terminology.

The FIT Training Committee appealed to translation studies experts to add more languages (in particular 'lesser used' languages) to the source list. In response to this request, the University of Johannesburg's Department of Linguistics and Literary Theory, which had been offering Translation Studies at the former Rand Afrikaans University since the 1980s, decided after consultation with the South African Translators' Institute (SATI) to address the need to develop translation terminology in South African languages. It was decided to operationalise the project in two distinct phases, i.e. to first produce an Afrikaans list and in the second phase to add a language from the Nguni group and a language from the Sotho group.

Translation Studies has traditionally been taught at several South African higher education institutions. According to the South African Translators' Institute some 14 institutions currently offer academic training in translation and/or interpreting (SATI 2010). The number of prospective translators entering translation courses who wish to work in South African languages is steadily increasing. This trend will most likely continue in view of the growing need world-wide for the services of translators. This statement is supported by the latest report of the US Bureau of Labour Statistics which has identified translation as one of the 10 fastest growing occupations in die USA (*Time* 2009: 23). The lack of translation terminology lists in Afrikaans and the other indigenous languages of South Africa is clearly a barrier to effective access to specialised information and knowledge in the field of Translation Studies and the continued teaching and learning in these languages.

The objectives of the multilingual translation terminology project are primarily pedagogical, i.e. to facilitate access to central concepts of translation through carefully selected terms used in the teaching of translation studies and translation practice. At the same time terminology development is indispensable in the process of creating and sustaining a dynamic environment in the higher education context of South Africa for the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction and ultimately for scientific progress. The project is therefore also a direct response to provision 15.2.1. in government's Language Policy for Higher Education (2002), i.e. 'The promotion of South African languages for use in instruction in higher education will require, amongst others, the development of dictionaries and other teaching and learning materials'.

The approach followed in this terminology project is informed by a variety of approaches and may be described in terms of Antia's (2000) framework. First of all, the project follows a communicative approach according to which the usability of the terminology in the training of translators and interpreters is emphasized. Moreover, the project is also an attempt to provide an effective and efficient means to impart knowledge (the knowledge approach). In line with a sociological approach the validation of the data by Afrikaans translation studies peers and their positive attitude and support is deemed to be of great importance.

5. Conclusion

The significance of such a multilingual project in the South African context cannot be over-emphasized bearing in mind that terminology gives access to the concepts in the field of study and forms an integral part of scientific progress. In the higher education context of multilingual South Africa terminology development is indispensable for creating and sustaining a dynamic environment for the use of indigenous languages as medium of instruction and ultimately for scientific progress. Against the backdrop of the government's Language Policy for Higher Education (2002) and the requirement to create opportunities for multilingualism in the higher education context, terminology development and coordination are some of the important challenges higher education in South Africa faces. This project is one of a limited number of terminology planning projects that could arguably assist in addressing this challenge in a concrete way.

Given the unsatisfactory progress with terminology policy and planning in South Africa, this paper argues that the time has now come to acknowledge that these policies and processes are (relatively) incomplete and should therefore be re-made following critique from experts and interested parties. Also, the current collaboration between government's Terminology Coordination Section located within the national Department of Arts and Culture and South Africa's only language-dedicated statutory body, the Pan South African Language Board, must be challenged. 'Not leaving your language alone' seems to be the way ahead given the current position and development of South Africa's indigenous languages and the state of affairs as regards the future of specialised discourse in these languages.

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