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Tensions and Biases: Towards an integrative language policy

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Abstract: *Language is crucial to learning, teaching and transformation. This can become emotional, and may create tensions in the case of Cameroon and South Africa. As such, the question of language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) becomes even more important in African multilingual contexts where a child may grow up speaking two or more languages at once. The primary objective of this paper is to develop a combined methodological proposal for integrating of extracurricular languages which would encourage the involvement of learners of all age groups to reflect on their linguistic and cultural diversity and participate to develop a practical way of encouraging integration through language. This it is hoped, may overcome tensions while encouraging the implementation of language-use-complementarity approach, which promotes both the use of English and students' primary languages, at curriculum and course levels.*

Keywords: Languages, Multilingualism, Integration, Identity, Identity Formation.
Research Area: Linguistics
Paper Type: Conceptual Paper

1. INTRODUCTION

The African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) project is possibly one of the most ambitious language planning projects in modern history. It represents a vision that places the African continent in a perspective that confers on its entire people the dignity that is rightfully theirs. Linguistic human rights, political democracy, economic development, successful educational systems, national and continental cohesion, all these are matters that are integrally related to the language question. This conceptualisation is triggered by two main challenges that face continent namely; the ideologically determined notion that paralyses many African people in the belief that their languages cannot be languages of power and, the lack of will on the part of many political and cultural leaders to promote the languages of the people. (Alexander 2010).

The issue of language in South Africa is not only political but also very emotional. The history of the language-in-education policy as traced back to the apartheid system determines the conceptualisation of the current language-in-education policy and its effectiveness or ineffectiveness. Given that the state actors and education gate keepers are often charged with formulation of education policies. These policies often seem to have certain socio-cultural or political, goals. One can argue from this point of view that education is never neutral for it appears to always be about identity formation.

As would be expected, the notion of boundaries still shapes and informs African pedagogy given that we have not yet created multilingual spaces. Since we are still looking for such multilingual spaces, we do not find mixing of isiZulu, English, Afrikaans, and so forth happening. That is, if we are to speak to someone who is using the 'other language' and 'culture' it is usually in English that this is done. This means movement is still along the lines of boundaries. If this happens to be the case, is code switching really a separate language?

Characteristically, multilingualism in many developed countries, for example European countries and the United States of America is influenced by the influx of immigrants. However, as stated above, this phenomenon becomes complex in Africa, particularly in South Africa where multilingualism is embedded in the many and sometimes, very diverse languages.With reference to the current language policy, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) the objective, is to further "the promotion of multilingual awareness and proficiency". The policy also links to the need of preparing learners to participate fully in a multilingual society. The past few years have seen an increased tension between learners' observable daily multilingual life experience outside class, and the exclusive use of English in the classroom (Alexandra 2008). In the paragraphs that follow below, a broad overview of the educational curriculum and a few selected South African curricula, lead to a verbose debate with conclusion that even the construction of curriculum is not neutral.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Samoff (2007) has described the situation of education research in Africa as profoundly troubling. While acknowledging the role of education and knowledge as vital for development, he also points out the troubling situations that are characteristic of the African education system, including, but not limited to the following: (1) space constraints (2) the disarray of education which fails to fulfil its developmental role (3) the often taken for granted assumption that reliable knowledge is informed and well-grounded by research that is produced from the canons of western social normsand (4) the risk in education and policy stimulated by overdependence on funds from abroad which often come with demands that places foreign aid organizations at a favourable position to ensure that their funds secure powerful influence over African education policy, research and the research process (cf. Samoff, 1999).

Like Samoff, Omundi and Banda (2009) and Carnoy (2006) have also highlighted some troubling issues underlying African research, development and education. Interesting amongst their concerns is the assumption that international research is most reliable. In this regard, a majority of those leading developmental agendas in, for example, Kenya are Western educated elites or people who have interacted widely with Western funders and already have a specific ideology, value and attitude of what development is. They use this pre-established knowledge to blame the underperformance of the locals. Therefore, if this habit of taking foreign research as a given, is not problematized, then, how else can one comprehend the fact that the Kenyan province of Nyanza with the highest number of NGOs (over 450) and highest number of Community Based Organisation (CBOs) is still the poorest in the country or that over 54% of its population still lacks access to improved water supply? (cf. Omondi and Banda 2009).

Similarly, Carnoy (2006) is concerned that research agendas from combined foreign or international research projects might be geared towards influencing either policy or practice in one country by using research results from another country either explicitly or implicitly. He decries for example, the similarities in research methodologies and results obtained through such approaches. Emphasising the same point, Torres &Schugurensky (2002) specifically pay attention to the current wave of reconstruction amongst many universities across the world arguing that mission statements, organizational structures and academic priorities are being reconstructed to suite the hegemonic neoliberal agenda of this era.

The major concern of higher education nowadays seems to be tilting from the predominant need for social transformation to essentially excellence, costs, profits and efficiency. Such a preference according to Torres & Schugurensky (2002) inspires the neoliberal quest for supreme markets while challenging that historic belief of higher education as mainly a social investment and citizens' right. This is how universities position themselves to be able to compete with others. The aim of this paper is thus to examine the a few previous South African curricula or curricula discourses.

Deriving from the notion of additive Bilingualism, (Baker 1993), sub-regions in the African continent has been imparted with the notions of mother-tongue-based bilingualism and practice. Yet, according to Alexander (2008), parents in African, especially middle class are still faced with the dilemma of deciding whether their children should study through the First Language (L1) medium or one of the many ex-colonial languages namely English, French, and Portuguese among others. The African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) aims to promote trans-border languages unlike the previous generations of language activists, who envisioned a Plan of Action for Africa (under the auspices of the Organization for African Unity (OAU)) in June 1986 "[…] to release the African populations from their excessive dependence on foreign languages considered as official languages in their countries by progressively replacing these languages with carefully selected local African languages" (Alexander 2008:23).

Gauging from this, one can say postcolonial Africa is associated with upheaval and change. This is especially true of South Africa with official status granted to her local languages being used to recognise it multilingual and multicultural diversity while at the same time, trying to balance demands for national unity. This is the case of the ACALAN whose objective according to Alexander (2008) was implemented almost as soon as it was initiated within the South African context. Accordingly, Alexander (2008:2) claims that English which is the most relevant international language is necessarily part of the "mother tongue" of a child in the South African context. Context according to Christie (2005) is that which surrounds a text and makes it relevant, and a text is what gives context its meaning. This leads to the notion of systemic functional linguistics that deals with meaning passages of language as a basis of linguistic study.

In retrospect to the issue tracing the history of the South African educational crises as revealed by the language-in-education policy, this article will determine the processes that led to the current language-in-education policy starting from the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) to Curriculum 2005 (C2005), and RNCS CPAS (Pudi 2006) with aim to assess the intercession of the processes of implementation, the outcomes and the implications. To do this, this paper particularly examine the implicit idea behind the conceptualisation of the language-in education policy, and whether the process of implementation has successfully captured the idea embedded in its conceptualisation. However, due to space constraints, the paper focuses only on two notorious South African curricula to determine the idea behind curricula implementation. This article employs a systemic functional linguistics (SFL henceforth) to analyse the authentic products of social interaction called 'texts' (Christie, 2005) during interaction and in relation to the cultural and social contexts in which they are negotiated and, not as decontextualized sentences or utterances.

3. THE APARTHEID CURRICULUM

The South Africa historic apartheid as a pervasive regime directly links to how the methods and modes of conceptualising and implementing education linked learner's identity

with certain forms of identity construction implemented so as to divide society in race. The result of this was the creation of not only a monolingual society but a society which also reinforced inequalities by co-relating education and race. In the view of Apple (1990), such a curriculum was considered invalid by many given that it considered one race to be more supreme than all others. The peak of this monolingual and mono-cultural agenda of the apartheid education policies was reached in 1976 with Soweto riots which culminated in a massacre of many learners.

Since the education practice was meant to separate Black learners from White learners and deliberately distort information to necessitate the maintenance of a kind of master-servant relationship, between the Africans and the Whites, the construction of a kind of superiority complex in the minds of young White learners became inevitable even in the international arena, (Msila 2007). To counter this the ill of such a curriculum, the introduction of Curriculum 2005, and outcomes based education (OBE) became necessary.

4. CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE OUTCOMES-BASED CURRICULUM

To redress past injustice, the first democratically elected government in South Africa embraced several policies and legislation especially with regards to promoting the status of African languages in education. One way of doing this was redefining the status of South African languages through the Constitution and the language-in-Education policy.

Affirming the quest of the ACALAN, South African languages were projected as entrenched in language rights and also as imbedded in the promotion of "diversity and multilingualism in education and society" (Mda 2004).

Closely linked to the issue of using language-in-education policy to redress past inequalities, is the idea of ministerial promotional documents of education (DoE in Harley and Wedekind 2004:198) stating that "[T]he curriculum will begin to integrate education and training […] It will also foster learning which encompasses a culture of human rights, multilingualism and multiculturalism and sensitivity to values of reconciliation and nation building". This probably is a response Naledi Pandor's cry that ever since independence, South Africa has been focusing its attention and resources on "entrenching funding equity, teacher development programmes, improving science and mathematics outcome, matric pass rates, redress policy, language policy and education, and democratising school governance" (Pandor 2004:11). Yet her call for reasonable attention to issues of integration is still greatly neglected even when it is mentioned, Pandor (2004) estimates it almost always exclusively in relation to higher education.

This means changing curriculums may not be the only appropriate route to integration. Probably, linking societal practices to the classrooms and allowing learners to engage in their lived practices maybe the way to integration.

5. A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE TO INTEGRATION

The multilingual and multicultural African contexts have often been overlooked in terms of policy making and language planning. Educators as well linguists even from within Africa tend to heavily rely on imported notions and strategies from Europe and elsewhere. It entails comprehensive models of bilingualism in African countries, to be able to account for the range of African languages and English and/or French, Portuguese, etc. spoken by African speakers. Therefore, rather than the pedagogy mother tongue, or First Additional language of a singularprocesses of conceptualisation, and capturing the trajectory to the South African language in education question, this may require that we should consider

stimulating her multilingual classroom patterns. This we hope may account for her multiplicity of cultures and reflect her sociolinguistic environment.

6. POSTCOLONIAL SOUTH AFRICA: A BRIEF SOCIOLINGUISTIC ACCOUNT

South Africa is often lauded for its multilingual language policies which serve to validate the languages of its people. This country like many African nations consists of ethnically mixed population. In addition to her apartheid past, the present economic, socio-historic, and sometimes-political implications of language becomes an extremely emotional issue in South Africa (De Klerk 2002; Thorpe 2002).

Due to economic and socio-political unrest in some African countries, many have made South Africa their home. The new arrivals have brought with them their languages and a 'mix' of cultures into the Rainbow Nation, as South Africa is sometimes called. Their languages and even some South African languages are not captured in census data. Instead, they are often nondescriptly pooled together as 'Other' or unclassified languages on official documentation.

As a way of correcting the injustices imposed by the apartheid regime, the new South African Constitution (unlike that of most other African nations) recognises the benefits of multilingualism and thus acknowledges eleven official languages. These include nine indigenous African languages, namely tshiVenda, isiNdebele, sePedi, seSotho, siSwati, xiTsonga, Setswana, isiXhosa, and isiZulu, in addition to the two former official languages, Afrikaans and English (Thorpe 2002). Among these indigenous languages, isi-Zulu is numerically the largest according to the 2001census where 23.8% of the South African population considered isiZulu as their mother tongue. The 2011 census again revealed similar statistics in terms of mother tongue thus: 22.7 of South Africans claimed isiZulu is their first language, 16.0%, were isiXhosa first language speakers, 13.5% Afrikaans, 9.6% English, 9.1% Sepedi, 8.0%Setstwana, 4.5%Xitsonga, 2.6% siSwati, 2.4%Tshivenda, 2.1% IsiNdebele, 1.6% other and 0.5% sign language (Census 2011 page 24).

However, in South Africa, the languages one hears most frequently will depend on where one is in the country. Within Cape Town, following the 2011 census figures (Census 2011), Afrikaans becomes numerically larger, at 49.7%, followed by isiXhosa at 24.4% (though more than 78% of South Africans in the Eastern Cape speak this language), English at 20.2% with isiZulu being among the least spoken languages in the province at o.4%.

In the Gauteng province, the industrial hub of South Africa, around Johannesburg, isiZulu still remains the most spoken language with 2 390036 (19.8%) since immigrants from Zululand have lived and worked in and around Johannesburg for the past century. This is followed by English 1 603 464 (13.3%) then Afrikaans 1 502 940 (12.4%), Sesotho 1 395 089, (11.6%) Sepedi, 1 282 896 (10.6%), Setswana 1 094 599 (9.1%), isiXhosa 796 841 (6.6%), Xitsonga at 796 511 (6.6%), IsiNdebele at 380 494 (3.2%), others at 371 575 (3.1%), Tshivenda 272 122, (2.3%) SiSwati 136 550 (1.1%), Sign language at 52 744 (0.4%).

These statistics could be represented thus:

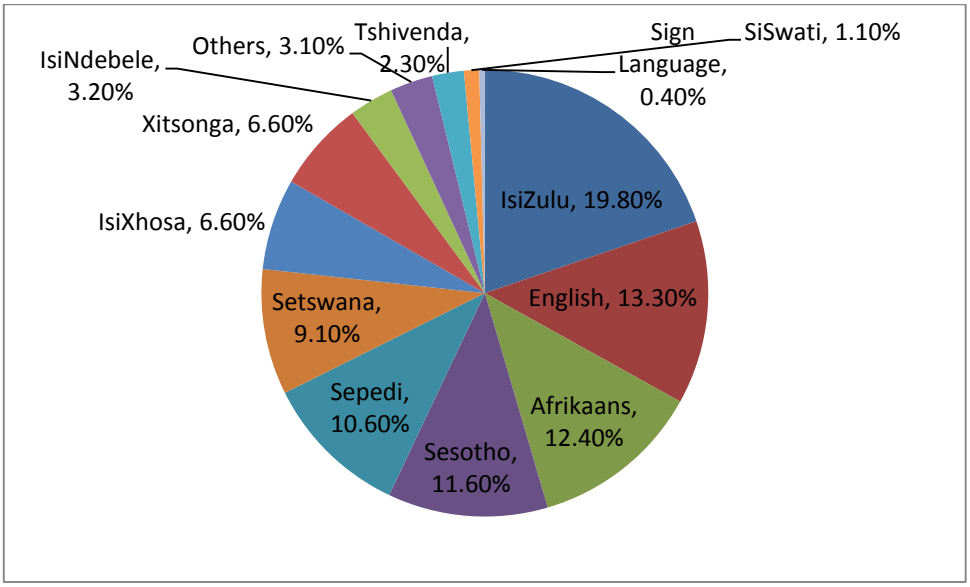

Figure 1.1: Distribution of languages in Gauteng, province - adapted from the 2011 census.

What is revealed in the above pie chart is limited to census figures of 2011 and thus obscures other languages not 'officially' designated. Besides isiZulu, English, Afrikaans, and other official languages, the figures fail to reveal whether the speakers use two or more of official languages. In addition, the languages of the 3.1% of the population of Gauteng are ambiguously classified as other. Accordingly, Hacksley et al. (2007:1) note, multilingualism in South Africa, "is far more fluid and extraordinary [...]" than these figures can reveal.

There is no doubt that Johannesburg is more heterogeneous with a wider linguistic repertoire than the above statistics reveal. Consequently, there are dangers involved with insufficient attention to the statistics of other languages spoken by foreigners (e.g. Congolese, Cameroonians, Nigerians and Zimbabweans) as well as other local language varieties (isiPondo and isiBhaca, which are local varieties of isiXhosa). Furthermore, insufficient attention to languages spoken in communities (for instance, Tsotsitaal) could obscure a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of the nature and extent of multilingualism in society. This article then seeks to explore the nature of multilingualism in South African and shed light on how this can be explored to encourage integration among learners.

7. DISCUSSION: TOWARDS AN APPLICABLE METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGM

The four Pluralistic approaches (namely; awakening to languages, inter-comprehension, integrated didactic and intercultural) grant opportunity for the involvement of all South African languages surrounding learners and hence, may recognise both societal multilingualism and individual plurilingualism while maintaining a positive evaluation of linguistic environment and cultural diversity of the learners. According to the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches (FREPA), pluralistic approaches to language learning are innovative and efficient responses to new educational demands of the multicultural and multilingual world. Moreover, A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to languages andcultures (FREPA) stipulates that Pluralistic Approaches (PA) are didactic approaches which make room for involving more than one language and cultural varieties in the learning process. As such, these approaches differ from singular approaches which primarily concentrate on separating one language and cultural variety taken (FREPA 2: 75). It follows that the PA are fundamentally aimed at giving an educational response to the contemporary challenges of the diversity while paying attention to the languages and

proficiency of languages spoken by learners'. Hence, they can be said to provide for new educational demands which aim to secure "the establishment of pluralistic views and an intercultural understanding of a multicultural social environment" (FREPA 4: 11) and as such provide hands-on answers to the problem of linguistic diversity.However,Ivanova, and Llorente (2014) stipulate the application of pluralistic approaches to language learning face limitations as these approaches often becomes either suitable only to one-off cases and mostly experience methodological doubts in their daily teaching or, often becomes a question of educational curricula not being able to integrate these approaches in their contents.

Drawing from, the experiences of Ivanova, and Llorente (2014) in the application of Pluralistic approaches to language learning, which exhibits some compatibility with different curricula profiles, it is estimated that the methodological features of each approach, employed extracurricular projects, with each of them mainly based on one of the pluralistic approaches, which have been developed and implemented by the Salamanca Plurilingüegroup from the Official School of Languages of Salamanca.

Given the apparent theoretical difficulties of the PA this paper therefore, recommends the use of qualitative approaches, and mixed methods namely, questionnaires, interview questions; video and audio capturing instruments together with one Pluralistic Approach to ascertain detailed documentation of language practices within classrooms and around learners. This, it is hoped, will help to reconfigure language practices and implement measure that may inspire diversity and energise integration among South African learners from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Given that SFL theory is concerned not only with complete 'text' as a basis of linguistic study but, also describes the linguistic options or choices that are available in constructing meanings in particular contexts, it becomes easy to understand the link between social or cultural contexts and language use. For this reason, SFL can also serve as a methodological apparatus for examining the link between language use and the cultural contexts in which it occurs, that is, the interconnectedness of a language and the social. What this really means is that any language use serves to construct some aspects of experience, to negotiate relationships and to realize a satisfactory message (Halliday, 1994; Christie, 2002).

Relating to the three functions of choices and complete text above, the SFL theory is viewed as having strong a commitment to the view that language study should focus on meaning and on the way in which people exercise choices in order to make meaning' (Christie and Unsworth, 2000:2). According to Chapelle (1998) the unit of analysis for SF linguists is the 'text' since the functional meaning potential of language is realized in units no smaller than 'texts'.

The study of texts is typically performed by examining elements of the lexico-grammar and phonology. However such small units must be viewed from the perspective of their contribution to the semantic sense expressed by the entire text within a context. On this issue Halliday says, "[…] for a linguist, to describe language without accounting for text is sterile; to describe text without relating it to language is vacuous" (Halliday, 1985: 10).

8. **CONCLUSION**

The failure of imported models of education is crystallised in the language planning and policies in African education, which are continually pursue a monolingual agenda. For this reason, language policies and the models that these monolingual agenda spawn are

designed for monolingual children and their vernacular/mother tongue, for children's second language English or First Additional Language.

Accordingly, Banda (2009) argues that these language-in-education models take an "either/or" approach when, in fact, the two languages are both important to the learners since they (the languages) are both needed to develop children's linguistic repertoire. This means that there are a different range of codes available to bilingual speakers which enable them to perform different identities across ethnic, community, regional and national boundaries, and across modalities, styles and registers (Anchimbe 2010).

Linguistic repertoires operate not merely within, but also across social networks; not only within the context of the speech community, but also across heterogeneous and multidimensional localities, communities, regions and nations. In other words, this means that the notion of linguistic repertoire involves more than a monolingual's language knowledge and monolingual competence in each of the codes in a multilingual's repertoire. It entails comprehensive models of bilingualism in African countries, to be able to account for the range of African languages and English and/or French, Portuguese, etc. spoken by African speakers (Banda 2007). Thus,to promulgate integration.the conceptualising of the language-in-education policy and the manner of implementation should embrace diversityin order to ascertain "mother tongue" education and/or first additional language(s) are used in South African classrooms.

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