Literacy in Two Languages? Implementing language policy in a post-colonial context.

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Abstract:
For nearly fifty years the majority of South Africans suffered from language policies aimed at social and political control. As a result schools were used as a mechanism to restrict speakers of African languages access to power with language policies in education as a major component in the apartheid plan. In spite of a very progressive language in education policy (July 1997) that enables learners or their guardians to choose the language of instruction, schools catering for learners who are speakers of African languages still use English as their medium of instruction from the fourth grade. It is argued that despite the good intentions in the policy it is not being implemented in the spirit that it was intended. Moreover, the policy id filled with a number obstacles, which make implementation difficult. The lack of political will among the political leadership of the country to seriously implement the national ideals expressed in the Constitution and the Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) may be little more than a symbolic gesture or a strategy to obtain public support without any intention of leading to real change in the society

Moreover, the results of my investigation show that in the township schools both teachers and students are struggling with using a language as a medium of instruction that is foreign and additionally a language that neither is proficient in. The result is that learners are left with partial subject knowledge and little or no real knowledge in the foreign language. Observations showed that Xhosa was generally used for most of the talk time in the classrooms with teachers utilizing code alteration strategies to assist learners. Ultimately, how can we expect children and adults to acquire knowledge and skills when they are taught through a language they do not understand? Finally, this paper questions the use of theories of bilingual and multilingual education developed as a result of research on immigrant minorities mainly in the North. Although the majority population in South Africa can, somewhat, be compared to such groups the reality is that they are a majority population and not an immigrant minority. Thus it is argued that despite the theoretical foundations of the study there is a need to draw attention to the differences between these two groups as well as their similarities in order to develop more appropriate theories. In this way this research contributes to the literature on bilingual and multilingual education not only for minority groups but also for majority groups who are often treated as minorities within their respective countries.

Introduction

In Africa today education is looked upon as an institution that can and should contribute to the social transformation of African societies. Education is also part of the social systems requiring transformation and as a result there is the need to reconsider African education.

What type of education is then necessary to contribute to the social transformations necessary for Africa?

During the colonial era, the Western education that was brought to Africa, first by the missionaries and then by the colonial powers themselves, was Eurocentric and did not take the realities of Africa into consideration. As Dei (1994:9) maintains

> Only a few scholars would deny that colonial education in Africa was Eurocentric and ignored the achievements and contributions of the indigenous populations and their ancestries. Colonial education for the most part did not cultivate the African student's self-esteem and pride. Education in Africa today is still struggling to rid itself of this colonial legacy.

Dei (1994) believes that it is then necessary for African education to be based upon African indigenous culture, thus enabling that education to become a primary vehicle for social transformation. Given that language is both a part of culture and the medium through which culture is transmitted requires serious consideration of the use of indigenous African languages as a viable medium of instruction in school. The policies that are ultimately adopted by governments have an influence not only on the curriculum but also the access to knowledge. By opting for a foreign medium of instruction many governments in Africa and other countries deny large portions of their population access to knowledge.

Moreover, in the original project proposal for this study[1] it has been stressed that much of the writing on issues of bilingual and multilingual education is not relevant for Africa. Many of the theories and much of the literature on the subject concern immigrant minorities, mainly in the North. Although, to some extent, the majority population in South Africa can be compared to such groups the fact still remains that they are a majority population and not an immigrant minority. While my theoretical foundations are partly based on such literature, I found that

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[1] It is important to note that the project leader Prof. Brock-Utne in the original project proposal initially questioned this critical discussion concerning the appropriateness of terms such as bilingualism. The project entitled "An Analysis of Policies and Practices Concerning Languages in Education in Primary Schools in South Africa and Secondary Schools in Tanzania" is supported by the Norwegian Research Council and led by Prof. Birgit Brock-Utne (2003). In the proposal Brock-Utne argues that these theories, developed mainly in the North to describe the language-learning situation of immigrant minorities in host countries, may not be appropriate when used to describe the language-learning situation found in many post-colonial settings. Thus in this paper I elaborate on Prof. Brock-Utne's argument. In addition, we have had several discussions about the project where the issue of language learning in post-colonial settings has come up. During these discussions we have often felt that the language-learning situation in theses post-colonial contexts seems to resemble that of foreign language learning as opposed to second language acquisition. These discussions along with my own data have then influenced the debate presented in this paper.

there was a need to draw attention to the differences of these two groups as well as the similarities. In this way I hope that my research will make a contribution to the literature on bilingual and multilingual education not only for minority groups but also for majority groups who are often treated as minorities within their respective countries (Brock-Utne, 1998).

Therefore, in this paper I will be focusing on the issue of education. The specific focus is on South Africa where the research project is located and in particular the implementation of the Language in Education Policy (LiEP). The paper focuses first on the language policy itself and some of the history behind it along with my own analysis of the policy. This is followed by a presentation of the implementation of the LiEP as a result of spending two extensive periods in the field in order to gain an in-depth perspective. The fieldwork periods were first a seven-month period where the majority of data collection took place. This was followed by an eight-month period in Norway where the data was further scrutinized and followed up by a one-year period in which additional data collection took place combined with the final writing-up phase. Thus in total one year and seven months was spent in the field. The overall aim in this paper then is to shed light on the gap between the policy and the practice while adopting a bottom-up approach in reporting the perspectives of those most directly involved.

The history of language policy

> Language policies for education are highly charged political issues seldom, if ever, decided on educational grounds alone. When they are made, they are almost invariably subject to mistrust and misunderstanding by some sections of the community. It is virtually impossible to please everyone…In South Africa these decisions have had to do with issues of political dominance, the protection of power structures, the preservation of privilege and the distribution of economic resources. As with schooling it has been an instrument of social and political control (Hartshorne, 1992:186-87).

For nearly fifty years the majority of South Africans suffered from language policies aimed at social and political control. As a result schools were used as a mechanism to restrict speakers of African languages access to power with language policies in education as a major component in the apartheid plan. The ultimate goal of these polices was separate and unequal development. The result was social and economic development of the dominant minority alongside the social and economic underdevelopment of the oppressed majority. Great socio-

economic divisions between different racial groups characterized the society inherited by the new government.

> In South Africa, the history of the use of language in African schooling has revolved around the relative positions and status of English, Afrikaans and the African languages, and been determined by the political and economic power of those using the various languages. The decisions have never been taken by those who use African languages in their everyday life, and ironically, when decisions were taken in favour of those languages they were taken without reference to their users, and for purposes far removed from any that has broad community support. The decisions were taken 'for' and not 'by' those most closely involved…(Hartshorne, 1992:187-88).

As I will highlight in this section the language issue in South African education has mainly centered around the position of English and Afrikaans and when the African languages were considered it was not for reason that benefited the majority black population, but rather designed to serve the needs of the whites. Also this brief historical account will show how decisions concerning language in education have been taken *for* the Africans and not *by* them.

The language struggle and in particular the language-in-education situation can best be described as an ongoing rivalry and competition between the two white, originally European, population groups, which reflects a pendulum swinging between Afrikaans and English as official languages and as medium of instruction, with little or no regard for the African languages.

> English-speaking settlers, like their Dutch counterparts…were not sympathetic to the idea of black schooling, believing that 'it spoilt the Natives', gave them ideas above 'their station' in life, and was too 'academic' in its nature. Part of this latter criticism had to do with the teaching of English to black pupils and the development of what was called a 'clerk mentality'. 'What was needed was a training in agriculture and the more menial vocational subjects…[However] economic forces were [also] beginning to play their part, and the economic value of a knowledge of English came to be appreciated by both the black employee [in the mining industry] and those that employed him. [Nonetheless] there was no question of black schooling in general being allowed to equip blacks to challenge the domination of whites in the area of economic power and privilege (Hartshorne, 1992:188-89).

At the time of the Union the language concerns of the majority of the people was not taken into consideration and decisions were taken by whites for whites and consideration was given only to English and Afrikaans. Thus in Article 137 of the 1910 Union Constitution: "Both the

English and Dutch[2] languages shall be official languages of the Union, and shall be treated on a footing of equality and possess and enjoy equal freedom, rights and privileges" (cited in Malherbe, 1925:414fn). Thus with this the first official bilingual language policy in education was passed. "The role of the two official languages in the schools has become [and would remain for sometime] one of the most important national issues in South Africa, politically as well as educationally" (Malherbe, 1977:3).

Between 1910 and 1948 the role of these two official languages would come to dominate in educational discourse. Concerning the schooling for Africans the major concern was on the status of English and the vernacular languages and it was not until the 1930s that the status of Afrikaans would be considered in black education (Hartshorne, 1992).

In the 1950s language planning in education was organized centrally and stood directly under government control. Language planning was top-down and differentiation between the various racial groups was introduced to enhance their separate development while simultaneously securing the hegemony of the whites. The arrogance of the whites in controlling the lives of blacks and their children is clearly stated in the Eiselen Report as much of the evidence given by blacks collected by the Commission was disregarded.

> We realize that in this connection we will have to face great difficulties and that public opinion, especially among the Bantu, is to a large extent still unenlightened, and that it would consequently possibly be hostile to any drastic change in the use of the medium of instruction (Eiselen Report, 1951 cited in Hartshorne, 1992:196).

Hartshorne (1992:196) comments on this quote stating:

> What is appalling about…this statement…is the unquestioning assumption of white superiority in all matters – that even on issues touching the everyday lives of blacks and their children, whites would presume 'to know better', to know 'what was good for' others, when in fact they were vastly ignorant of the needs and aspirations of those for whom they were prescribing.

Thus it may be argued that the discourse presented in the Eiselen Report was important as it both created and expressed the underlined apartheid ideology – the unquestioning hegemony

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[2] Afrikaans replaced Dutch officially in 1925. This transformation began as early as 1914 due to the influence of C. J. Langenhoven, a well-known Afrikaans writer. The substitution of Dutch with the vernacular Afrikaans as a

of the whites over the lives of the Africans, and how at the time the only view that mattered was that of the whites. Under the Bantu Education Act in 1953 the foundations were laid for the development of the mother tongue in addition to an increased emphasis on Afrikaans. Thus in reaction to the hegemony of English both English and Afrikaans were made compulsory "because of a fear that if only one were to be chosen, it would be English. Finally, both English and Afrikaans were to be used as mediums of instruction in the secondary school, because it was realized that if a choice of one were allowed, English would never be displaced" (Hartshorne, 1995:310). What had previously been a flexible policy was now a rigid plan to be implemented without exception.

Under this policy then mother tongue education was compulsory for African language speakers in the early grades with a sudden transfer in later grades to English and/or Afrikaans as the medium of instruction. The reality being then for the majority African language speakers, three languages were required to cope with the demands of the curriculum. Additionally, Bantu Education with an emphasis on mother tongue instruction was coupled with an impoverished curriculum, which remained in effect even after the Bantu Education Department was renamed in 1977 to the Department of Education and Training (DET)[3] (Heugh, 1995).

Furthermore, for Afrikaans- and English speaking pupils they received their education through the medium of the mother tongue while they acquired the other official language as a second language either by studying it as a compulsory subject or through a dual medium[4] program (also commonly referred to as a 50-50 policy). This 50-50 policy was also applicable for the speakers of African languages where half of the subjects were taught through the medium of Afrikaans and the other half through the medium of English. Hartshorne

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medium of instruction in schools also contributed to the development of the Afrikaner's political consciousness (Malherbe, 1977).

[3] The DET served as the department of education for black pupils until the April 1994 elections, which then became known as the 'ex-DET' and schools under this department are then referred to as 'ex-DET' schools. Additionally, there was also the House of Representatives (HOR) for Coloureds that after 1994 became 'ex-HOR' schools and the Indians were served by the House of Delegates (HOD), which then became 'ex-HOD' schools.

[4] Hartshorne (1995) notes that for the most part dual medium education for white schools was rejected in 1945. Conversely, Malherbe (1977:93-100) describes the dual medium project for English- and Afrikaans-speaking students in the mid 1940s. He cites that in the Cape Province in 1943 there were 187 secondary and high schools that were dual medium. Despite some initial positive outcomes of the experimental program Malherbe (1977) contends that the program was ultimately discontinued in 1950 mainly due to lack of bilingual teachers, but also due to political reasons.

(1995:311) argues then "for the next twenty years the medium issue was at the center of the opposition to the system of Bantu education [and that] African opinion never became reconciled to the extension of mother-tongue medium beyond Std 2,[5] nor to the dual medium policy in the secondary school". Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s those organizations close to the Department of Bantu Education – the Advisory Board for Bantu Education, the school boards, and the African Teachers' Association of South Africa (ATASA) – attempted to get the Department to reconsider its language medium policy (Hartshorne, 1992; 1995). Ultimately, the Department was only able to authorize exemptions from the application of the dual medium in secondary schools as the government took an inflexible standpoint concerning its policy in primary schools.

Hartshorne (1995:311) claims that it was ironic that the "first major blow to state policy was to come from 'within the system', from one of the homelands created under the ideology of apartheid. One of the first legislative acts of the new Transkei Assembly in 1963 was to determine that Xhosa should be used as medium for the first four years only in the primary school, and thereafter English was to be used exclusively". Thus from 1967 each of the homelands followed the Transkei pattern and by 1974 all but two homelands (QwaQwa and Venda) had adopted the use of English as medium from grade 5 (Hartshorne, 1995).

The Bantu Education Advisory Board presented a report to the Department of Bantu Education in 1972 recommending mother tongue medium for the first six years of primary school. Despite the attempts made by the Department the government was insistent on maintaining the dual medium approach. Thus initially the 50-50 policy was not enforced and as a result English was the de facto medium after Grade eight. In fact by 1968 only 26% of the schools had implemented this language policy (NEPI, 1992:28). However, the government was taking steps to enforce this policy and the practical implications were such that public examinations at the end of Grade 7, which had been kept in the primary school as a bridge to the secondary school, now had to be written in both English and Afrikaans, instead of the mother tongue (Hartshorne, 1992, 1995). Increasingly the number of schools, teachers, and pupils affected by the dual medium hard-line policy was increasing. In 1975, "the first year in which the new examination was taken, it was found that the Department was not prepared to

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[5] In the old educational system Standard 2 was equal to Grade 4. Thus the Standard grade plus 2 for the Grade in the new system.

make any exceptions and the new policy was rigorously pursued" (Hartshorne, 1995:312). Hartshorne (1992:203) describes the events vividly:

> Throughout 1975 and the early part of 1976, teacher groups, principals, school boards and the Soweto Urban Bantu Council, for example, urged the Department to take a more relaxed, flexible approach to the medium question, but to no avail. At the beginning of 1976, the Medowlands Tswana School Board took unilateral action and instructed their schools to use English only from Std 3 [Grade 5]. This resulted in the department dismissing two of the members of the Board, whereupon the entire board resigned in protest. From the beginning of 1976, too, clear expressions of dissatisfaction began to come from the pupils of many higher primary and junior secondary schools in Soweto. They were feeling the weight of the dual medium policy much more heavily than pupils in Std 9-10 [Grade 11-12] who, for the most part, were still using only English. Major strike action started on 17 May, when the pupils of Orlando West Junior Secondary School stayed away from class when the local circuit inspector refused to meet a committee they had elected to put forward their grievances. In the same week the stayaway was joined by pupils from three higher primary schools, and from this point on the strike spread rapidly and violence began to take place. By June 14, Leonard Mosala, a member of the Urban Bantu Council, was saying that 'we (the parents) have failed to help them in their struggle for change in schools. They are now angry and prepared to fight and we are afraid that the situation may become chaotic at any time'. He also warned that enforcing Afrikaans could result in another Sharpeville. Two days later the first major confrontation with police took place, and within a week at least 176 lives were lost.

Thus what began on June 16 1976 as a student protest in reaction to the government's attempt to firmly enforce the 50-50 policy contributed to a day that shook South Africa, which would continue to haunt many South African's for years to come. Theoretically speaking then the speakers of African languages were to be taught through the medium of the mother tongue with a sudden transfer to both English and Afrikaans as medium of instruction (half the subjects taught in English and the other half in Afrikaans) was to take place after Grade 8.

Heugh (1999, 2002) argues that despite the emphasis placed on the role of the mother tongue in Bantu Education and the impoverished curriculum the matriculation pass rate for African language speaking students increased dramatically from 43.5% in 1955 and reaching their zenith of 83.4% in 1976, despite the impoverished curriculum of Bantu education. Thus she maintains that the increase in the pass rate may, in part, be attributed to the emphasis placed on the maintenance and development of the mother tongue[6] during these years. It may be

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[6] However, these results also need to be looked at in relation to the total number of African language speaking students in the system, which increased substantially between 1955 and 1994. Thus during Bantu Education there were only a small percentage of learners that made it to the matriculation level and now there is mass

argued then that in the years of Bantu education, South Africa (1953-1976) actually had a better language in education policy for the majority population, but for the wrong reasons. During the time that the mother tongue was phased in and maintained for 8 years as the primary language of learning, the matriculation results[7] of black students steadily improved. It was an inflexible implementation of Afrikaans as a medium for 50% of the subjects in secondary school in 1975 that led to the student uprising in Soweto the following year. In the end, the government was forced to back down with their decision to enforce the implementation of the 50-50 policy due to intense resistance and in 1979 the Education and Training Act No. 90 was passed reducing the use of the mother tongue to 4 years of primary school followed by a choice of medium between Afrikaans and English (Hartshorne, 1992), with most schools opting for English medium. The reduction of the use of the mother tongue from 8 years to the current practice of 4 years has, however, coincided with decreasing pass rates (see table 6.1).

Table 6.1: Pass rates at matriculation level

Year	African language Speaking students	% pass rate	Overall total nr. of candidates (% pass rate)
1955	595	43.5	
1976 (Soweto)	9595	83.7	
1979	14 574	73.5	85 276 (87%)
1980	29 973	53.2	109 807 (75%)
1982	70 241	48.4	139 488 (69%)
1992	342 038	44	448 491 (56%)
1994[8]	392 434	49	495 408 (58%)
1997			559 233 (47,4%)

(Source Heugh, 2002:187).

In analyzing the language-in-education policies that have been in effect up to the time of the 1994 elections it is argued that for the speakers of African languages a number of different approaches have been applicable with different programs being utilized.

1. The pre- 1910 period can best be described as a *laissez-faire approach* to the language issue vis-à-vis the speakers of African languages. During this period the state was mainly concerned with education in general and language, specifically, with reference to the English- and Dutch-speaking settlers.

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education. Thus language may only be one of the contributing factors in the results discussed by Heugh (1999, 2002).

[7] The matriculation exams are the school leaving examinations, which are taken in Grade 12.

[8] After 1994, the matriculation results were no longer published according to a racial/ethnic classification of data.

2. The period 1910-1948 was characterized by a struggle between the two white groups over the distribution of power and as a result the hegemony of the two official languages of the period, namely English and Afrikaans. Concerning the speakers of African languages it was found that since English had, for the most part, already been established in the mission schools (initially the only schools for African language speakers) then English would continue to dominate. Therefore, in this period a *transitional approach* namely an early-exit model was in effect, which Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) argues is a subtractive form of bilingual education.

3. During the apartheid period of 1948-1976 the policy in force was also a *transitional approach* for the speakers of African languages, but the model may also be defined first as a segregation model, given that this was the ideology behind the apartheid thinking. Simultaneously, it may also be described as a late-exit model in which the "linguistic minority children with a low-status mother tongue…[were] initially instructed through the medium of their mother tongue for a few years and where their mother tongue…[was] taught as though it has no intrinsic value, only an instrumental value" (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000:593) before making the transition to another language, namely English although in theory it was to be both English and Afrikaans. If one then looks at the matriculation scores above, which show that during the period when the late-exit model was in effect the pass rate for speakers of African languages was much higher than when the early-exit model was in effect. It may be argued then that the late-exit programs are as the general rule states better than the early-exit ones because learners are allowed a better opportunity to become more proficient in their mother tongue by providing a greater foundation before making the transition to another language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). However, the fact still remains that in both late- and early-exit programs the ultimate goal is assimilation and a strong dominance in the majority language at the expense of the mother tongue.

4. The declining years of apartheid 1977-1994 is still defined by a *transitional approach*, however, the model now in use is that which was also utilized in the pre-apartheid years. Thus an early-exit model becomes the de facto approach and although the events in Soweto were instrumental in influencing this change in the policy it would not become official until 1979. Here the policy, passed in 1979, then reduces the number of years that the mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction from eight- to four years with a choice thereafter of either English or Afrikaans with most schools selecting English as the medium. Thus a subtractive language-learning situation results as opposed to an additive one.

The overall result is that for the most part historically African-language-speaking children have been exposed to a subtractive model of bilingual education while Afrikaans- and English-speaking children have been exposed to a dual-medium[9] program "a limited version of additive bilingualism" (Heugh, 1995:44). Heugh argues that for this second group the L1 for the majority of students is maintained throughout their educational careers and that the L2 is then introduced as a subject alongside the L1. Had this type of program been available for African-language-speaking children with similar resources – sufficient materials and

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[9] This dual-medium approach, one of the earliest forms of true additive bilingual education, was only offered to English- and Afrikaans-speaking pupils, but it was never an option for the speakers of African languages (Heugh, 1995; Malherbe, 1977).

proficient bilingual teachers – perhaps they might also have had the advantages of additive bilingualism.[10]

Negotiating the future

Early in the 1990s the ANC began to review their position on language policy. The initial work on this began with a Language Workshop in Harare. Present at this was Zubeida Desai who was serving as the Western Cape representative of the National Educational Coordinating Committee (NECC). In discussing the various political events leading up to the development of the LiEP she commented that only invited representatives were in attendance (personal communication August 2003). The planning of this workshop and decisions about time and place came from the ANC. In addition, with reference to who was allowed or obliged to participate it is clear that only those invited representatives were present and thus other more independent individual voices were absent, resulting in the absence of alternative viewpoints.

Hartshorne (1992:209) argues, "given the past history of South Africa…and the divisiveness of previous language policies as applied under apartheid, it is very clear that ANC language policy…will have to learn towards unity rather than to diversity". He also notes that in the Harare Language Workshop there were indications of this trend and which I believe favored English as a means of achieving this goal as one delegate noted:

> In building a unified South Africa, a new government may have to select a national language. In a multi-lingual context such as South Africa, a linking or common language is essential…Choosing any particular African language, on the other hand, carries a high source of potential conflict, since it will elevate one cultural group above others (Benjamin 1990 cited in Hartshorne, 1992:209).

Furthermore Hartshorne argues that in the NECC report on the Harare Workshop there appeared to be no discussion paper from an African language speaker. He then asks if this is

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[10] However, there are different environmental circumstances that need to be considered. While the whites whether their first language is Afrikaans or English have a lot of interaction and are often exposed to each other's languages both inside and outside of school that is not the same communicative situation (especially not an equal one) that blacks are in as they often are not exposed to i.e., English outside of school.

again "a signal that decisions are going to be taken *for* the ordinary parent" (Hartshorne, 1992:217fn23 emphasis added)?

In reviewing the ANC's position on language issues before 1990 I also searched a number of draft documents that highlight that within the ANC[11] there was a strong bias towards English, which has been equally noted by other researchers (there are a number of researchers that are critical of the ANC's bias towards English and space limitations do not allow me the opportunity to discuss them all in detail). McLean (1999:12) cites Hirson (1981) who argues that in a move to "unite black leadership, there was no other lingua franca, and English was almost always used at meetings". Furthermore, I agree with McLean's argument that the opposition to Afrikaans combined with the use of English as a common language has helped to structure the response of African language speakers both in the past and to the present day. Thus it may be argued that power abuse not only involves abuse of force it may also affect the minds of people (van Dijk, 1996). In other words the pattern of power emerging in the new democratic South Africa may be described persuasive and manipulative rather than coercive. As the discourse used in opposition of apartheid and, therefore, Afrikaans played a crucial role in manufacturing the consent of the people (Herman & Chomsky, 1988 cited in van Dijk, 1996:85) and the consent here is the acceptance of English as a viable option or even the only option. Additionally, Alexander and Heugh (1999:6-7) point out that the African leadership[12] in many ways accepted the status quo and the hegemony of English.

> Tragically, the anglocentrism of the political, and to some extent of the cultural, leadership of the oppressed people in effect, if not in intention, ensured the predictable

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[11] It is interesting to note that English has always served as the ANC's working language from its conception in 1912 to the present. Even in the ANC school in Tanzania (the ANC ran a school in Tanzania during the years that they were banned in South Africa), English was the medium of instruction from preschool through to the secondary level and even adult literacy classes were concerned with literacy in English (Hartshorne, 1992). The question that needs to be considered is that despite this strong and clear bias towards English in the earlier ANC documents is this bias towards English still present in the ANC's thinking? And although the specific mention of English was subsequently dropped from the LiEP one may wonder how much earlier documents influence the actual ideology and practice of the ANC led government.

[12] It is interesting that this bias towards the use of English as a viable option in education was not only found in the ANC's thinking at the time (see NEPI, 1992; ANC, 1992, 1994). Furthermore, it is important to note that the ANC is a political party and not all members share the same view towards language (my focus is of course not on individuals, but on social groups, institutions or organizations). For example in several interviews I have conducted the current Minister Dr. Ben Ngubane of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology is described as *understanding the language issue* and *recognizing the important role that language plays* (Interviews with Neville Alexander and Zubeida Desai). Additionally, Alexander and Heugh (1999:8) acknowledge that the National Language Project (NLP), which they were both greatly involved in, "believed that English would function as a lingua franca or linking language". However, by 1992 the NLP's approach to ESL had been modified based on language research on the continent (see Heine, 1992; also the work of Cummins and Skutnabb-Kangas influenced this change).

outcome of the rulers' policies. For it is a sad fact that the African (or black) nationalist movement did not react to cultural oppression in a manner similar to that of the Afrikaner (or white) nationalists. At the critical time when Bantu education was being imposed on the black people, the leadership of the liberation movement across the board made a de facto decision to oppose Afrikaans in favour of English. The option of promoting the African languages while also ensuring as wide and as deep a knowledge as possible of the English language was never considered seriously for reasons connected with the class aspirations of that leadership. In effect, therefore, the hegemony of English, its unassailable position…became entrenched among black people. Because it was the only other language that could compete with Afrikaans as a means to power (jobs and status) and as the only means to international communication and world culture at the disposal of South Africa's elites, it became, as in other African countries, the "language of liberation".

The clear bias towards English is also clearly evident in one of the two ANC draft documents I analyzed entitled *Ready to Govern: Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa* (ANC, 1992). To begin with the pull towards English coupled with the recognition of the practical constraints involved in implementing a policy, which gave official status to eleven languages, was highlighted in the *Ready to Govern* document in which attention is drawn to the competing interests that were at work:

> To overcome the practical problems of multi-lingualism, it will be possible to designate a single common language to be used for record purposes or for other special use, either at the national level or in the regions. All the major languages spoken in our country should be equally available for such purposes (in alphabetical order − Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Swati, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu).

Here the language diversity found in the country was noticeably viewed as a <u>problem</u>, which was to be solved by <u>designating a single **common** language</u> for use at the national and provincial levels. The underlying assumption was that English would serve this function and that it would become the language of government. This was also echoed by Alexander who notes *the creeping unilingualism in the Civil Service* which he believes is, in part, *a result of globalization and also the result of an anti-Afrikaans attitudes amongst black speakers of African languages*, which influences the belief that *English alone is <u>enough</u>* (Interview: Alexander, 25/02/02).

Subsequently, I also analyzed a draft document entitled *A Policy Framework for Education and Training* that was published in January 1994 (ANC, 1994). This 1994 policy framework document is divided into seven parts and sets out the ANC's proposals on education and

training. The following points contained in part 5 chapter 12 under the heading "Language in Education Policy" are of relevance (ANC, 1994:61):

> …official language policy in South Africa has been interwoven with the politics of domination and separation, resistance and affirmation. Over the past two centuries, South Africa's colonial and white minority government have used language policy in education as an instrument of cultural and political control….the official language or languages of the state have been elevated and other South African languages have been either suppressed or marginalised. Language oppression has in turn provoked popular struggle…Such struggles have been waged by Afrikaners against British cultural and political imperialism, and by Blacks against Afrikaner-dominated white baasskap.

What is interesting in this excerpt is how social actors are represented to suit their interests and purposes with reference to the intended readers (van Leeuwen, 1996). The dichotomy between domination and separation on the one hand and the resistance and affirmation on the other is representative of an "us" versus "them" portrayal, where the ANC is represented by resistance and affirmation and the white Afrikaner minority is equated with domination and separation. However, in this introduction the ANC acknowledges only the language struggle between the Afrikaners and British on the one hand and black South Africans and the Afrikaners on the other. The exclusion of any oppression by the British on the Africans in relation to language issues is <u>not</u> discussed. This reflects the criticism by Alexander and Heugh (1999:6) in which they suggest that "African (or black) nationalist movement did not react to cultural oppression in a manner similar to that of the Afrikaner (or white) nationalists" and that they apparently accepted the dominant position of English at the expense of the African languages. The document does, however, go on to acknowledge the previous official status of only two languages, namely English and Afrikaans, and highlights the fact that "African South Africans have effectively been denied the <u>right to choose</u> the terms of their linguistic participation in public life and education" (ANC, 1994:61). However, given the previous exclusion in acknowledging the hegemony of English this sentence appears to argue that the right to choose applies to English in opposition to Afrikaans, as previous policies attempted to enforce. Thus the document draws on the apartheid discourse that denied speakers of African languages the <u>right to choose</u>. In addition, it draws attention to the issue of power in which "the effect of South Africa's official language in education policies has been to promote one-way communication, on terms set by the white minority" (ANC, 1994:61). The document while acknowledging the power relations that have existed historically it falls short of making any significant recommendations that will alter this

situation. Interestingly enough neither the ANC draft policy nor the ensuing LiEP make provisions to change this in any concrete way, for example by requiring that all students should study at least one African language.

As the final stages of multi-party constitutional negotiations were reached in December 1993 last-minute compromises were made to protect language rights. The resulting interim 1993 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and in the subsequent 1996 Constitution, in Section 6(1), eleven languages are recognized to be official languages. With the Constitution serving as a foundation it has been argued that various language policies, bodies, and processes[13] were set in motion, which involved the interaction among three main interest groups (de Klerk, 2002). These groups according to de Klerk were the ANC, the NP (the Afrikaner Nationalists) and a diverse combination of sociolinguistics, academics, and political activists who "formed a vanguard in relation to language issues" but who did not have extensive support or power. It has been argued by de Klerk that a number of nongovernmental organizations were also involved in this work such as NLP (National Language Project), USWE (Use Speak and Write English), ELTIC (English Learning and Teaching Information Center) and PRAESA (Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa). Moreover, de Klerk (2002) argues that without the prominent role played by Afrikaner Nationalists the language clauses in the constitution might not have been included, something that Alexander confirms in my interview with him (Interview: Alexander 27/02/02).

In the latter part of 1995 the Department of Education commissioned a working group made up of members from the NGO sector in order to draft a working document for a new language in education policy. According to Alexander the NGO ELTIC was the main group involved in this commission and their initial draft of the LiEP was based on the work of the NLP (personal communication, August 2003). Within a month of the report the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, commissioned a Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG) to assist him in creating a national language plan. The LANGTAG[14] included seven subcommittees, one of which addressed language in education.

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[13] For this investigation I will limit my discussion mainly to the LiEP. However, there are other interesting developments concerning language issues at the national level, which space limitations do not permit me to elaborate upon. For an interesting discussion of these see Taylor (2002) where she describes work of LANGTAG and PANSALB in greater detail than I am able to consider here.

[14] In its final report the LANGTAG stated that language can and should be planned as an integral part of social policy, especially in multilingual societies. Also it rejected the orientation of language as a problem in favor of an orientation of language as a fundamental human and a vital national resource (DACST, 1996). Additionally,

In keeping with usual procedure the LiEP draft document (based on the work by ELTIC and the NLP) was then circulated for comment among a select group of informed individuals. Alexander and Heugh (1999) also point out that the earlier language in education proposals from PRAESA influenced this policy and Alexander comments that the LANGTAG had some influence as well (personal communication, August 2003). Additionally, Desai noted the role played by PRAESA in the development of the LiEP:

> *In coming up with the document, which promotes very strongly additive bilingualism I think PRAESA played quite a prominent role in terms of that particular concept…There were consultative meetings in different parts of the country to discuss earlier versions of the document…I read some of those responses and they are included in a long document called "the orange book"…However, I personally felt that the model of additive bilingualism that was promoted in the LiEP, although there is mention of other kinds of approaches, the model that was presented was based on a "dual medium approach". Now for a dual medium approach[15] to work you either must have two teachers who speak each of the two languages or one teacher who is fairly bilingual in both languages. It also helps if those two languages have the same kind of status. Now in South Africa we do not have a lot of that in place* (Interview: Desai, 14/03/02).

Thus Desai acknowledges PRAESA's influence with reference to specific aspects of the policy, in particular the dual medium approach that PRAESA is very committed to. However, Desai is also critical that the department gave preference to this approach in particular. I must also agree with Desai's assessment that for the dual medium approach to work the requirements necessary are not available in most schools in South Africa and thus for one particular approach to be promoted at the expense of other alternatives suggests short-sightedness on the part of the Department of Education.

My investigation, therefore, shows that the following organizations were either directly involved or influenced the LiEP policy in some way: ELTIC, the NLP, LANGTAG, and PRAESA with individuals such as Neville Alexander who was not only the chair of LANGTAG but also the director of PRAESA and involved in the NLP and Paul Musker[16] the coordinator and convenor of the Department of Education Committee appointed to develop the LiEP. Furthermore, Alexander also confirms Desai's statement that he was very involved

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space limitations do not permit a detailed discussion of the LANGTAG and subsequent developments for more details see Taylor (2002) and Alexander and Heugh (1999).

[15] PRAESA has carried out a number of research studies involving the dual medium approach (many of the results are published in PRAESA's Occasional Papers series, which are available from PRAESA).

[16] Neville Alexander informed me of Paul Musker's involvement (personal communication, August 2003).

and thus influential in the final touches in the negotiations of the LiEP (personal communication, August 2003). The policy drafting group in the Department of Education headed by Paul Musker from ELTIC and the Language in Education subcommittee of LANGTAG chaired by Neville Alexander were also operational at the same time which allowed them the opportunity to meet and discussed their work (Alexander, personal communication, August 2003). Thus Alexander commented that through these arrangements he, for the most part, drafted the Language in Education Policy himself (personal communication, August 2003).

Consequently in July 1997 the Minister of Education announced that the LiEP was then based on the principal of additive bilingualism, which was heavily influenced by the work of NGOs previously mentioned and individuals such as Alexander and Musker. Principally the policy promotes the use of the home language in addition to a second language and for the majority of students this means English. The specific aspects of the LiEP that are of interest in this investigation will now be discussed.

The main policy objectives of the LiEP are to promote additive and functional multilingualism, and sociolinguistic and – cultural integration. Accordingly in the preamble of the LiEP the following points are of relevance (DoE, 1997:1):

(3) The new language in education policy is conceived as an integral and necessary aspect of the new government's strategy of building a non-racial nation in South Africa. It is meant to facilitate communication across the barriers of colour, language, and region, while at the same time creating an environment in which respect for languages other than one's own would be encouraged.

(5) …drawing on comparative international experience demonstrating that, under appropriate conditions, most learners benefit cognitively and emotionally from the type of structured bilingual education found in dual-medium (also known as two-way immersion) programmes. Whichever route is followed, the underlying principle is to maintain language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s). Hence, the Department's positions that an additive approach to bilingualism is to be seen as the normal orientation of our language-in-education policy.

(6) The right to choose the language of learning and teaching is vested in the individual. This right has, however, to be exercised within the overall framework of the obligation on the education system to promote multilingualism.

The ultimate intended outcome of this policy is that two or more languages will be perceived and used as languages of learning for all learners in the country (DoE, 1997:13; Luckett,

1995:75; Alexander, 2000:17). First of all in point (3) it is stated that the LiEP is <u>meant</u> to facilitate communication between groups. However, this could suggest that this is something that is wished for but not certain. Additionally, it is not specified how this will be achieved, which could mean that speakers of African languages will be required to learn English or Afrikaans (which is currently the general rule), but that speakers of English or Afrikaans will not be required to learn African languages. This suggests that a diglossic situation may actually be maintained with English (and to some degree Afrikaans) remaining as a H (high) variety language(s), used more in public domains with the African languages remaining a L (low) variety, to be used in informal settings and for initial literacy only (Ferguson, 1975). Furthermore, this brings to mind the issue of equity as suggested by Kress (1996) where equity should be treated as something that works reciprocally, in *all* directions. Thus if communication is to be facilitated between groups, then English- or Afrikaans-speaking groups should also be required to learn an African language. Hence at the educational/individual level high levels of bilingualism or multilingualism "are a necessary educational goal for all linguistic minority children and a desirable goal for *all* children" (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000:244 emphasis added) whether a minority or majority.[17]

Secondly point (5) has been previously discussed above where the idea of supporting one approach over and above others appears to be problematic. First of all the reference to dual-medium approach is also stated as two-way immersion, which according to Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) are not necessarily the same type of program. Thus immersion programs in general refer to linguistic majority children with a high status language instructed through a foreign (minority) language where the teacher is bilingual (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000:614). This resembles the dual-medium programs for English- and Afrikaans-speaking children in South Africa established in the early 1900s (Malherbe, 1977; see also 6.2). On the other hand, two-way bilingual (dual language) programs (also known as 'dual immersion') are models where approximately 50% are majority students and 50% are minority students (with the same mother tongue) who voluntarily choose to be instructed by a 'completely' bilingual teacher (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000:618). Initially instruction is given in the minority language (90%-10% model) or through the medium of both languages (50%-50% model), where the

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[17] Recent research into the ideology behind the language policy is critical of the policy suggesting that multilingualism took precedence over the facilitation of learning (Mathiesen, 2003). Others have also echoed this criticism stating that "at times it is not clear whether this aim [the facilitation of learning], or the *promotion of multilingualism*, is pre-eminent in the documents" (Desai & van der Merwe, 1998:252).

dominant language is then taught as a subject. This in itself is problematic given that many of the township and rural schools are generally homogenous and, therefore, do not provide learners the benefit of interaction with their peers who speak the target language (in this case English). Essentially for African pupils, the classroom is the only setting in which they receive most, if not all, of their exposure to English and this is often provided by teachers who themselves are imperfect speakers of the language (this will be discussed in more detail in the next section). This is also an important factor in the distinction between foreign language learning (FLL) and second language acquisition (SLA) as peers play an important role in SLA and not in FLL. It is only some of the ex-Model C schools (previously white only schools) and former colored schools that have in recent years become more heterogeneous to any degree and thus to propose such a model as a viable alternative nationally is complicated given the many constraints such as available 'competent' bilingual teachers, economic resources, and the current student composition in the schools, to name a few.

Finally point (6) suggests that the individual (students or in the case of minor children parents) has the right to choose the language of learning and teaching. This is seen as a reaction to the top-down centralized decision-making process of the apartheid government and as such is intertextually related to apartheid discourses. The ability of individuals to exercise this right is, however, dependent upon the individual having access to information concerning such decisions. However, it is argued that 'ordinary' individuals, in general, do not have access to political, academic or other discourses to allow them to make informed decisions. A similar point is also taken up by Webb (1999) who is critical of the policy concerning the ability of school governing bodies in making decisions with reference to the development of a language policy[18] for schools. Thus Webb (1999:361) comments, "whilst the philosophy of individual choice and the devolution of decision-making accords nicely, it is essential that decision-makers be enabled to make informed choices". Walker and Archung (2003) suggest that historically the involvement of black South African communities in the decision-making process of schools was problematic. Thus " schools were not seen as inviting the involvement of parents, and parents were not described as having any influence on the direction of the school" (Walker & Archung, 2003:33). This resulted in students and parents

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[18] The policy also stipulates that school governing bodies are responsible for developing a language policy for the schools and in doing so they "must stipulate how the school will promote multilingualism" (DoE, 1997:3).

often believing that schools should be responsible for decisions concerning i.e., medium of instruction.

Desai also argues that *while it is ideal to leave the choice to the individual* (in the case of minor children parents/guardians would be responsible for this choice) *the policy is not being implemented in the spirit that it was intended* (Interview: Desai, 14/03/02) and as a result the status quo is maintained. Desai argues that the "choice factor" is one of the most "implicit tensions that run through the document" (Desai, 2001:330). Thus "despite that fact that the Soweto uprising of 1976 serves as a grim reminder that no state can afford to impose a language policy on learners, there is an argument for saying that the new policy document errs on the side of allowing too much choice". As such it is argued that:

> …unless such individual choice is accompanied by a public awareness campaign around language and learning issues, and a massive injection of resources, both material and human, the prejudices of the past are likely to militate against individual learners choosing African languages as languages of learning (Desai, 2001:330-331).

Apart from stipulating that "the language(s) of learning and teaching in a public school must be (an) official language(s)" (DoE, 1997:section 4.4) the document does not specify that the language(s) of learning and teaching (LOLT) should be a home language (mother tongue) and as such undermines the "underlying principle…to maintain home language(s)" as medium of instruction (DoE, 1997 seciton 4.4 point 5). What is also interesting is that nowhere in the document is it stipulated that a switch from i.e., the mother tongue to English as the language of learning and teaching must take place at all. It is, however, assumed by many (teachers, principals, parents and students) that this switch must take place. Previously this switch occurred in Grade 5 and now it occurs even earlier in Grade 4. The result is that the status quo is maintained and the de facto 1979 language policy remains in tact.

Desai relates the high-level policy decisions vis-à-vis educational practice at the local-level implying that the symbolic gesture by the government in recognizing multilingualism simply remains symbolic (Interview: Desai, 14/03/02) when the realities of the classroom do not reflect their stated intention and the hegemony of English remains.

Moreover, Desai also recognizes the status of English stating that:

At the moment there is a lot of lip service being paid to 'multilingualism'. And what it means in practice is something totally different. In fact the hegemony of English remains virtually intact, but now people would greet their students in Xhosa, or they use a little bit of Xhosa here, and a little bit of Xhosa there, and then somehow it is 'multilingual'. But for me the ultimate thing is: Can the students write their exams in Xhosa? If they can't, then don't tell me it is a multilingual classroom (Interview: Desai, 14/03/02).

The realities

> *The 'policy gap', [is] understood as the mismatch between policy intention and policy practice and outcome*
> (Sayed, 2002:29)

In this section I will present the empirical findings as a result of the ethnographic investigation of the three different schools (SC1, SC2 and SC3). In the introduction of this paper I discussed that the project explores two related issues namely policy and practice or as Sayed (2002) mentions in the quote above the 'policy gap' that is the gap between the policy intention and the policy practice or outcome. In the previous section the policy intention has been discussed and analyzed and I now turn my attention to the practice that is the implementation of the LiEP at the classroom level.

Despite all the research showing that children learn better in their mother tongue the use of ex-colonial languages as medium of instruction, particularly in Africa, still continues. Thus it is important to analyze how teachers and students facilitate learning though the use of these languages as medium of instruction. In looking at the question – How well do pupils adjust to having a foreign language as a medium of instruction? – I discovered that this important issue has been overlooked in much of the research on language in education in South Africa. As discussed in the previously the transitional approach is the only option currently available and as a result it is important to see how well these learners adjust to this foreign medium, namely English.

In analyzing the data, which included observations, interviews and a reading comprehension task some interesting phenomenon appeared to be relevant to the transition from mother tongue to English as the medium of instruction. In total 6 factors appeared to affect pupils' adjustment to the FL.

1. Limited input of FL
2. Limited exposure to the FL
3. Limited or no parental support
4. Low levels of mother tongue development
5. Lack of sufficient knowledge of the FL
6. Lack of materials

Due to space constraints I will only deal with the first two factors as they also relate to the questioning of theories of bi-/multilingualism based on immigrant minorities. The input of the FL is limited both in quantity and quality. During observations it was recognized that the input is highly controlled by the teacher and it is very selective. The input of the foreign language in the classroom is often restricted to specific subject content as opposed to grammar or language usage. On numerous occasions observations showed that the FL used in the classroom is limited in its quantity and that there is a narrow focus on specific vocabulary words and concepts, which in turn are practiced through the use of repetition and memorization, which does not allow for creative language use by the students. Students are restricted to language use consisting of filling in blanks or multiple-choice. Student responses in the foreign language, if they respond at all, are limited to short one-word answers (generally the specific concept that is the focus of the lesson) with no elaboration or explanation given by either students or teachers. It was often observed that students only responded when questions were repeated in their mother tongue as opposed to the foreign language.

In addition to the quantity of the input of the FL the quality of that input is also important. The argument by Wong-Fillmore (1991) who looks at SLA in an immigrant context contends that if the TL speakers are themselves imperfect speakers of the TL the input they provide for the learners may not be an adequate representation of what the learners should be striving for. In the context of this study this is seen as an important factor given that the teacher plays a major role with little or no peer learning taking place (Ringbom, 1987; Wong-Fillmore, 1991), which is the significant difference between SLA and FLL. Here the teacher is the major source of input of the FL as opposed to peers who are believed to be an important factor in SLA. During the study it was also observed on several occasions that the FL used by the teachers themselves was in fact not representative of the type of English language that learners should strive for. Teachers were observed as consistently making grammatical errors

and spelling mistakes. Thus the teacher's input was often incorrect and they also did not correct their pupils' language usage in the FL either. The result being that incorrect language usage is reinforced. Furthermore, teacher talks in the FL are more text bound, which means that teachers often have to read from the textbooks and worksheets when using English as opposed to when Xhosa is used teachers are able to speak more freely. The teachers themselves are also aware of their limited ability in English and confided that they felt this was a serious problem for both them and their students.

The following statements from some of the Grade 4 teachers highlight this sentiment:

> *Some of us [the teachers] find it difficult to express the content in English; it's difficult.*
>
> *We are using it [English], but because it is a foreign language we are not fluent.*
>
> *We are using English because of the kids you know, in Grades 1-3 in that phase is Xhosa and then in Grade 4 there is a bridging, a grade where we are um **having** to teach **everything** in English. So they [teachers] are trying to do that more especially to translate in Xhosa because of the pupils.*
>
> *I would say plus minus 50% of the teachers are competent. As you know English is a foreign language so at times it's difficult to just get through the language and not being the mother tongue.*

Here even the teachers themselves view the language as foreign and highlight some of the difficulties they face in *having* the use the language.

Another factor related to the limited input of the FL in the classroom is the fact that students are also limited in their exposure to the language outside of the classroom setting. In general when we speak of second language acquisition the case is that most students are immigrants in countries where they come into contact with the target language both inside and outside of the classroom setting (Wong-Fillmore, 1991) and as a result they have the opportunity to learn the language both formally and informally (Ringbom, 1987). However, it has been argued that these models and theories developed from our understanding of immigrant groups mainly in the North are insufficient in dealing with the realities of the students in this study and those in similar situations. As a result, we need to understand the factors affecting learners' additional language acquisition in these types of contexts according to their own reality. Thus the English language infrastructure (Setati, Adler, Reed & Bapoo, 2002) becomes one of the most

significant contextual differences. The language input outside the classroom is seen as an important factor given that the learners in this context must rely heavily on the input they receive in the classroom. This language-learning situation then resembles that of foreign language learning as opposed to second language acquisition (Ringbom, 1987) and it is important that this difference be recognized.

In analyzing the data then the limited exposure to the FL became obvious as students confided that they seldom heard or used English outside of the classroom setting and that if they did it was often with others who like themselves were not proficient in the language. Therefore, in relation to Wong-Fillmore's (1991) model these learners do not have social contact with people who are mother tongue speakers of the TL. When asked if they used English outside of the classroom one Grade 4 student responded "*no never*". Two other Grade 4 students acknowledged that they tried to use English with each other "*just for fun*", as a game, "*but that we mostly use Xhosa*". Also the teachers, most of whom live in the townships admitted that both the students and they themselves rarely used English outside of the classroom and if there was a need it was generally to speak to the "*others*", the "*umlungu*" (meaning a white person in Xhosa).

Ultimately, it is important to note that in South Africa there is in reality two different language-learning situations, two sides of one coin, and additional language learning needs to be organized accordingly. On the one side of the coin, in the case of many white Afrikaans speaking learners and middle- and upper-class colored and black South Africans the reality is that learning English is closer to a SLA situation. A majority of these learners find themselves living in areas where they not only come into contact with the language inside the classroom, and they are generally taught the language by mother tongue speakers of the TL or those highly proficient in the language, but also they come into contact with the TL on the playground and in the communities where they live. This situation allows students the opportunity to learn the language both formally and informally. Additionally, most of these children have parents who are themselves knowledgeable in the TL and are then able to assist their children with their schoolwork.

On the other side of the coin, for the majority of rural South Africans and those living in the townships (this is the majority of the total population) English is seldom heard nor used outside of the classroom setting (see also Phillipson, 1991 for other examples). For these

learners they are truly in a *sink or swim* situation, as they are required to use English only as a medium of instruction after Grade 3. These children then do not have any chance to receive informal opportunities to learn or practice the language outside of the classroom setting nor do they come into contact with native mother tongue of the TL. The result is that these learners face a FL learning situation as opposed to an SLA situation and the failure of the Department to publicly acknowledge this paradox and to take steps to deal with it leaves many of these learners unable to swim in an English ocean. Only recently have other researchers given these contextual differences serious consideration. Setati et al. (2002:73) refer to Ringbom's (1987) model highlighting these differences. Nevertheless, these researchers only see these contextual differences as applying to the rural versus urban context and do not take into account that in many township communities English is also very much a foreign language. A possible explanation for their results may be that their investigation in the urban areas appears to be located in multilingual schools, in which the context differs greatly in comparison to township schools.[19] Thus their analysis fails to account for the differences that exist in the urban areas and not only between urban and rural.

Finally, through the use of observation data, interviews with teachers, teacher-trainers and other informants it was discovered that teachers also employ a number of coping strategies in coping with the mismatch between home and community language on the one hand and the school language on the other. In total teachers made use of 3 main strategies known as; code alteration, banking methods, and creativity. I will only briefly discuss code alteration here as this appeared to be the most significant of the three strategies.

In total 3 different types of code alteration were identified and are referred to as code-switching, code-mixing, and full translations. When teachers are knowledgeable in the primary language of the learners they are then able to employ anyone of these code alteration strategies.

In the Western Cape at the various Universities and Technikons I was also able to confirm Ferguson's (2002) claim that the use of code alteration strategies are neglected in teacher education and that they lack legitimacy. In my discussions with the teacher-trainers I discovered that the code alteration practice is not dealt with in teacher education and as such

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[19] Plüddemann, Mati & Mahlaela-Thusi (2002) provide a detailed description of various schools, which highlight these contextual differences.

teachers do not make effective use of this strategy. Although teachers themselves acknowledge the use of this strategy their belief towards its effectiveness are often questioned as some felt as though they are *smuggling the vernacular into the classroom*, while others are unsure as to when and how to use this strategy. Once teachers become not only aware of using the strategy, but also that it can be used to assist learners the strategy may become a more effective teaching tool. My investigation has confirmed what others have described as the *intentional but dilemma-filled practice* of code-switching as teachers indicate the need for the practice to enable the learners the ability to understand concepts and ideas, but since it is not dealt with in teacher education acknowledgement and approval for its use in the classroom is not given.

The conclusion that is drawn from this is that although English is the official language to be used, in many schools at least from Grade 4 onwards, to teach all content subjects teachers are more concerned that pupils are able to understand the subject matter. As a result teachers make use of the code alteration strategy involving code-switching, code-mixing and full translations as one way of achieving this. Thus, acquisition of the FL becomes a secondary objective.

Summary

The multilinguistic situation found in South Africa is not unlike those found in many other countries, particularly in Africa. This study has highlighted that in South Africa language decisions in education have had more to do with issues of political dominance, power struggles, the preservation of privilege and the distribution of economic resources and not with pedagogical concerns. For nearly fifty years[20] the majority of South Africans suffered from language policies aimed at social and political control. As a result schools were used as a mechanism to restrict speakers of African languages access to power with language policies in education as a major component in the apartheid plan. The ultimate goal of these polices was separate and unequal development. The result was social and economic development of the

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[20] This was the period during apartheid where the ideology behind language policies was specifically designed for these purposes. However, I have also suggested elsewhere (Holmarsdottir, forthcoming) that during the period of British rule the policies also served similar purposes although they may have not been specifically designed as such. This I believe is often overlooked in the shadow of apartheid.

dominant minority alongside the social and economic underdevelopment of the oppressed majority.

Throughout the project proposal, which this project is a part of, we have argued that it is important to understand the language-learning context. Thus what possibly distinguishes the approach we take in this project from many other language policy studies is the emphasis on understanding the dynamics of lower-level implementation. Rather than focusing on or limiting the attention to higher-level policy, which illustrates the intentions of the policy, it is crucial to understand how the policy is actually implemented at the level of the classroom. The result is that it is possible to identify systematic discrepancies between policy intention and actual implementation. In connection with educational planning, the researcher needs to understand the micro level of the classroom interactions in relation to macro level policy decisions.

The limited input of the FL in both quantity and quality needs to be given serious consideration. In this paper I argued that in general the SLA context involves immigrants in countries where they come into contact with the target language both inside and outside of the classroom, providing opportunities for both formal and informal language learning. However, the learners in this study, as in many post-colonial contexts, do not generally come into contact with the target language outside of the classroom setting and thus only have formal learning opportunities available to them. Given that these learners do not receive input outside of the classroom the input inside the classroom plays an important role. The result is that the teacher serves as the major source of input fitting the FL learning situation as opposed to an SLA situation in which peers often play major role. Moreover, in this study it was discovered that the quantity of word acquisition in the classroom setting is limited to specific words or concepts and students are restricted in their responses to short one-word answers, multiple-choice or filling in blanks.

My research shows that the quality of the input learners receive, which is also seen as important, is inadequate and that this input may actually reinforce incorrect language usage. Teachers should be able to explain effectively in English the new concepts in the various content subjects, but this is not possible with teachers who do not speak English with confidence or fluency, using outdated or insufficient materials and who have almost no contact with English-speakers. Moreover, in interviews conducted with the teachers they

highlighted their lack of fluency in English as one of the major obstacles they face in using the FL as a medium of instruction. The results of this study show that the majority of the teachers involved in this investigation do not have the knowledge and skills to support English language learning and to teach literacy skills across the curriculum. What this study has also shown is that the Department of Education both recognizes and acknowledges this paradox and in the words of one Department official he admits that in this situation "*no effective learning can take place*" (Interview: Department of Education official, 26/02/02). However, it appears that no steps are being taken to remedy the situation.

Moreover, it became clear in this investigation that both teachers and students are struggling with using a language as a medium of instruction that is foreign and additionally a language that neither is proficient in. The result is that learners are left with partial subject knowledge and little or no real knowledge in the FL either. Fafunwa (1990 cited in Brock-Utne, 2000:154) holds that "one of the most important factors militating against the dissemination of knowledge and skills, and therefore of rapid social and economic well-being of the majority of people in developing countries, is the imposed medium of communication". How can we expect children and adults to acquire knowledge and skills when they are taught through a language they do not understand? It is impossible to empower individuals and to build upon their linguistic heritage in a system that perpetuates the use of a foreign language of instruction for its learners. Likewise, learners are unable to benefit from educational opportunities if these are provided through a foreign medium of instruction that they do not understand. These learning opportunities are then not designed to meet the basic learning needs of the students if the language of instruction becomes a barrier to knowledge. Similarly, education cannot possibly be equitable and non-discriminatory when the medium of instruction is in a language that neither the teachers nor the learners can use sufficiently and when the majority of the population is required to receive their education through a language of the dominant minority.

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