Language in education influenced by global trends – South African experiences

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This paper mainly focuses on the cultural and political dimensions of global trends influencing language in education in a South African context. It is important that educators acknowledge the power in these trends and their implications for shaping and constraining the choices available to educational policies and practices. The author argues that it is not possible to step around language issues in education if this topic is to be considered in a proper manner.

The concept of globalization is closely related to the concept of global trends and both require definitions within the context of this paper. Smith and Doyle (2002) use the concept of globalization to describe the spread and connectedness of production, communication and technologies across the world. The technical innovation of Internet enables diffusion of ideas and knowledge easily and rapidly. The technological revolution the world has experienced the last decades has led to complex interaction between cultures, politics and economy world wide. Carnoy (1999) assesses this information technology and innovation as the foundation of globalization. In order to compete in the global market there is a necessity of productivity linked to the generation of knowledge. If globalization is defined as a 'free market', educational policy makers look to market 'solutions' in educational matters. As a result of market forces education becomes a commodity (Patrinos, 2000).

On the other hand, globalization is not only about economics. It may cover other aspects of life as well. Eriksen (1998) describes globalization as a de-localization or phenomena that are no longer limited by space and time. This can be called a globalization of culture. Societies are becoming more and more complex, less isolated or acting in a vacuum (Davies, 2004). However, global trends and culture are always interpreted locally and have a local character due to difference in influence, world view and knowledge of the people involved (Eriksen, 1998). Thus global forces and globalization are of a dialectic nature, i.e. global trends and events influence local practices and vice versa (Arnove, 2003; Baylis and Smith, 2005). Global trends can be defined as commonalities of practices among disparate cultures due to external forces influencing internal politics (Waters, 2001). Often these trends are reinforced by state policy makers in the sense that they use these "Greater forces" as an argument for changes, leaving the nation-state "no choice" but to play by a set of global rules not of its own making (Burbules and Torres, 2000). This paper is based on research conducted

in South Africa and intends to discuss different aspects of how global trends affect use of language within the educational system. The first section discusses how extensive use of English can be described as a global trend and how this influences education in a multilingual society. Furthermore, creation of national systems of education is a relatively new trend as well as decentralization of education. Implications of these trends in relation to language use will be discussed. Last, the global trend that emphasise democracy and human rights has made interesting impacts on language in the South African society.

Global English

"The linguistic dimension of globalization is the ideal focus for an attempt to understand the relation between politics and culture at the turn of the millennium" (Sonntag, 2003:1). Since language can be described as the main means through which knowledge is conveyed, this makes the language of instruction used in school of utmost importance (Mda, 2000). Learning through the mother tongue improves the outcome of the pupil (Cummins, 2000; Heugh, 2000; Brock-Utne, Desai and Qorro, 2003, 2004; UNESCO, 2004). Despite this, linguistic globalization is an important dimension of globalization, which pushes forward a global English hegemony (Arnove, 2003; Sonntag, 2003). English is a globally used language and often associated with globalization, both as a cause and a product. Through English people are able to communicate with one another world wide. Widespread knowledge of the language enables everyone to interact, hence making this a part of the cultural dimension of globalization.

Since language issues in education are important on the political agenda, it is even more interesting to have a look at linguistic action within the schools. The trend of English as a lingua franca in domains like economy and science, influence the choice of language of teaching and learning (Phillipson, 1992). Education in the mother tongue looses ground to English and this practice alters the status a language is given. The study on which this paper is based, had a closer look at how different statuses are ascribed to isiXhosa, English and Afrikaans by their difference in use within the public sphere and educational practices.

South Africa is one of the richest and most economically developed Sub-Saharan countries. Advanced technology is widely used and the Internet is a rich source of public information. Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa are the official languages in the Western Cape Province. The provincial government uses these three languages equally on their web-pages according to the Western Cape Provincial Languages Act (No 13, 1998) and the Western

Cape Language Policy (Western Cape Provincial Government, 1998, 2001). Census 2001, which provided information on the language situation in each province, shows a majority of Afrikaans speakers in the Western Cape (2.5 million), with isiXhosa speakers being almost 1.1 million and English speakers constituting approximately 875 000. A small minority makes use of several other languages (Statistics South Africa, 2003). Thus, English is the minority language amongst the three main official languages found in the province. Despite this it is a language widely used in the public sphere.

An example is the web-pages of Western Cape Educational Department. They are in English and only contain minimal information in Afrikaans and isiXhosa. National television programmes too are mainly in Afrikaans or English, with news in isiXhosa only three times a week. A parent in school A[1] commented on the news:

> ***P₄:*** We *do* listen to isiXhosa news, but in some cases some issues are not mentioned on SABC1 [South African Broadcasting Corporation], so we watch e-TV which is an English medium channel (Focus group discussion 2, 2004-10-05).

The parents have noticed that not all issues are covered in isiXhosa, so they prefer to watch the English medium channels instead. Time allocated to news in the African languages is much less than English or Afrikaans. Such an imbalance between the languages is certainly not promoting status for the previous disadvantaged languages. It is possible to ask why money is not spent by Television stations to dub cartoon programmes into for example isiXhosa which is spoken by 7.9 million people (Statistics South Africa, 2003). Dubbing programmes is a common practice in countries with far less population (Holmarsdottir, 2005). Instead this practice is promoting English in the public sphere. Is this improving the English skills of the children? Not according to Mazrui:

> In spite of the extensive spread of English to the earliest levels of education, and in spite of the tremendous resources invested in its promotion, there have been numerous claims of 'falling standards' of English in the education institutions as well as in the society at large (Mazrui, 2004:41).

Although Mazrui is pointing at Africa in general, based on my research I believe this could be the case in South Africa as well. The practice shown by the data of this study suggest that English is promoted in the public sphere, at least far more than isiXhosa.

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[1] School A and B in this study are situated in townships, school C in a very affluent area, and school D in a middle class area according to their own descriptions. Interview with teachers are coded T_1, T_2 onwards and interview with parents P_1, P_2 and so on. Several sessions in classroom were observed during this study. They are coded O_1, O_2 onwards.

The prominent status of English in the public sphere might be one of the factors why first language speakers of isiXhosa strive for English acquisition. According to Sonntag (2003) and others, the black disempowered South African population, in particular, see English as a ticket to upward mobility. Instead of challenging the English hegemony, they assess it as an important and necessary commodity. Since they consider English as *the* global language, their response is to increase teaching of English in school, even use it as a medium of instruction. A market for English is created when that is the language most often used in the public sphere, and the parents demand this with the intention of improving the future for their children. However, job opportunities do exist in the isiXhosa speaking environments and, in many cases, may be the most likely option for many of the pupils in the township schools. Furthermore, the principal in school B (T_3) also emphasizes the necessity of good skills in isiXhosa when working in this environment. Despite this parents seem to value English skills more. This is concurrent with Arnove's (2003) apprehension of the dialectic process between global trends and local responses. Since English is deemed important in a globalized world, the local response is increasing the use of English as the language of instruction although it is not the mother tongue of the children.

The political context is a factor which influences the linguistic global trend as well. When English is given high status within the political elite, this inevitably influences the perceptions and practices on the ground. Sonntag's (2003) case studies suggest that English is often the language of global democracy, and in the case of South Africa a significant component of the democratic struggle against apartheid. English is the language in which the liberation struggle took place and has also been the working language of the ANC (Nodoba, 2002; Sonntag, 2003). English seems to be the language which carries "the imagined capital of liberation", especially to the African elite of whom the majority is educated in exile (Heugh, 2003:36). If English implies higher status than African languages to the African elite, this is obviously sending a message to the population and reinforcing the reality of dominance of English (Alexander, 2000). English is assessed as a global currency and carries connotations of power and opportunities (Sonntag, 2003; Holmarsdottir, 2005). Reduced status of Afrikaans, which was the language of power pre-1994, is strengthening this understanding. When asking parents in school A whether they experience equal status among the official language in Western Cape, the following answer was given by one parent:

> ***P₅:*** They don't have equal status. My observation is that Afrikaans has lower status than English, so all the children try to opt for the prestigious language which is English (Focus group discussion 2, 2004-10-05).

This is also verified by the deputy principal in school C and the principal in school D who struggle with parents wanting to send their Afrikaans-speaking children to English medium classes.

Difference in status among the official languages of the province is also visible through the emphasis put on required and/or expected fluency in the various languages. A trilingual model is promoted through different language policy documents on the provincial level (Western Cape Provincial Government, 1998, 2001). On the other hand, a report of the language policy in the primary schools of the Western Cape holds that "Schools that are under-resourced apply dual medium teaching in a manner that reinforces the ideology that English proficiency is the gateway to upward social mobility and a successful life" (Western Cape Education Department, 2002:7). Some schools (like school A and B in this study), which make a transition from mother tongue education to English in Grade 4 have very marked pedagogical disadvantages that are reflected in a high drop-out and failure rate, according to this report, which refers to a recent study of matriculation results of the year 2000 in the Western Cape which shows:

> …conclusively that students who were taught and assessed in their L1 [first language] (English or Afrikaans) performed incomparably better than those (mainly Xhosa L1-speakers) who were taught and assessed in their FAL[2] (mainly English). There were individual exceptions, and while it is not suggested that language-medium is the only causal factor at play in this case, this correlation is extremely significant (Western Cape Education Department, 2002:23).

Related to this it is interesting to have a look at the requirements of proficiency in each of the official languages in the province within the four schools of this study. School A and B use isiXhosa as a language of instruction until the end of Grade 3 and then a transition to English medium occurs. According to principal in school B the teachers are in fact code mixing isiXhosa and English already from the start resulting in a low proficiency in isiXhosa. On the other hand, a vocabulary large enough to understand teaching in English from Grade 4 is required, on which Macdonald elaborates:

> Qualitative data from many testing and observational contexts indicates that the Std 3 year [Grade 5] is a time of trauma for both teacher and child. The children cannot cope with the sudden ("deep end") launch into a massive range of new vocabulary, structures and concepts…the vocabulary requirements in English increase by 1 000% from Std 2 [Grade 4] to Std 3 (from perhaps 800 words to approximately 7 000)…the current generation of children are developing very few of the English skills which are required for the challenge of the medium transfer in Std 3 – at least to Std 3 as it is currently conceived, with the unprepared – for advent of the formal learning of content subjects in English (Macdonald, 1990:161,162).

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[2] First Additional Language

Macdonald's study indicates that English proficiency required being able to follow English as the medium of instruction is rarely present within this group of pupils. Without any previous systematic pedagogical approach to English as a subject from at least Grade 1 in school A and B, the transition to English is problematic and there is a possible discrepancy between expectancy of English skills and what is realistic. Afrikaans is the second additional language in these schools, but is rarely mentioned in the data of the author's study, thus making it difficult to estimate what kind of proficiency is expected in this language.

In the English medium classes of school C Afrikaans is the first additional language which is implemented as a subject from Grade 2. The teacher however (T_7), who is an English/Afrikaans bilingual, is not satisfied with the pupils' Afrikaans skills in Grade 5. English is the first additional language for the Afrikaans classes. IsiXhosa is offered as a second additional language for all classes, sharing an isiXhosa teacher with two other schools in the vicinity. It does not seem that they put too much effort into this, talking about the difficulties of getting hold of a good isiXhosa teacher, but according to the policy of the province they are instructed to offer isiXhosa as a second additional language.

School D has Afrikaans as their first additional language from Grade 2 and in Grade 5 they have four lessons per week. The same kind of structure is used with English for the classes who have Afrikaans as medium of instruction. IsiXhosa is the second additional language from Grade 2 or 3 with two lessons per week at Grade 5. Pupils asked think isiXhosa is interesting and some are able to practice this because family members are able to speak the language. According to the teacher (T_9) they are lucky having a very good native speaking isiXhosa teacher.

English is the language of instruction in all the Grade 5 classes visited in this study. In school A and B none of the pupils have English as their mother tongue. Still they are expected to manage this as the language of teaching and learning – although they do not have structured training in this in advance. English is not a language they meet outside the classroom, except for some programmes on Television. English is the mother tongue of the majority in the classes visited in school C and D. A structured plan for Afrikaans as a first additional language was present, but adequate teaching in isiXhosa (second additional language) seemed more incidental in the sense that they are dependent on external teachers, who sometimes could be difficult to get hold of. This makes it possible to draw some lines: In classes where English is the language of instruction, Afrikaans is chosen as the first additional language and thus given priority over isiXhosa. In schools where isiXhosa is the language of instruction during foundation phase, English is the first additional language and the language

of instruction from Grade 4. Afrikaans is the second additional language. The data also indicates that fluency in isiXhosa is never required at the same level as fluency in English or Afrikaans. The pupils of school A and B are required to take exams in English in all subjects. The pupils of school C and D are not expected to take exam in isiXhosa nor even in their first additional language. This practice is giving English a currency in the present South Africa, devaluating a previously disadvantaged language such as isiXhosa and in some cases also threatening the status of Afrikaans.

Creation of national systems of education

Education is an important issue in all societies, consequently making it a contested topic (Davies, 2004). However, mass education is a relatively new phenomenon and now emerges as a global trend. The content of schooling has always been related to power relations. Paths of influence on the educational content are multiple, varied and often not obvious. As an example, many ex-colonial countries have an education system influenced by their previous colonial powers, e.g. British ex-colonies tend to have a system similar to the British both in organisation, examinations and, to some extent, content (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Brock-Utne, 2000). Today these countries often experience an educational sector dependent on external aid. To some extent, the aid they receive also decides the content and language of instruction in schools since the donors often provide necessary educational materials (Brock-Utne, 2000; Samoff, 2003). American economic and political interests abroad have, for example, led the United States to contribute large sums of money towards teaching of English in many countries (Pennycook, 1994; Alidou and Mazrui, 1999). The British Council is promoting English in other countries and values it as an even greater economical asset than the North Sea Oil (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994). This pattern contributes to reinforcing existing power relations, i.e. previous colonial powers or the elite of the country, often educated in the North, are those determining what knowledge and language is of importance or given status (Mazrui, 2004).

On July 14, 1997, the Minister of Education formally announced the new Language in Education Policy (Department of Education, 1997). One of the main views expressed in this policy is that "… being multilingual should be a defining characteristic of being South African" (ibid: 1). The Department's approach to this goal is in line with additive bilingualism, i.e. maintaining the mother tongue while learning an additional language. It is the provincial education department that has the duty to provide education in a particular

language of instruction if there are at least 40 learners in grades 1 to 6 or 35 in grades 7 to 12, requesting the language. With such a progressive linguistic policy, the gateway for mother tongue (as long as it is one of the eleven official languages) as the language of instruction seems open. IsiXhosa is the mother tongue of a large segment of the population in the Western Cape where this study was conducted (23.7% according to "Census 2001", Statistics South Africa, 2003).

School A and B in this study are situated in an isiXhosa speaking environment. Almost all the teachers and pupils speak isiXhosa, as well as the parents. According to the policy of the Department of Education, these schools can and should use isiXhosa as the language of teaching and learning. The reality, however, is different. IsiXhosa is the medium of instruction in Grade R to Grade 3, with a transition to English from Grade 4 onwards. However, despite English officially being the language of instruction, the practice in Grade 5 varies[3]. A quote from the field notes during an observation in an "English" science class describes this paradox:

> The teacher does all the teaching in English at the start of the lesson, but eventually uses more and more isiXhosa when the material is new to the children and she realises that they don't understand or in order to get through what she wants (or both). Questions are asked by the pupils in both isiXhosa and English (O_7, 2004-09-14).

In school A observations were done in a class which was supposed to be conducted in English:

> The session is an English-lesson, but all the instructions are given in isiXhosa. Comments are given from the teacher in both isiXhosa and English. Question from the book are always translated into isiXhosa. Answers are mostly given in isiXhosa, but some in English. Even when the children answer in English, the teacher responds in isiXhosa (O_1, 2004-09-08).

This shows a practice in the classroom which is mixing both isiXhosa and English. English is *not* used consistently as the language of instruction, although this is the policy of both schools according to the principals and teachers. Neither is isiXhosa used as the primary medium of instruction, with English separated as a subject, which is the aim of the Language in Education Policy (Department of Education, 1997). In the light of this it seems like both the language policy of the individual school and Language in Education Policy from the Department of Education has failed. Heugh (2000) emphasizes the necessity of educational planning being based on the reality of the classroom in order to be effective. The reality of the classroom is the teacher asking questions in isiXhosa when she is supposed to conduct the teaching in English (O_4). The reality is a teacher teaching English as a subject *in isiXhosa* (O_1). The reality is also both learners and teachers mixing isiXhosa and English in the

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[3] This investigation was conducted in Grade 5 classes only.

classroom interaction. What reasons are given for this discrepancy between policy and reality?

A teacher in school B was asked why English is (officially) used as a language of instruction instead of isiXhosa, and responded that it is the national Government's policy in education. The discrepancy between the practice in classrooms and the language policy points to a misconception of the official policy or that the educators are not aware of the possibility of officially using isiXhosa as a language of instruction through out primary school. Hence it is not possible for educators to implement it. A teacher in school A is giving pupils' lack of English skill as another reason for the discrepancy between policy and practice:

> Q^4: I observed that you used isiXhosa as the language of instruction in your class although it is supposed to be English. Even when English was the subject, you used isiXhosa. Can you elaborate on why you use such a practice?
> T_2: If I wouldn't have translated everything into isiXhosa, none of the pupils could understand anything and the class would have been totally passive. Their English is so poor that I even teach English [as a subject] in isiXhosa. This is done in all the classes at the school all through the Grade 7, despite English being the official language of instruction from Grade 4. When we give tests to the pupils, they are in English with a translation into isiXhosa. The pupils do, however, manage to give the answers in English (Interview, T_2, 2004-09-08).

In research looking at the language issue in South Africa, Vivian de Klerk (2002) claims that the language policy is not in tune with the socio-economic environment of the learners. She points to the lack of recourses (for example text books) in African languages as one of the factors in determining why schools choose English as a medium of instruction instead of African languages – that is, they have no choice (see also Holmarsdottir, 2005). Supply of teaching materials in English is ample compared to material in African languages. However, the Revised Curriculum 2005 (Department of Education, 2002) gives a possibility to evade this problem. Teachers are granted the opportunity of making the teaching material themselves. A teacher/deputy principal (T_{11}) spoke warmly about this method with me and provided several examples of cartoons, pictures from magazines and so on which she uses extensively in her teaching. Another teacher (school C, T_7) claimed that they don't use text books in this school, only materials that the teachers make themselves. They have created the modules in each subject by designing texts, questions, drawings, exercises and tests. These experiences make me, to some extent, disagree with de Klerk (2002) when she suggests that poor resources is a factor forcing schools to choose English as a language of instruction. On the contrary, with Curriculum 2005 the teachers are no longer heavily dependent on textbooks and they can make use of low cost resources to reach the set learning goals – even in

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[4] Q = question asked by the researcher.

isiXhosa, if they wish. This is, however, much more of a challenge in the township schools since they rarely have access to resources such as a photocopier which makes it problematic to distribute teachers' own-made material amongst the pupils.

Returning to the language policy, the teaching style and techniques are of importance in a classroom. The National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (NCCRD) conducted research on language in the classroom and found that:

> Proficiency in the language of learning and teaching is important, but co-exists and interrelates with other factors such as teaching style and the existence of learning support materials (NCCRD, 2000:v).

That research was carried out in four provinces where African language speakers constitute between 73% and 92% of the population (Statistics South Africa, 2003), but the research does not tell whether the teachers interviewed were black, colored, Indian or white. However, findings suggested an inadequacy in teachers' proficiency and recommend general in-service training:

> The issue of proficiency should be seen in its broadest sense. It goes beyond mere communicative competence in a specific language and includes the teacher's ability to create the right learning environment through the use of language. It is about commitment to change, effective teaching and learning styles and techniques, and most of all, it is about using language to create a love of learning (NCCRD, 2000:viii).

Teachers in school A and B appear to have less professional confidence and this could be one factor influencing the choice of English instead of isiXhosa as the language of instruction (officially) in the sense that they opt for a "familiar" way of teaching and not challenging the existent ways of doing things. The discrepancy between policy and practice in the "Rainbow Nation" does not cater to the *process* of learning in which promotion of multilingualism is substantial.

Furthermore, South Africa has a system where tertiary education is not available in the African languages (Nodoba, 2002). Since the educational level often sets the limits to career, income, and social prestige, higher education is desirable in order to experience social mobility (McGroarty, 2002). Here, the language of the masses is an obstacle since English or Afrikaans are the only languages of instruction in tertiary education institutions. Access to higher education is limited for the vast majority due, in part, to linguistic problems, thus reproducing existing power relations. Without the government giving students this opportunity, the majority of South Africans are in practice denied the possibility of higher education.

Decentralization of education

Despite national systems of education being a global trend, another trend is to reduce the central government's role within the educational sector (Samoff, 2003). Decisions regarding education are often left to provincial governments or even the individual school with teachers and parents. This is supposed to constitute a more democratic form of government (Olowu and Wunsch, 2004). Even though it seems admirable in a democratic sense, decentralization of education does not necessarily guarantee local governance. The educational sector is too important to the national government to remove all governance in this area, thus decentralization is found in policy rather than in practice (ibid.) But on the other hand, this could be quite convenient to those holding power because the responsibility for the results rests with the local administrators despite their minimal control over the actual situation. Olowu and Wunsch (2004) suggest this is an explanation for a democracy that is fairly new and a government that is politically insecure.

The education sector of South Africa encourages participation of citizens in activities involving education (Republic of South Africa, 1996a, 1996b; Department of Education, 2001). Decentralization of decisions is a global trend that has paved the way for "revitalized partnerships at all levels" (Stromquist, 2002:58). One particular means which is created in order to allow democratic participation of citizens within schools is the School Governing Body. According to the South African Schools Act, section 2, 20 and 21 (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), the Governing Bodies of public schools[5] are given considerable powers regarding governance of their school, in general, and the school language policy, in particular (Brown, 1998; Davenport and Saunders, 2000). This is emphasized in the Language in Education Policy (Department of Education, 1997), which gives the School Governing Bodies the responsibility of selecting school language policies that are appropriate for their circumstances and in line with the policy of additive multilingualism. During fieldwork I spoke with people from the South African Human Rights Commission and the Western Cape Education Department confirmed the role of School Governing Bodies as the organs deciding language of instruction in every school. The Revised Curriculum 2005 (Department of Education, 2002:5) recommends "that the learner's home language should be used for learning and teaching wherever possible", which is concurrent with the Constitution, the Language in Education Policy and other official documents. Despite this there seems to be

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[5] A Governing Body comprises of elected parents, elected educators at the school and members of the non-educating staff in addition to the principal. The number of parent members must comprise a majority of the total number of members in a Governing Body, hence giving parents the majority of votes (Republic of South Africa, 1996b).

confusion at the grassroots level on who should choose the language of instruction and what additional languages to offer as subjects.

Although the principal in school B states that it is the parents who are to decide this issue, he also admits that the school and the teachers are the ones who actually decide. The situation is quite the contrary in school C and D. They recognize the right of the *individual* parent to choose which language of instruction will be used for their children, which is concurrent with the Language in Education Policy (Department of Education, 1997), but here we also get the idea of Afrikaans competing with English since many Afrikaner parents want their children to attend English medium classes. On the other hand, in school B the principal mentions the involvement of the School Governing Body in deciding language policy of the school; this organ is not mentioned at all in school C and D when it comes to language of instruction used in the schools, as this is assessed more as an *individual* parental choice.

The Language in Education Policy promotes multilingualism by suggesting a second language as a subject from Grade 3 onwards and later a third language if desirable (Department of Education, 1997). If there are plans in place for a change in language of instruction from mother tongue to an additional language, the Revised Curriculum 2005 advises to have this additional language as a subject already from Grade 1 (Department of Education, 2002). Without giving any *explicit* explanation, however, the Department of Education (ibid.:4) states that: "The curriculum provides strong support for those learners who will use their first additional language as a language of learning and teaching". Consequently they send a double-sided message when they recommend the home language being the language of instruction in addition to giving strong support for those who want to use the first additional language instead. The language policy in the Western Cape Primary Schools recommends that the first additional language should be implemented as soon as possible in the foundation phase, including Grade R (Western Cape Education Department, 2002). In the context of the Western Cape the languages opted for are Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa. In School A and B there is an official change to English as a medium from Grade 4 onwards; therefore they ought to have English as a subject from Grade R onwards. When I questioned this, a teacher in school B (T_4) said that English is introduced as an additional language from Grade 1 (with Afrikaans as a third language later on). The principal at the same school, however, gives this answer:

> English as a subject is started in Grade… eeeh ... a little bit of English, not as a subject but we on *our own*, we do give them some rhymes, poems, and all those things. But we put this English as a subject in Grade 3, but not as a formal sort of thing (Interview, T_3, 2004-09-14).

This statement suggests that they have a particular practice in teaching English as an additional language, more than having a policy (which was not possible to obtain since they were "working on it"). Holmarsdottir (2005) found that the policy in many township schools in the same area was not official, but a practice that had been in effect in black schools since 1979 (see also Murray, 2002). In school C and D the policy of additional languages as subjects is very clear. They both start with the first additional language (Afrikaans or English, depending on what is the language of instruction) in Grade 2 and isiXhosa as a second additional language soon after that (they were a bit vague about the time of starting).

This data suggests a confusion and/or lack of knowledge about the School Governing Bodies' role and responsibility in language issues in all four schools. As a consequence, the language of instruction chosen in schools C and D, for the most part, is the mother tongue of the pupils, which gives them an advantage when compared to the children in school A and B where there is an early transition from isiXhosa to English as the medium of instruction. However, additional languages chosen in each school is concurrent with the policy of the Western Cape Education Department (2002).

Policy documents provide strong guidelines in the decisions on language issues. The establishment of School Governing Bodies as organs in which citizens can participate in decision making does not seem to work according to the intention since they do not make decisions regarding language issues. Walker and Archung (2003) have conducted research on parents' participation in black communities in the United States and South Africa. Their results suggest that schools are not inviting the involvement of parents to the degree that parents are able to influence the direction of the school. Involvement, rather, seems to mean support for education and educators rather than active roles in the school environment. Another issue in the decentralized system of decision making, despite creating opportunities for democratic participation, is whether ordinary citizens are at all capable of making the best decisions regarding language on behalf of the learners. Morrow and Torres comment on this:

> In the context of globalization, the shift of the locus of power and decision making away from the nation-state further erodes the capacity of marginalized groups to grasp the structural processes that determine their fate (Morrow and Torres, 2000:50).

My study suggests that school A and B practice a language policy that does not favour mother tongue instruction while school C and D does favour mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Morrow and Torres (2000) discussion of the decentralization of decisions as further eroding the possibility of marginalized groups, seems appropriate in this context. As far as the School Governing Bodies are concerned, making decisions on language appears not

to be in their hands, but in the hands of others in the township schools. In these cases the decentralization may be to the detriment of the pupils.

Democracy and Human rights

Democratization is a global trend as well as internationalization or globalization of state actions through alliances and diplomacy. According to Waters (2001), this makes the nation-state the level of impact. Through democracy, citizens are enabled to elect national political leaders. On the other hand, Chomsky (2003) holds the opinion that more and more decisions regarding society are out of the public arena and in the hands of "the market", which are increasingly international and unaccountable to society. This can turn out to be, at the best, a limitation of democracy especially because the language of the public sphere then might be a language of the minority of a nation-state (Prah, 2001). Therefore, it was interesting within the framework of this study to find out if mother tongue isiXhosa-speakers are able to participate in democratic processes on a national level in their own language, e.g. if it is possible to vote in isiXhosa, in what language they have access to information surrounding the electoral process, and whether isiXhosa-speakers enjoy freedom of expression *in isiXhosa*. The relationship between democracy and globalization constitutes a web of influences and the connections are also of a dialectic character between the local and the global. It is not only the centre who influences the periphery; democracy in each context is also home-made.

A part of the democratic trend is respect for human rights, i.e. every human being should be regarded with the same value (Koelble, 1998; Burbules and Torres, 2000; Prah, 2001). Some nation-states have not ratified the United Nations declaration on human rights (United Nations, 1948) but have adopted some of its principals into their own constitutions or in other ways respecting some of the key principals, as is the case of South Africa. This is an important factor when it comes to linguistic practices within the educational system.

Language is highly political and in post-apartheid South Africa, language and education constitute a separate section in the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). Chapter 2, section 29 states:

(1) Everyone has the right

a. to a basic education, including adult basic education; and
b. to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

(2) Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable.

In other words, democracy in South Africa has provided linguistic rights to the entire population. This is especially important to the majority who use previously marginalized languages. A parent in school B gave this comment when asked whether she thinks the government takes sufficient measures to protect the use of isiXhosa:

> *P9:* As they say we are a "Rainbow nation", they want everybody to understand one another's language as you must understand English, you must understand isiXhosa, you must understand Sotho, you must understand Afrikaans. It doesn't say: "No, you must stick to isiXhosa". We must understand each other (Focus group discussion 1, 2004-09-21).

Despite this, Kathleen Heugh's (2003) research found that few English-speakers believe that their language rights are compromised, whereas the majority of speakers of African languages report dissatisfaction with the linguistic delivery of various services. However, the Constitution has provided a "watch-dog" to cater for the linguistic diversity of South Africa: the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB). The responsibilities of PanSALB are described in Act no 59 of 1995 (Republic of South Africa, 1995). One of PanSALB's explicit tasks is to address allegations of language rights violations. After an investigation, they are to publish their findings. In looking at the issue further, the author received 26 Board Notices from PanSALB: 2 from 1999, 14 from 2000, 7 from 2001, and 3 from 2002. Although this list is not exhaustive, it gives a picture of what language violations they receive complaints about and the languages involved. The results are displayed in the following table:

Table – complaints on violation of linguistic rights (material received from PanSALB)

Violation of other official languages by use of **English only** [6]	10
Violation of **Afrikaans** rights	12
Violation of **English** rights	1
Violation of **isiZulu** rights	1
Violation of **Sepedi/isiNdebele** rights	1
Violation of the rights of African languages in general	1
Sum	26

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[6] These complaints are put forward because *only* English is used, thus violating the language rights of *all* the other ten official languages.

A minority of these complaints are related to specific official African languages. An overwhelming majority are related to the violation of Afrikaans linguistic rights or use of English only and thus violation of the other official languages. Heugh's study confirms that most claims are from the Afrikaans speaking community. She states:

> Of the Board's records of alleged violations of language rights during its first term of office [1996-2001], 95% of the 158 complaints came from Afrikaans-speaking persons or lobby groups (Heugh, 2003:26).

Another interesting factor in this sample is that few of these complaints are related to education. Board Notice 2 of 2001 concerns a complaint from parents regarding language of instruction conducted in Setswana, and thus violating the rights of Sepedi and isiNdebele speaking pupils in this community. Another complaint is treated in Board Notice 98 of 2002 concerning Afrikaans speaking students at the University of Pretoria receiving all instructions, tests and examination evaluation in English. Afrikaans speakers appear to be both outspoken and more aware of their language rights.

The annual Reports from PanSALB (2001, 2002, and 2003) contain lists of language rights violation complaints received. Information given shows the same pattern as in the previous table; complaints on violation of Afrikaans linguistic rights or use of English only (violating the other official languages) constitute the vast majority (46% and 37% respectively) of complaints received by PanSALB in the period 1 April 2000 – 31 March 2003. Complaints on violation of the right to use African languages make up only 8% of the material. The information in these reports makes it is possible to generate a table for this specific period:

Table – Complaints on violation of linguistic rights (based on the annual reports 2001, 2002, and 2003)

Violation of other official languages by use of **African languages only**	3
Violation of other official languages by use of **Afrikaans only**	2
Violation of other official languages by use of **English only**	91
Violation of **Afrikaans** rights	111
Violation of **English** rights	1
Violation of **isiNdebele** rights	1
Violation of **isiNdebele/Xitsonga** rights	1
Violation of **isiXhosa** rights	1
Violation of **isiZulu** rights	1
Violation of **Northern Sotho (Sepedi)** rights	3
Violation of **Setswana** rights	1
Violation of **Xitsonga** rights	5
Violation of **Xitsonga**/**Tshivenda** rights	2
Violation of the rights of African languages in general	5
Complaints with no specific language	15
Sum	243

This data suggests that some people feel their linguistic rights threatened by the increase in use of English. In this data, complainants of "English only use" are often Afrikaans speakers (75%)[7] and they are, of course, also complainants of violation of Afrikaans rights. In other words, the Afrikaans speaking population is very active when it comes to fighting for their linguistic rights in the democracy of South Africa. They are the strongest supporters of multilingualism, according to Sonntag (2003), and they have been very efficient in this struggle. After all, they are better resourced due to their previous advantaged position. Since a majority of 76% of the South African population use African languages in their every day life (Statistics South Africa, 2003), it is a striking fact that so few complaints are received from this segment of the population. Perhaps the Afrikaans speaking population is far better qualified using official channels and possibilities of protecting their language than the population using other languages (Sonntag, 2003). In addition, they may be

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[7] This is an estimate done from either the names of the complainants or that the content of the complaint shows that English only is used when previously Afrikaans was used as well.

better informed of their linguistic rights, especially if we take into consideration that the development of Afrikaans was originally in response to the hegemony of English (Mesthrie, 2002; Reagan, 2002). This does not necessarily suggest that speakers of African languages do not feel their linguistic rights compromised if we compare with Heugh's (2003) research mentioned above. Also if we take into consideration the global trend of English discussed in the previous section, it might be correct that the hegemony of English is not challenged by the speakers of African languages in South Africa (Sonntag, 2003).

In this linguistic context it is interesting to take a closer look at the possibility of conventional participation in democracy in isiXhosa. Participation is, amongst other things, concerned with voting in elections and gathering of information regarding politics. South Africa celebrated its 10th anniversary of democracy in 2004 in which the third elections were carried out. All the parents asked in school A and B confirmed they had used their right to vote in the April elections. A parent in school B said the voting took place in English, but with photos of each candidate related to their names, making it easier for those without English skills to choose. Parents in school A said the voting took place in isiXhosa. The author was not able to look into this discrepancy, but politicians are obviously aware of the linguistic situation if we consider the language that they use in their election campaigns. According to parents in school A and B, politicians used isiXhosa both in the community and on Television during the election campaign. A journalist from the isiXhosa newspaper Vukani confirmed this and stated that despite the fact that the content in their newspaper mostly consists of local news, the national election was covered thoroughly in isiXhosa.

Thus it can be said that at least the basic possibilities of participation in the democratic processes are catered for in isiXhosa. Politicians recognize the necessity of using isiXhosa in the election simply because that is the language of a large portion of the population both in the Western Cape (23.7%) and the Eastern Cape (83.4%) (Statistics South Africa, 2003). In other words, they assess it necessary to use isiXhosa in order to access the voters.

Conclusion

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights summarize the value of education:

> Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights….Education has a vital role in … promoting human rights and democracy (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment 13 on the Right to Education, E/C.12/1999/10, 8 December 1999, para. 1).

Sia S. Åkermark makes a valuable comment in this regard:

> In view of the fact that more than 190 states have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the above objectives concerning respect for and understanding of the identity, the language and the values of minority groups are *legally binding* upon most countries in the world (Åkermark, 2003:20 – italics in original).

South Africa has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Due to the discussion in this paper, I agree with Mazrui (2004) in the necessity of rethinking language policies related to education, especially since this sector continues to promote English despite this being the mother tongue of only a small minority of South African citizens. On the other hand, policies are dependent on the people that are supposed to implement them and this study suggest a need for further information related to the language policies and further training of the previously marginalized educators. Global trends are influencing the language in education in favour of English, but if the pupils are to access the knowledge intended from the Department of Education through Curriculum 2005, mother tongue as the language of teaching and learning need to be further emphasized in South Africa.

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