

Language policy and mother-tongue education in South Africa: The case for a market-oriented approach

Nkonko M. Kamwangamalu
University of Natal, South Africa

Introduction. South Africa became a democracy in 1994 after almost five decades of administration under the now politically defunct divide-and-rule apartheid system. Since then South Africa has been trying to break clean with the many legacies it has inherited from that system. This paper is concerned with one such legacy, the language policy in the educational system. In the apartheid era, South Africa was officially considered a bilingual state, with English and Afrikaans as the sole official languages of the state. With the demise of apartheid in 1994, the new government has adopted a multilingual language policy giving official recognition not only to English and Afrikaans but also to nine African languages: Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, Swati, Tswana, Sotho, Pedi, Venda, and Tsonga. One of the main objectives of the new language policy has been to promote the status of the nine African languages by, among other things, using them as media of learning.

Six years after the policy was enshrined in the country's new constitution, it seems that not much progress has been made yet in attempts to implement the policy, especially with respect to the issue of mother-tongue education. Rather, the status quo prevails: English and Afrikaans remain the media of learning in English-medium and Afrikaans-medium schools, respectively, much as they were in the apartheid era. The African languages are offered as media of learning from first through fourth grades in predominantly black schools, after which English—not Afrikaans because of its association with apartheid—takes over as the instructional medium.

This paper reflects on the lack of progress in attempts to implement the new language-in-education policy and attributes its apparent failure mainly to past apartheid policies, particularly the Bantu Education Act of 1953, to which I shall return later. In an attempt to address the issue of mother education with regard to the African languages, the paper argues for a language policy that views mother-tongue education in these languages as a marketing problem. This approach is proposed against the background of the established parameters in language policy and language planning: language planning is future-oriented; it involves complex decision making, assessing and committing valuable resources

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both human and material, assigning functions to different languages or varieties of a language in a community (Wardhaugh 1987), and regulating the power relationship between languages and their respective speakers in the linguistic market place (Bourdieu 1991).

The paper will be organized as follows. The first section presents a sociolinguistic profile of South Africa, for language planning cannot be discussed in a vacuum. The outcomes of a language planning exercise are determined by the social context in which this exercise is grounded. The next section reviews the argument for mother-tongue education against the background of a high rate of illiteracy both in South Africa and in the rest of the African continent. This is followed by a section discussing mother-tongue education in South Africa, with a focus on the Bantu Education Act of 1953. This discussion aims to provide the background against which past and present resistance to mother-tongue education in the African languages can be understood better. The penultimate section discusses the new language policy against the background of the Bantu Education Act. It highlights some of the ambivalent clauses in the new policy and explains how, like the Bantu Education Act, these clauses have, in their own way, hampered the implementation of the new language-in-education policy. The last section concludes the paper with a discussion of the proposal made earlier, that mother-tongue education in the African languages should be treated as a marketing problem (Cooper 1989; Bourdieu 1991; Coulmas 1992).

South Africa: A sociolinguistic profile. The history of language planning in South Africa can be described in terms of the following four important phases: the Dutchification applied by the Dutch officials of the “Dutch East India Company” who settled in South Africa from 1652; the Anglicization applied by the British when they colonized South Africa first from 1795 and then from 1806–1948; the Afrikanerization of South African society (1948–1994), marked by the coming into power of the Afrikaners and the subsequent extensive promotion of the Afrikaans language and Afrikaans-English bilingualism; and finally language democratization from 1994 marked by a shift from Afrikaans-English bilingualism to pluralism (Cobarrubias 1983).

In each of the phases, language (e.g., Dutch and later Afrikaans for the Dutch/Afrikaners, English for the British, and societal multilingualism for the current administration) has taken center stage in the sociopolitical administration of the South African state. For instance, during the Dutchification of the Cape, only Dutch served as the language of rule and so did English and Afrikaans during Anglicization and Afrikanerization, respectively. The dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994 brought about the recognition that South Africa is a multilingual rather than the bilingual country it was assumed to be in the apartheid era. South Africa has a population of 40.6 million made up of (black) Africans (31.1 million or 76.7 percent), Whites (4.4 million or 10.9 percent), Coloreds (3.6 million

or 8.9 percent), and Asians (1.04 million or 2.6 percent) and speaking some estimated twenty-five languages. These include the country's eleven official languages, immigrant European languages (e.g., German, French, Portuguese, Italian), Asian languages (e.g., Gujarati, Tamil, Hindi, Telugu, Chinese), and other languages (e.g., immigrant African languages, Khoisan languages). Demographically, Zulu (23 percent) and Xhosa (18 percent) are the most commonly spoken first home languages in South Africa. The 1996 census reveals that Afrikaans (14.4 percent) and English (9 percent), while widely spoken in all nine provinces, are less frequently used as first home languages than certain of the indigenous languages (*The People of South Africa Population Census 1996* 1998; see Table 1).

Nevertheless, two languages, English and Afrikaans, remain central to the country's government and administration. Of the two, however, English is the most powerful language in the land: it is used in all high domains, for example, the government and administration, education, economy, diplomacy. English serves as a lingua franca in interethnic communication; it is the language of the elite, power, and privilege; and it is seen by many as a means by which one can achieve unlimited vertical social mobility. Afrikaans is also relatively prominent in some of the high domains, but in terms of political power and as a result of the demise of apartheid, it plays second fiddle to English. The African languages remain on the margins of power and are used mainly as vehicles for transmission of cultural heritage from generation to generation, much as they were in the apartheid era.

It must be admitted, however, that politically these languages are more visible now than they were in the apartheid era. For instance, unlike in the apartheid era the African languages are now used, albeit occasionally, in some of the speeches made in Parliament. In the medium of television they share airtime with English and Afrikaans, although English and Afrikaans have the lion's share of the airtime.

The mother-tongue education debate in Africa. Mother-tongue education is an aspect of a larger enterprise, vis-à-vis language planning, the latter being defined as "a government authorized, longterm, sustained, and conscious effort to alter a language's function in society for the purpose of solving communication problems" (Weinstein 1980: 56). UNESCO defines 'mother-tongue education' as "education which uses as its medium of instruction a person's mother tongue, that is, 'the language which a person has acquired in early years and which normally has become his natural instrument of thought and communication'" (1968/1953: 698).

In Africa, a black child generally experiences mother-tongue education for the first four years of primary education. During this period and depending on the context, a European language, English, French, or Portuguese, is offered as a subject. From fifth grade onwards, a European language becomes the sole medium of instruction. The abrupt switch from the mother tongue to a European

Table 1. The official languages of South Africa

Language	No. of speakers	Percentage	Geographical areas of concentration^a
Afrikaans	5,811,547	14.4	W-Cape, Gauteng, N-Cape
English	3,457,467	9.0	K-Ntl, W-Cape, Gauteng
Ndebele	586,961	1.5	Gauteng, Mpumalanga
Xhosa	7,196,118	18.0	Eastern Cape
Zulu	9,200,144	23.0	K-Ntl, Gauteng
Pedi	3,695,846	9.2	Gauteng, N-Province
Sotho	3,104,197	7.7	Free State/Gauteng
Swati	1,013,193	2.5	Mpumalanga, Gauteng
Tswana	3,301,774	8.2	North West, Gauteng
Venda	876,409	2.2	N-Province
Tsonga	1,756,105	4.4	Gauteng, N-Province
Other	583,813	0.6	Gauteng, K-Ntl
Total	40,583,573	100.0	

^aN-Province, Northern Province; K-Ntl, KwaZulu Natal; W-Cape, Western Cape; N-Cape, Northern Cape.

Source: *The People of South Africa Population Census 1996, 1998*: 12–13.

language as the medium of learning, the inadequate linguistic preparation of the pupils in the European language prior to its use as the medium of learning, and the pupils' lack of exposure to the European language outside the classroom generally result in high failure rates and dropouts (Lanham 1978; Musker 1993; Alexander 1997; Hartshorne 1995). These outcomes have made mother-tongue education one of the thorniest issues in Africa since the early 1960s, with some supporting and others opposing it. Those who support mother-tongue education maintain that effective literacy acquisition and second-language proficiency depend on well-developed first-language proficiency (see, for instance, UNESCO 1968/1953; OAU 1986; Skutnabb-Kangas 1988; Akinnaso 1993). Those who

oppose mother-tongue education maintain that research on the merits or otherwise of mother-tongue education is inconclusive, and that for “every research report that indicates that mother-tongue education is effective, there is another one that indicates that it is not” (Fasold 1984: 312). It is pointed out that due to financial constraints countries cannot provide each child with education in his or her mother tongue. Another argument against mother-tongue education is that it is divisive: “Promoting it will result in extensive separation of ethnic groups in the education system” (Gupta 1997: 500).

Whatever position one takes on this issue, research into language-in-education policies in Africa over the past four decades has shown comprehensively that despite all efforts to make the European languages available to the African masses, the efforts have been resounding failures: the majority remains on the fringe; language-based division has increased; economic development has not reached the majority (Alexander 1997: 88); the social distribution of European languages in African communities remains very limited and is restricted to a minority elite group; and the illiteracy rate among the populace remains high. Research reports from around the continent bear testimony to these failures. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), for instance, it is reported that only one person out of every twenty-five Congolese can speak French correctly; and only one out of every thirty Congolese can write correctly in French (e.g., Rubango 1986). In Anglophone Africa, research reports indicate that only a thin percentage of between 5 percent and 20 percent can communicate in English (Samuels 1995). In South Africa, for instance, the 1991 census statistics show that 49 percent of the black youth between fifteen and twenty-four years of age cannot speak, read, or write English (van Zyl Slabbert et al. 1994). A more recent report indicates that twelve million South Africans are illiterate and that about twenty million others, mostly schoolchildren, are not fluent readers in any language (“Illiterate” 2000). Along these lines, Siachitema (1992) and Tripathi (1990) report that, in Zambia, since independence the number of Zambians competent in the use of English has shrunk. Therefore, since competence in English is a prerequisite for participation in the national political and economic system, the majority of the people, most of whom live in rural areas, have been left out in the cold, on the fringe of the privileged, political action. The situation in Lusophone, Africa, is not any different. Heines (1992) notes that less than 10 percent of people are able to function through Portuguese.

Despite the facts outlined above, the European languages remain the media of learning in the educational systems of most African states. Today, as Prah (1995) rightly points out, most African states constitutionally create space for African languages but hardly attempt to alter what was handed down through the colonial experience. The question, as Bamgbose (1991) puts it, has always been whether or not it is desirable or even possible to break away from the existing practices, and if so at what costs. The main point of contention has been the role

of mother-tongue education in relation to education in a European language. Promoting mother-tongue education does not entail “saying farewell to European languages but reducing [them] to equality” (Phillipson 1996: 162) or “converting [them] into popular rather than elite *lingua franca*” (Neville Alexander as quoted in Bhanot 1994: 38). In this paper I argue that the main problem with mother-tongue education is not whether it is good or bad but rather whether it can empower those to whom it is targeted. In the section that follows I address this problem, with a focus on mother-tongue education in the South African context. To understand why mother-tongue education has been resisted in South Africa, I shall look at the country’s past language policies, especially the Bantu Education Act of 1953.

Mother-tongue education and the Bantu Education Act. Mother-tongue education was at the core of the apartheid language-in-education policies. The campaign for mother-tongue education was driven by the apartheid government’s philosophy of Christian Nationalism, a philosophy that propagated notions of the separate identity and development of each *volk* (people) and of the God-given responsibility of the Afrikaner *volk* to spread the gospel to the native inhabitants of Africa and to act as their Guardians (Shingler 1973). The campaign for mother-tongue education was propagated not only by the apartheid government but also by the church. The latter preached that “God [had] willed it that there [should] be separate nations each with its own language, and that mother-tongue education [was] accordingly the will of God” (Malherbe 1977: 101). Consequently, the apartheid system saw to it that every ethnic group was educated in its own mother tongue. So, language became a yardstick for segregated education: Zulu mother-tongue speakers had to be educated in Zulu-medium schools; Xhosa mother-tongue speakers had to be educated in Xhosa-medium schools; the whites of British descent had to be schooled in English-medium schools; and their Dutch counterparts had to go to Afrikaans-medium schools. What distinguished mother-tongue education for the whites from mother-tongue education for the blacks was that the former was an education with a difference: it was intended to promote white interests, to ensure that they had access not only to the languages of power, English and Afrikaans, but also to the privileges with which these languages were associated.

To achieve the above objectives, in 1953 the apartheid government introduced legislation known as the Bantu Education Act No. 47. The Act, also dubbed the “Slave Education Act” (Grobler 1988: 103), superficially had two main objectives. First, the policy was aimed at ensuring equity between English and Afrikaans by using them on an equal basis as media of learning and teaching in black schools. Second, it was intended to extend mother-tongue education from fourth through eighth grades in black schools to promote the philosophy of Christian Nationalism as described earlier.

However, the subsequent political events suggest that there was more to the Bantu Education Act than its above-stated objectives (e.g., Shingler 1973; Malherbe 1977; RESA (Research on Education in South Africa) 1988; Heugh 1995a; Prah 1995; Alexander 1997). First, for Dr. Verwoerd, who engineered the apartheid system and its laws, the aim of the Bantu Education Act was “to teach a black child that he [was] a foreigner when he [was] in White South Africa, or at best stateless; that equality with Europeans was not for him; that there was no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. . . . For that reason it [was] of no avail for him to receive a training which [had] as its aim absorption in the European community” (Malherbe 1977: 546). Second, it seems that one of the motives behind the drive for mother-tongue education was linguistic nationalism, in other words, the identification of language with national or group self-interest. Thus, as Malherbe (1977: 2) observes, “for the Afrikaner the Afrikaans language became the symbol of the struggle for national identity and in the course of time the State school was seized upon as the means to foster that consciousness of ‘a nation with a God-given destiny.’” This struggle was aimed at achieving one prize, to make Afrikaans the sole (official) language of South Africa. This is clear from the following statement by Mr. J. G. Strijdom, a one-time Prime Minister of South Africa:

Every Afrikaner who is worthy of the name cherishes the ideal that South Africa will ultimately only have one language and that language must be Afrikaans. (Malherbe 1977: 72)

Third, it is clear, again from Malherbe’s works, that mother-tongue education was an exercise in acquisition planning (Cooper 1989), for it was intended to increase the number of users of Afrikaans. The apartheid government felt that requiring black pupils to have Afrikaans as a medium of instruction would contribute to the demographic growth of Afrikaans. This is evident in a paper titled “Threatening Cultural Dangers,” published in 1937 by the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniging* (Federation for Afrikaans Culture or F.A.K.):

We must see to it that the Natives learn Afrikaans. . . . If we should speak to the Kaffir [*sic*], what language is to be used? I believe that it should be Afrikaans. That gives us another seven million people which will make our language the strongest and the preponderating one in this part of the world. Can we let such a force be lost to us because of the false notion of our self-esteem and national pride? . . . If every Kaffir in South Africa spoke Afrikaans, the economic power of Afrikaans would be so strong that we should no longer need an F.A.K. to watch over our cultural interests. The Native will in future be a much bigger factor in the development

of our country than is the case at present, and we must shape that factor so that it serves our purpose, assures our victory, and perpetuates our language, our culture and our volk. . . . The Kaffir who speaks Afrikaans . . . can be our cultural servant as he is our farm servant. . . . (Malherbe 1977: 73–74)

Fourth, by extending mother-tongue education through eighth grade, the apartheid system intended to “restrict Africans to menial estates and lowly occupations” (Prah 1995: 68); to allow the Africans limited access to the languages of power (English and Afrikaans); and to ensure that the majority of them should fail to match the academic achievements of English and Afrikaans speakers (Heugh 1995b). As RESA (1988: 1–2,6) puts it, the ultimate goal of the Bantu Education Act was “to protect white workers from the threat of African competition for skilled jobs which emerged as a result of economic expansion coupled with African rural-urban migration during the Second World War; [to provide the Africans with limited skills in English and Afrikaans;] to meet the demands of white farmers for unskilled African labor; and to produce a black population not only educated to a level considered adequate for unskilled work and subordinated, but which would also accept its subordination and inferior education as natural, as fitting for a ‘racially inferior’ [*sic*] people.”

The Bantu Education Act had serious implications for languages of learning and teaching in black schools. Black children had to receive education through three languages: Afrikaans, English, and the mother-tongue; while for their white counterparts education was dispensed exclusively in Afrikaans or English depending on whether one was Afrikaans- or English-speaking. The black pupils resisted mother-tongue education, which the Bantu Education Act promoted, because they recognized it for what it was: one of the strategies used by the apartheid government to deny the blacks access to higher education and thus restrict their social and economic mobility. The resistance to mother-tongue education was a resistance to Verwoerdian instruments of repression, of limiting access to the mainstream of political and economic life (Nomvete 1994). The resistance to Afrikaans was a symbolic resistance to what was perceived as a language of oppression, as well as a desire for greater access to English. The black pupils saw education in their own mother-tongue as a dead end, a barrier to more advanced learning, a lure to self-destruction, and a trap designed by the apartheid government to ensure that the black pupils did not acquire sufficient command of the high-status languages (English and Afrikaans). Such fluency would enable them to compete with their white counterparts for well-paid jobs and prestigious career options (Alexander 1997). The black pupils’ resistance to the Bantu Education Act and the apartheid government’s determination to impose it led to the bloody Soweto uprising of June 16, 1976, which marked the end of Afrikaans as a language of

learning and teaching in black schools and concomitantly boosted the status of English not only in these schools but also in the Black communities. Hartshorne (1987) points out that African opinion never became reconciled to the extension of mother-tongue medium beyond Standard 2 (i.e., fourth grade). Thus mother-tongue education became stigmatized in South Africa—even after Bantu Education was largely abolished. Along these lines, Heugh (1995b) notes that the rejection of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in 1976 has had the uncalculated effect of advancing the position of English, not only over Afrikaans but also over African languages. As an outcome of the events of June 16, 1976, amongst the small, educated black middle class, English became a viable language through which political discourse was mediated. Since then, only English has been the language of instruction in black high schools (Cluver 1992).

The legacy of the Bantu Education Act foreshadowed current negative attitudes toward African languages as languages of learning and teaching and has been a stumbling block in efforts to promote these languages. It is against this background and in an attempt to break with past language-in-education discriminatory policies that the current multilingual language policy was developed and enshrined in the country's new Constitution.

Mother-tongue education and South Africa's new language policy. South Africa's new language policy promotes multilingualism and language right or what Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996) call the ecology of language paradigm. To this end, South Africa has given official recognition to eleven languages including English, Afrikaans, and the nine African languages mentioned earlier. A number of questions have been raised in relation to this policy: Why eleven official languages? Why not settle for English only? What language will be used as the medium of instruction? These questions are answered in section 3 of the then Interim Constitution (1995). According to the Interim Constitution, South Africa has chosen eleven languages to ensure and guarantee the freedom and human dignity of all South Africans under a new dispensation; to recognize the country's linguistic diversity as well as the fact that the majority of South Africans—probably 98 percent—use one of these languages as their home or first language; and to ensure that the process of democratization is extended to language-related issues as well (see *South Africa's New Language Policy* 1994). Similarly, South Africa has not declared English the only official language, as it is a minority language, spoken as first or home language by only 9 percent of South Africa's population. One thing that often goes unnoticed, which I would like to concentrate on in the remainder of this paper, is the discrepancy between official language policy and language practice, especially in education. But, first, let us examine closely the new language policy and its objectives. The policy is stipulated as follows in South Africa's new Constitution:

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The official languages of the Republic (of South Africa) are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. (The Constitution 1996: chapter 1, section 6[1])

One of the main objectives of the new language policy has been to promote the status of the nine official African languages against the background of past discriminatory language policies. Accordingly, the new Constitution states that

recognizing the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages. (The Constitution 1996: chapter 1, section 6 [2])

The Constitution also makes provision for the establishment of a Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) with the responsibility to, inter alia,

promote and create conditions for the development and use of these (African) and other languages. (The Constitution 1996: chapter 1, section 6 [5a])

Thus far these constitutional principles do not seem to have made any progress toward promoting the status of the African languages. This is not at all surprising, especially if one considers ambivalent language-related clauses in the country's Constitution. For instance, in chapter 1, section 3, the Constitution (1996) stipulates that

the national government and provincial governments *may use any particular official languages* for the purposes of government, taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and the balance of the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province concerned; but the national government and each provincial government must use *at least two official languages* [my emphasis].

Since the Constitution does not specify which official languages should be used in which province or by the national government, both provincial and national governments have tacitly opted for the status quo since they use English and Afrikaans as the languages of administration, much as was the case in the apartheid era. Realizing that not much progress has been made in attempts to promote the African languages, in 1998 the government embarked on a year-long multilingualism awareness campaign aimed at, among other things,

- promoting multilingualism so that South Africans will view multilingualism as a valuable resource;
- bringing about an appreciation that, in a multilingual society, knowledge of more than one language is an asset both in an immediate economic sense and in the larger social sense;
- breaking down the legacy of apartheid by means of the promotion of African languages. The elaboration, modernization and development of these languages are important requirements for the attainment of social and economic equality and justice for the majority of South Africans. (Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology 1998: 20)

As I have observed elsewhere (Kamwangamalu 2000), it is too soon to tell what effect, if any, this campaign will have on language practices in South Africa. What is evident, however, is that since statutory apartheid ended in 1994 not much has changed in terms of language practices in the country's institutions. If anything has changed at all, it is that English has gained more territory and political clout than Afrikaans. Consider, for instance, language practices in education. According to the new Constitution of South Africa, "every person shall be entitled to instruction in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable" (The Constitution: section 32[c]); and, irrespective of the domains (e.g., education, administration, etc.), "all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably" (The Constitution 1996: section 6[2]).

Despite these constitutional principles, language practices in education have not changed. English and Afrikaans remain the main media of learning and teaching; with English being also used increasingly as an instructional medium in traditionally Afrikaans-medium institutions to accommodate black students who attend these institutions. These practices flout the principle of language equity enshrined in the Constitution. They support the Language Task Group (LANGTAG)'s research findings that "despite the constitutional commitment to multilingualism . . . there seems to be a drift towards unilingualism in public services (including education)" (LANGTAG 1996: 31); and that "all other languages are being marginalized" (LANGTAG 1996: 47). The heritage of apartheid education makes it difficult for parents and politicians alike to support mother-tongue education in the first few years of school and maintain additional bilingualism later (Reagan 1995). Despite what the new language policy says, the failure to implement the policy has compelled the black population at large to question the instrumental value of their languages. As Msimang (1993: 38) notes, this has had the pathetic consequence that "most black people have come to hate their own languages and consider them irrelevant in the education process." They adopt the attitude that mother-tongue education is not important because, unlike English- and Afrikaans-medium education, it does not pay off in terms of economic viability. In the absence of this viability, the stigma

associated with mother-tongue education in the African languages lingers on and has, consequently, impeded efforts to promote African languages as media of learning and teaching.

Against this background, the obvious question is what should be done to promote the African languages as media of learning? The last section of this paper will be devoted to this issue. I argue, once again, that contrary to the literature the issue of mother-tongue education should not be addressed in terms of whether mother-tongue education is good or bad. Rather, it seems to me that the real issue is whether mother-tongue education in an African language is rewarding, whether it will benefit its consumers (here black parents and children) in the same way as English- or Afrikaans-medium education does theirs. Accordingly, I propose that mother-tongue education in the African languages should be treated as a marketing problem.

A market-oriented approach to mother-tongue education. The main argument in this section is that, as an aspect of status planning, mother-tongue education is a marketing problem. This argument is informed by recent studies into the economics of language planning (e.g., Cooper 1989; Bourdieu 1991; Coulmas 1992). Viewing language planning as a marketing problem entails, as Cooper (1989: 72) puts it, “developing the right *product* backed by the right *promotion* and put in the right *place* at the right *price*.” Concerning the *product*, Cooper says that language planners must recognize, identify, or design products that the potential consumer will find attractive. These products are to be defined and audiences targeted on the basis of [empirically determined] consumer needs. *Promotion* of a communicative innovation such as language refers to efforts to induce potential users to adopt it, whether adoption is viewed as awareness, positive evaluation, proficiency, or usage (1989). *Place* refers to the provision of adequate channels of distribution and response. That is, a person motivated to buy a product must know where to find it (1989). And the *price* of a consumer product is viewed as the key to determining the product’s appeals to the consumers (1989).

Bourdieu (1991) does also view language planning or language management as he calls it as a marketing problem. This is clear from his definition of status planning as an exercise in regulating the power relationship between languages (i.e., the products in Cooper’s sense) and their respective users in the linguistic market place. For Bourdieu, “linguistic products (including languages, language varieties, utterances, accents) are signs of wealth or capital, which receive their value only in relation to a market, characterized by a particular law of price formation” (Bourdieu 1991: 66–67). This means, as Bourdieu (1991: 77) puts it, that “the market fixes the price for a linguistic product or capital, the nature, and therefore the objective value, of which the practical anticipation of this price helped to determine.” The more linguistic capital that speakers possess, Bourdieu (1991) argues, the more they are able to exploit the system of differences to their advantage and thereby secure a profit of distinction.

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Applying the ideas of Cooper, Bourdieu, and others to the South African context, it is clear that the products, in this case the nine official African languages, have been identified; and the places where these products can be found are common knowledge to most South Africans. One knows, for instance, that Zulu is the majority language in KwaZulu-Natal; and that Xhosa and Sotho are the demographically dominant languages in the Eastern Cape and the Free State and Gauteng provinces, respectively. Given this natural geographical distribution of the official languages, the language consumers would not have any problem locating the product they need.

What is missing in the current multilingual language policy, and which policy-makers need to consider in efforts to implement the policy, is the *promotion* and *price* of the above and the other official African languages (Venda, Tsonga, Tswana, Ndebele, Swati). Recall that linguistic products are also goods to which the market assigns a value; and that “on a given linguistic market, some products are valued more highly than others” (Bourdieu 1991: 18). Despite what the Constitution says about the principle of language equity, language practices in education attest clearly that English is assigned more value than any other official language, the African languages included. Put differently, it is one thing to have legislation in place that accords recognition and equal status to all the official languages. But as Hal Schiffman (1992) points out, egalitarianism in language policy, which seems to be at the heart of pluralism in South Africa, does not necessarily result in equal outcomes, nor does it necessarily entail language promotion. Also, education systems do not change just because there is a change of government (Hofmeyr and Buckland 1992). Language consumers need to know what an African language, if adopted as a medium of learning, would do for them in terms of upward social mobility. What payoff or reward, price in Cooper’s sense, would it generate? Would it, for instance, open up job opportunities and give the consumers access to employment? The answer to this question, and not a constitutional principle or a multilingualism awareness campaign alone, will determine whether status planning for African languages in South Africa will fail or succeed (Kamwangamalu 1997).

At this stage mother-tongue education requires more deliberate promotion: agencies must be established to encourage use; curriculum materials must be developed and teachers trained; researchers must be encouraged to study them; a bold political support must be given to the use of these languages as media of learning; certified knowledge of an African language must become one of the requirements for access to employment; and money must be spent. But, as Tollefson (1991) cautions, only when the language achieves a full range of functions and no stigma is attached to its use has it arrived. African languages are as yet to take their first step toward achieving this goal.

Concluding remarks. Because education plays such an important role in employment and in gaining access to political power, mother-tongue education—or its denial—is one of the most important issues in language policy and language education (Tollefson 1991). Therefore, there is an urgent need for policy makers

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to rethink their language-in-education policies with a view toward revitalizing mother-tongue education for the betterment of the masses. Mother-tongue education is the surest way to reach a large number of people and integrate them into the national or democratic process.

However, for the masses to accept mother-tongue education as an alternative to education in a foreign language, African governments, and this includes South Africa, must vest mother-tongue education with the kind of prestige and material gains associated with education in a foreign language. This policy has worked for Swahili in Tanzania and for Afrikaans in South Africa. There is no reason why, with committed resources, community support, and a strong governmental will, it should not work for indigenous languages in South Africa or in other contexts. The success of mother-tongue education will depend on many variables including the availability of human and financial resources, people's attitudes, which in turn are dependent on the reward attached to mother-tongue education, and the political will to make mother-tongue education marketing succeed.

South Africa need not look too far for strategies to market mother-tongue education in African languages. Afrikaans, labeled a kitchen language some fifty years ago, today competes with English in most high domains of language use including education. How did the Afrikaners, who were in power at the time, manage to promote Afrikaans to its present status in South Africa? Apart from the sad chapter of the Bantu Education Act, Afrikaans was promoted through incentives and rewards for top achievers in the language. For instance, in order to encourage pupils to become bilingual in English and Afrikaans, the governments of Transvaal and Natal awarded monetary grants as inducements. These were known as Bilingual Merit Grants in the Transvaal and Bilingual Bonuses in Natal. Malherbe (1977) reports that these grants went to pupils who attained a certain percentage of marks in each of the official languages. Attached to these grants was the condition that such pupils had, on completion of high school, to go to a training college in order to become teachers. The teachers who displayed exceptional proficiency in the use of both official languages as media of instruction were each given a monetary grant (Malherbe 1977).

Incentives for promoting mother-tongue education in African languages do not have to be limited to the teaching profession. Since these languages have been systematically marginalized in the past, it is imperative that they be promoted aggressively both in education and in other sectors. Certified knowledge of these languages should become one of the criteria for access to employment, much as was the case for Dutch, English, and Afrikaans in the Dutchification, the Anglicization, and the Afrikanerization eras, respectively. After all, as Eastman (1990) correctly points out, people (and in this case black South Africans) would not want to be educated in their indigenous language if that language has no cachet in the broader social, political, and economic context (cf., Gupta 1997).

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