

# **LANGUAGE IN BLACK EDUCATION: The Politics of Language in a Multi-lingual Situation.**



**Abram Lekalakala Mawasha**

Inaugural Address delivered at the Acceptance of the Chair and Headship of  
the Language Bureau, Faculty of Education, University of the North on  
Wednesday August 4, 1982.

**PIETERSBURG**

# **LANGUAGE IN BLACK EDUCATION: The Politics of Language in a Multi-lingual Situation.**

**Abram Lekalakala Mawasha**

B.A., B.Ed, M.Ed. (SA), M.A. (Southern Illinois University) D. Ed.  
(UNIN) U.ED.

Inaugural Address delivered at the Acceptance of the Chair and Headship of  
the Language Bureau, Faculty of Education, University of the North on  
Wednesday August 4, 1982.

**PIETERSBURG**

*I thank the Vice Chancellor, Honourable guests, colleagues and students.*

## INTRODUCTION

The idea of a Language Bureau was, so to speak, conceived in 1966 when two posts were created specifically for language and language methodology in the Faculty of Education. The posts were for Professional English and Method of English, Professional Afrikaans and Method of Afrikaans. The incumbent of the former post was subsequently put in charge of Professional African Languages and was also responsible for the Method of African Languages. Initially all these courses were put under the wing of the departments of English, Afrikaans-Nederlands and African Languages respectively with the University of South Africa serving as the external examining body.

A make-shift language laboratory was also installed thereby laying the foundation for the use of educational technology in the teaching of language and language methodology on campus.

About five years later a department called the Language Bureau was created and at the same time two language laboratories were properly installed and put under the supervision of the Language Bureau and the Language Bureau Committee. Unfortunately at this point in time language methodologies were put in the Department of Didactics alongside methodologies of content/school subjects. The latter arrangement left the Language Bureau in an extremely weak position overall in that it was left only with the then non-examination professional language courses which were effectively support courses in teacher training and the supervision of language laboratory classes for the departments of English and Afrikaans-Nederlands in the of Arts.

In time, however, these arrangements, especially the latter, proved extremely awkward and very often down-right frustrating. The vortex of frustration lay in three areas:

- a. Non-examination or support courses are difficult to structure, organize and administer as part of an examination-orientated programme (such as our teacher-training programme is) since students regard them, often to their own detriment, as a waste of time.
- b. That the Bureau could depend for "survival" on supervising language laboratory classes for the departments of English and Afrikaans-Nederlands was as unfortunate as the role of the Language Bureau Committee proved administratively untenable.

- c. Language and Language Methodology constitute the obverse and reverse sides of the same coin. Their separation in our teacher-training programme was therefore ill-advised. In addition, to have the methodologies African languages in a Black institution lumped together into one course and taught through the medium of English was bizarre in the extreme.

Given the complexity of the situation, it is hardly surprising that it took the Language Bureau 16 long years to come to its own as a department in its own right with a clear-cut area of work, broken down into the following four sub-areas:

Given the complexity of the situation, it is hardly surprising that it took the Language Bureau 16 long years to come to its own as a department in its own right with a clear-cut area of work, broken down into the following four sub-areas:

- a. to train first and second language secondary school teachers;
- b. to provide training in English, Afrikaans and the Vernacular as school and teaching-profession languages.
- c. to provide training in language for special purposes e.g. English academic purposes.
- d. to prepare and produce Self-Instruction Courses in African languages for speakers of other languages.

Clearly the task of the Language Bureau is as stupendous as it pivotal to Black education in particular and to communication across linguistic and cultural barriers in general. No mean task by any standard!

## 2. *Language in Black education*

Curricula in Black secondary education are divided into three main streams. These are the arts, science and commerce streams. Which ever stream the pupil may choose, three languages viz the Vernacular, English and Afrikaans are obligatory. This means that practically 50% of every Black child's secondary school curriculum comprises language or communication. In addition, from higher primary through university Black South Africans have elected to be instructed through the medium of English as a second language. This introduces yet another language dimension over and above the 50% noted above.

This language situation has three major implications for Black secondary education and for that reason for the training of secondary school teachers in general. The implications are

- a. If the child is poor in the language arts (or if the language arts are for whatever reason inadequately taught), chances are that the child will be down on aggregate and may, in consequence thereof, fail overall in secondary education.
- b. If the child is for whatever reason inadequate in general English usage he may find it difficult to utilise that language to advantage as a means of acquiring, processing, internalising, applying or disseminating learning-material. This also may lead to under-achievement and consequences concomitant thereunto culminating in failure and most probably dropout.
- c. If for whatever reason the teacher's linguistic competence and performance (especially the latter) in English is inadequate his ability to communicate effectively at classroom instructional level in that language may impair his overall effectiveness as a teacher to the detriment of the pupil.

Corroborative evidence in support of the implications noted above is fully documented in the relevant literature. We have time to cite only two examples:

Douglas Barnes writes as follows:

"Language is so deeply embedded in many subjects of the secondary school curriculum that it is sometimes difficult to separate learning the concepts and processes of a subject from learning to use language to represent and use these concepts and processes..."

Language is a means of learning" (1, 113)

Needless to say that if the language concerned is neither the teacher's nor the pupil's source language, the problem is compounded.

Barnes continues:

"Teachers are only partly aware of their own uses of language and still less of how and to what extent classroom language determines the kinds of involvement which are open to their pupils..." (1, 114)

W P Robinson concurs and points out further that

"The language we command affect our capacity for communication... When material to be comprehended or learned is presented verbally or when verbal answers are required, the language we have available constrains (or facilitates) our verbal and non-verbal behaviour" (8 - 87)

The Language Bureau is alive to these language implications hence for example the courses Classroom Communication and English for Science both of which are geared towards improving the students' communicative competence in English and so increase his ability to benefit from instruction through the medium of English as a second language.

### 3. *The politics of language in Black education*

South Africa is a multilingual, multicultural country. Decisions as to which or whose language is to be used where and when are mainly political decisions with spin-offs into the economic and social spheres of life. Therefore to understand fully the language situation in Black education and so be able to train language teachers with adequate background, it is important to understand the politics of language in South Africa as a whole over the years.

Generally speaking, the politics of language in Black education in particular and South Africa in general seems to fall into four broad phases:

- a. The phase of the original inhabitants of South Africa.
- b. The phase of the Dutch occupation of the Cape 1652 -
- c. The phase of the British occupation of the Cape and later further in-land 1806 -
- d. The phase of the Afrikaaner and the Nationalist party 1948 -

### 3.1 *The phase of the original inhabitants of South Africa.*

Although detailed records of this phase are hard to come by (or perhaps altogether non-existent) we may well assume that, in the absence of a foreign language, the indigenous people spoke their different source languages.

They were yet to be conquered; they were in power within their different tribes or national units. Indigenous languages, therefore, served as the languages of education (in the broader sense of the word,) "politics", "economics", "religion" etc. in whatever form these may have existed.

Presumably this phase lasted until colonisation brought the indigenous peoples into contact with people of European origin thereby setting the stage for a new dimension of power-struggle, conquest of the Black races and subsequent introduction of, among other things, languages of European origin.

Effectively these languages were first Dutch, then English and lastly Afrikaans.

### 3.2 *The phase of the Dutch occupation of the Cape 1652 -*

In 1652 the Dutch landed at the Cape and around 1658 tried to initiate education for Blacks - mainly Hottentots and slaves. According to available records it would appear that no particular qualifications or requirements were laid down for the admission of the Hottentots to "school"; for the slaves it was clearly laid down that they shall

"sprekende prompt de  
Nederduytsche taal en  
doende of goed hebbende  
de beleydenisse van die  
Gereformeerde religie" (9, 19)

This rather ambitious effort failed because evidently on the one hand most of the "pupils" were not adequately conversant with Dutch which was the only official language at the time and also to be the only medium of instruction and on the other the "teachers" were not adequately (if at all) conversant with the languages of the "pupils". A perfect example of a hopeless case.

During this phase, however, we notice the following:

The Dutch are effectively in power in the Cape; Dutch replaces the indigenous languages as the only official language; Dutch is the medium of instruction for all including Blacks.

Undoubtedly the indigenous languages continued to be used but the *official language* in the context of colonisation, was Dutch.

### 3.3 The phase of the British occupation of the Cape - 1806

The second British occupation of the Cape in 1806 changed the political power structure in the Colony and with it the language situation in both State and school. In 1822 for example Lord Charles Somerset then Governor of the Cape proclaimed English the official language and around 1852 Dutch was all but used in parliament. Somerset's Anglicising policy not only made English the dominant language of the Colony but also the dominant language of the school including Black state schools. In mission schools were the churches, in consultation with the parents of the children, were free to choose the medium they preferred (4, 118) the situation was changed in 1841 when funding of Black schools was made conditional on the use of English both as medium of instruction and as "the colloquial language of the school." (4, 90).

During this phase we notice the following: The English are now in power; English therefore replaces Dutch as the main official language of the Colony; English replaces Dutch as the common medium of instruction in state and mission schools including schools for Blacks.

This phase, for reasons that will become clearer later in this address, had a great impact on Black education in particular and on the subsequent development of Black South African in general. Specifically it created the following language situation:

- a. English became firmly entrenched as the language of education and *lingua franca* for the emergent Black intelligentsia so much so that English and education came to mean virtually one and the same thing.
- b. Being "civilised" or "enlightened" (whatever that might mean) became synonymous with proficiency in English, westernization and professing the Christian religion. Christian or "school" names for Blacks invariably meant English names. Many traditional African beliefs became heathen superstitions etc.
- c. Afrikaans which had shed the stigma of being labelled "kitchen language" had replaced Dutch and occurred only *peripherally* as subject in Black school mainly on the strength of its being a bread-and-butter language in that many job-givers were Afrikaans speaking. Afrikaans also occurred in pedginated form as a kind of idiolect for certain Black groups in certain Black townships.
- d. The preponderance of English and the rather peripheral yet somewhat utilitarian status of Afrikaans tragically enough edged the African languages into a comparatively lower status on the curriculum. Time was when African languages in Black secondary schools were taught through the medium of English! as media of instruction they were used only upto and including standard 2.

This, the second phase (especially between the years 1897 - 1936) saw education reports and reports of commissions of enquiry focusing in varying degrees of detail on language in Black education notably the level of performance in English in Black school and the consequences of this on the use of English as medium of education on the one hand and on the position of African languages both as subjects and as possible alternative media of education on the other.

We have time to cite only a few examples of such reports:

In 1925 the Department of Public Education in the Cape felt it "could not afford" to lower the standard of English by giving African languages prominence in the curriculum (5, 59).

In Natal C T Loram, in Inspector of Education was equally emphatic about the need for paramountcy of English over the African languages in Black schools. In fact he saw no need for teaching African languages as subjects least of all of using them as media of education. In 1917 he wrote as follows:

"Apart from sentiment, there is no reason for wishing the Bantu languages to survive. They have served their purpose. They are not capable of expressing the ideas which the new European civilization has brought to the country. They are hopelessly clumsy and inadequate on the mathematical and scientific sides". (5, 42)

In 1920 N D Achtenberg an Inspector of Education in the Transvaal expressed a contrary viewpoint through. Unlike Loram, he felt that the use of English as a medium of instruction in Black schools (especially primary schools), caused the "pupils to acquire a very superficial knowledge of the content subjects." (5, 50). Clearly, he felt that the use of African languages as media of instruction will be educationally advantageous to the Black primary school child.

In the meantime, the Black people themselves had taken a stand regarding language in their education. They preferred English rather than the Vernacular as medium of instruction in their schools and also "devoted a great part of their energies to the instruction of English as a language" (5, 58). They were, however, not against Afrikaans and the vernacular as subjects in the curriculum. Black people felt so strongly about this stand on language in their education that G H Franz, and Inspector of Education in the Transvaal reported in 1931 that

"efforts to introduce mothertongue as medium of instruction aroused violent opposition on the part of parents" (5, 63)

The 1935-36 Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education interpreted this the Black people's stand on language in Black education as follows:

"The origin of this tendency is not far to seek. The official language was long and still is regarded as the key to knowledge and power, the Vernacular as something already known not requiring study and worthy only of that more or less benevolent contempt which is bred of familiarity. The process of instilling sounder educational doctrines into the masses of teachers is a slow one and conservatism, as always, dies hard particularly in a race who, as yet, have not felt the urge of self-conscious nationalism driving them to struggle *for* rather than *against* their mother tongue."

(5, 63).

Black people were not struggling against their mother tongue as the Commission reported; they preferred English simply because they had come to accept that language as the only *safeguard* for what they considered to be a stirring education. Also, English had proved effective both as an intra-national and international medium of communication at all levels - educational, social, political, economic etc. Moreover in a situation where power vested in English (and to an extent Afrikaans) the immediate value of the vernacular was not obvious. These are the consequences of conquest. The language or languages of the conqueror tends to permeate and soon dominate and ultimately maps the language-direction of the conquered territory. It becomes the official language and all that that entails.

### 3.4 The phase of the Afirkaaner and the Nationalist party 1948 -

The third phase persisted until 1948 when the Nationalists Party under Dr D F Malan came to power mainly on the ticket of Apartheid. From now on Afrikaans will vie with English for width of application which will include in schools for Blacks. That in a moment.

No sooner was the Afrikaaner in the power-saddle than he constituted the Eiselen Commission 1949-1951 on whose recommendations the Bantu Education Act of 1953 was subsequently promulgated. The Bantu Education Act not only upset the language situation apple-cart in Black education but also created a separate system of education called Bantu Education.

In future, English and Afrikaans were to be used as media of education on a 50-50 basis in Black secondary schools. The Vernacular was to be used as medium of instruction in the primary school and for certain subjects such as Religious Instruction, in the secondary schools.

In this phase we notice the following: The Afrikaaner is now in power and therefore Afrikaans is put on a footing of Equality with English in State; Afrikaans seeks and obtains greater prominence in Black education both as subject and as medium of instruction. No longer is Afrikaans as medium of instruction restricted to certain Black schools in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State; it now applies country-wide.

The fourth phase, however, failed to achieve its objective of among other things, drastically altering the language situation in Black education. Black people opposed the Bantu Education Act from the time when it was promulgated in 1953 and continued relentlessly to do so at all possible levels. The 1976-77 unrests in schools, colleges and universities were reportedly a continuation of this opposition; opposition against the Bantu Education Act and the language situation accompanying the Act. Significantly, after the 1976-77 unrests, the language situation in school reverted to the third phase. Now we await the implementation of the recommendations of the De Lange Commission on language and language teaching.

We noted above the reasons why the second phase died on base one; but why did the fourth phase fail where the third phase succeeded? Two reasons:

- a. Timing. When English was introduced into Black education it was introduced mainly in one package with Westernization, education and Evangelisation and offered the Blackman who had lost on the battle-field after many battles a fighting or survival chance in the "new" South Africa in which he now found himself. It was a life-line. He grabbed it. The timing was opportune.

The fourth phase on the other hand was, I am sorry to say, ill-timed and therefore doomed from the outset. It was seen with one eye-sweep with Apartheid and Bantu Education both of which were anathema to the Black people of South Africa. Understandably therefore they rejected the entire phase as a package.

- b. Political over-exuberance. Probably to consolidate their position certain prominent Nationalist politicians of the time made unfortunate, indeed downright frightening statements. We cite Dr Hendrik Verwoerd's statements as an example:

"There is no place for him (the Black South African) in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour...."

The Black teacher "must not learn to feel above his community, so that he wants to become integrated into the life of the European community."

The Black child must not be prepared for "life outside the community and for situations which do not in fact exist." (3, 22-23)

These were frightening statements and hardly rosy substitutes for what phase three above had accomplished. These statements introduced uncertainty about the future in the minds of many Black South Africans. This caused them to resent phase four in favour of phase three.

Subsequent political utterances did not help the situation; if anything they aggravated it.

#### 4. The Language Bureau

It is important to define in some detail some of the key functions of the Language Bureau; this in turn will define the Chair I am about to accept.

Our starting-point in the Language Bureau is that teaching and the teaching profession in Black education in South Africa today makes provision for at least three languages, the Vernacular, English and Afrikaans. This language situation in turn calls for the training of teachers who can teach these languages and in the case of English, use it to advantage as medium of instruction from the higher primary school upwards. Language and language methodology are therefore the defining characteristics of the functions of the Language Bureau.

Needless to say that if the language situation in Black education and/or South Africa as a whole should change, the Language Bureau will adjust accordingly.

It is important at this stage to define these functions more specifically and therefore define the Language Bureau and its activities more precisely:

#### 4.1 Training teachers of African languages

In training teachers of African languages for Black secondary schools, the Bureau has a singularly difficult task of bring home to the teacher-trainees the following:

4.1.1 That African languages as media of communication for Black people are not a product of Apartheid or Bantu Education. These languages existed long before these unfortunate concepts were conceived and realised. He is a defeated man indeed who spurns his very own to spite his conqueror.

This perspective is important if a positive attitude towards African languages as part of the Blackman's cultural heritage is to be inculcated in the teacher trainees and through them into the pupils.

4.1.2 That source language skills transfer positively to target language skills; and that the con-committance of linguistic incompetency in the source language is, in most cases, incompetency in the target language.

4.1.3 That criticising available language and reading material in African languages on the grounds of irrelevancy and/or poor quality is one thing and producing something better another.

The onus of producing relevant and high quality language and reading material rests squarely on Blacks including teachers and teacher-trainees. In this connection authors associations such as the Association of Lebowa Authors have a vital role and the Tsonga Authors Association to play.

4.1.4 That good literature and/or well designed language material are not necessarily confined to European languages. Dele Charley the Black Sierra Leonean writer actually feels that under certain circumstances African languages may prove more potent as literary instruments for representing African experience than would European languages. Speaking on the Voice of America series: *Conversations with African writers* (Lee Nichols, 1981, p6) he said:

"I feel it is very important for the African writer to write in an African language. There are certain forms of expression for which you cannot find adequate English parallels".

Charley is not against the use of European languages in literature for or about Africa, what he is saying is that it is often difficult to find English parallels for certain African expressions.

Here are a few examples of what he probably had in mind.



#### 4.1.4.1 On wisdom

"Rammina bohlae wa Mohohu, Kukama-bodiba"  
Se re o bina wa ukama bodiba  
O re ditlaela di wele ka mo meetseng"

(PUKU YA BOSELELA, 1967, p. 14)

#### 4.1.4.2 On self identification

"Ke molomo'atau kotwana  
Molomo'atau sewela matota  
Sewela le majabele a magoro ka gofela"  
(SERITI SA THABANTSHO, 1954, p.32)

#### 4.1.4.3 Opinion on certain traditional practices eg. Bolo

"Ga di re thuse sepe dipimpi  
Dilo di dirwang ka kwa dikhuretsheng  
Dilo di so tsweleng pepeneneng...."  
MABOKO A SETSWANA, 1972, p8

Talking about the potency of African languages in African literature we may want to refer back to a point made earlier on i.e. "Source language skills transfer positively to target language skills." If a pupil finds

"Lekgaru, lekgarumela nkwe,  
Nkwe le yona ya mo kgarumela  
Gwa dula lekgakgaru-kgaru-kgaru"  
(SERITI SA THABANTSHO, p. 45)

enjoyable, enriching and edifying as a literary piece chances are he would be equally moved by

"I caught this morning morning's minion,  
Kingdom of daylight's dauphine,  
dapple-dawn-fawn falcon in his riding...."  
(THE WINDHOVER, G M HOPKINS)

Equally, if a pupils would appreciate the veracity and the timelessness of the message contained in:

"Motho wa motho ga a thwalwe e se phetana  
Motho wa motho ke go tswalwa le motho"  
(SERITI SA THABANTSHO, p. 18)

chances are he will appreciate

"A man said to the universe:  
'Sit, I exist!'

'However', replied the universe,  
the fact has not created in me  
A sense of obligation' "

(A MAN SAID TO THE UNIVERSE, Stephen Crane)  
OR

"die Here het geskommel  
en die dice het verkeerd geval vi' ons  
daai's maar al"  
(DICE, Adam Small)

Furthermore, a child who can reflect deeply and think critically on the full meaning of the Tsonga poem "Vumina" or the Venda poem "Ri a livhuha" stands a better chance of following and appreciating a lesson on say, Hopking' "Instress" and "inscape" or the symbolism of the horse in S H Lawrence.

In a word, start from the known to the unknown. It's as simple as that!

The principles argued above generalise to novels and plays with equal veracity.

In training teachers of African languages therefore, the Language Bureau seeks to separate a language situation resulting from a political arrangement or power-structure from language as a cultural heritage, a means of communication for a particular people as human beings complete and adequate in themselves. For example, that the Bantu Education Act sought to increase the African language component in Black education is no reason why the work and role of the teacher of African languages should be taken lightly because the African languages as a Blackman's cultural heritage existed long before the Bantu Education Act and will continue to exist even after this Act has been abrogated.

The Bureau seeks to restore the linguistic prestige that the African languages lost over the years as the Blackman lost first militarily and later politically and also to show the relevance of these languages in the learning of other languages such as English and Afrikaans. *In doing so, however, the Bureau does not advocate the use of African languages as media of instruction beyond standard II; the Bureau identifies with the standpoint of Black South Africans in general in this connection.*

The question of medium of instruction in Black education is a complex one. The Bureau is not only aware of the literature/reports available in this connection but I personally have read three papers and published one in this area. Time does not permit us to go into this.

Suffice that we stress that the teacher-trainee needs to have a composite picture of all these facts if his attitude towards African languages is to be positive.

4.1.5 That research and publication in first language methodology is an accepted international academic and professional exercise. That the language concerned is Urdu or North Sotho is besides the point.

To research one's own and to tell it as it is, is normal. This too is very important for teacher trainees to know and appreciate. The Bureau hopes to make substantial contribution in this area of first language methodology since very little has been done to date.

#### 4.2 *Training of second language teachers*

##### 4.2.1 *Afrikaans teachers*

Afrikaans is taught as a subject in Black school and occupies a rather important position outside the classroom. For this reason teachers of Afrikaans as a second language are being trained for Black education.

The Bureau, as a unit in charge of the training of language teachers at this university is no exception.

The stance of the Bureau is that Afrikaans is a language; a means of communication and trains the teachers with this stance as starting point.

The Bureau is, however, not insensitive to the broader issues involved here especially as a result of the political situation in the country; it is nonetheless academic and professional enough to recognise certain works in Afrikaans in which writers draw attention to certain problems social, economic, political, religious - in South Africa and highlight the negative effect that emanate from some of the measures taken to deal with these problems. We cite three examples to illustrate this:

"en hier is die result van hierdie land se  
wette kyk na die sestig lyke hier gescatter  
onner die heading Sharpville  
oe! dit lat 'n mens gril  
dit kielie hierso af by 'n mens se spine"  
(Highlights of De Year 1960, Adam Small)

"Die kind is nie dood nie  
nóg by Langa nóg by Nyanga  
nóg by Orlando nóg by Sharpville  
nóg by die polisiestatie in Philippi  
waar hy lê met 'n koeël deur sy kop  
.....

"die kins wat net wou speel in die son by  
Nyanga is orals,  
die kind wat 'n man geword het trek deur  
die ganse Africa  
die kind wat 'n reus geword het reis deur

die hele wêreld  
Sonder 'n pas  
(DIE KIND, Ingrid Jonker)

"Ma is dood  
onder 'n trein  
Ons leef van brood  
en Pa van wyn"  
(DISTRICT SIX, R K Belcher)

Teacher-trainees need to be aware of these and other writers if only to have a complete picture of Afrikaans and certain thoughts expressed in this language. This in turn will render the teaching of Afrikaans in Black schools just that much easier.

##### 4.2.2 *English Teachers*

The Language Bureau (as adequately illustrated above) is aware of the central position that English occupies in the Black secondary school curriculum and for this reason is constantly seeking newer and more effective strategies of training Black teachers of English as a second language.

The stance of the Bureau in his connection is that effective teaching of English will enhance its effectiveness as medium of instruction. The Bureau is aware, and trains its students accordingly, that preferring a second language as medium of instruction is one thing; training teachers to use such a second language effectively in the classroom another; and teaching the language effectively enough for pupils to be able to use it to maximum advantage in the teaching/learning situation yet another.

The proficiency of the teacher in a particular medium of communication tends to rub-off onto the pupils. The reverse is equally true.

Since success in English determines success in the teaching of other subjects on the curriculum, the Bureau works closely with academic and professional bodies such as the English Academy of Southern Africa, South African Council for English Education, South African Association for Language Teaching and the British Council. The latter procures and subsidises ELT Consultants attached to the Bureau.

##### 4.3 *Classroom Communication: the Vernacular, English and Afrikaans*

We noted above that in a typical Black school setting in South Africa today, the Vernacular, English and Afrikaans occur side by side as media of communication and continue in this way into the community - into wider South Africa - and in many cases into the job-situation as well.

For the teacher, proficiency in these languages enhances his ability to communicate - an important consideration since teaching is essentially communication. Outside the classroom, effective communication is equally important since it is man's linguistic attribute that makes him the being that he is.

"Language is everywhere.....  
Without it ... society as  
we now know it would be  
impossible."  
R W Langacker, 1973

The Bureau's stance in this connection is simple but vital: effective teaching calls for effective communication. Take away communication - both oral and written - from the classroom, what have you left?

#### 4.4 Language for special purposes

The language concerned here is English, English for academic purposes. The Bureau treats this area as two-pronged. On the one hand it focuses on remedial English, linguistic enrichment in English and promoting greater facility in the use of English for a particular area of study e.g. the Natural Sciences. On the other, it focuses on "beyond the lecture-hall." The latter is just as important as the former since all training is aimed at the community and the job situation.

The Bureau maintains that linguistic incompetency in a teaching/learning situation has adverse effect on both the quality of teaching and the thoroughness of the internalisation of the subject content concerned.

The Language Bureau also maintains that there are two linguistic levels in operation when a second language is used for academic purposes both of which are important to successful teaching and learning. First there is the basic linguistic facility that makes essential communication possible and secondly there are the specific registers and style that define the character of a particular subject. Both levels call for a balance between the receptive and the reproduction vocabulary (regular and specialised) to make comprehension and response (speaking, reading and writing) possible.

Many universities, at home and abroad, consider this area critical to successful teaching and learning in situations where the medium of education is a second language.

#### 4.5 Production of self-instruction courses in African languages for speakers of other languages

That African languages should hold the same status in White education as English and Afrikaans in Black education is obvious. The multilingual nature of the South African citizenry hold true for all South African and not for Black South Africans only.

A well-meaning colleague greeted his ex-lecturer in North Sotho. The lecturer was literally taken aback and mumbled something in Afrikaans. Said the well-meaning colleague:

"Even after 20 years in a North Sotho speaking area?"

The moral of this is that in South Africa it is taken for granted that the Black South Africa must be able to switch from his first language to English and/or to Afrikaans with reasonable ease, but the same does not hold for the White South African. Makes you wonder why, don't it?

#### 5. Some future plans

The Bureau has the following plans for the future to fit into the "University of the North, 2000" call by the vice chancellor:

5.1 The Bureau hopes to persuade the University Administration to allow it to establish a departmental library that will function as part and parcel of the language laboratories. The language laboratory provides practice in the listening and speaking skills; the lecture-hall the writing skills. - The reading skills can only be adequately provided for if a departmental library is created.

5.2 The Bureau has surveyed and discovered that reading for pleasure and for edification is on the decline in Black education. To deal with this problem the Bureau is planning a systematic reading programme that would form part and parcel of the language and language methodology courses offered by the Bureau. To start off the programme personal reading material will be used and later the University will be requested to consider supporting the effort. If pupils are to be readers, their teachers must set the example. The Bureau sees this as the most logical step towards creating an information-rich Black community.

5.3 To encourage the much needed specialization, the Bureau hopes to create a situation in which its staff members specialise in one language only - both content and methodology - instead of two as is the case at the moment. The need for this is so clear that the Bureau does not expect the University Administration to turn down the plan. After all, in the Faculty of Arts there are as many departments as there are main languages offered at the University. The Bureau will request not for departments, but for individual (more specialised) personnel.

5.4 The Bureau hopes to step-up its in-service work in language and language methodology for Black teachers in the Northern and Far Northern Transvaal. The need to keep in touch with our products and, where possible, to update them in terms of newer strategies that come to hand is important for both the Bureau and its trainees. Emphasising certain language teaching strategies in training is one thing and for the trainees to find these strategies functional and effective in the actual teaching situation another. In-service work makes it possible for Bureau to check-out the effectiveness of its training programmes against the practicalities of the actual teaching situation in the schools at large.

In-service work will in future cover all the languages offered in the Bureau; at the moment the Bureau concentrates on English only.

5.5 Certain universities in the country today offer what are known as enrichment programmes in, among other things, English to Black pupils at secondary and senior secondary levels. These programme supplement the regular tuition offered by the schools. The Bureau hopes to start with this type of extension service later this year or early next year. The idea is to offer this service side-by-side with in-service work for teachers. Of necessity work will start on a small scale and, depending on degree of success, enlarged to cover more and more teachers and pupils.

Detailed planning will be carried out with the relevant authorities before any work can be attempted. It is obvious that if the Bureau succeeds in its enrichment programmes, the University will receive the kick-backs in that its first years in the language arts will be that much better. If an appointment is to be made in this connection it will be a good investment; it will be worth it.

5.6 There are plans afoot (already at an advanced stage) to liaise with the British Council for the creation of long-term ( $\pm 2$  years) English Language Teaching Consultancies in the Bureau. (Such Consultancies will also be available to the Department of English at the University). The Consultancies will not only enable the Bureau, as it were, to compare notes with first class academics and language and language methodology specialists from England with a view to strengthening its own programmes but also to give overseas' academics a chance to see what the University of the North is engaged in. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the first of such a long-term Consultancy will be attached to the Bureau as early as September or beginning October this year, 1982. Thanks to the fore-sight of our vice chancellor, Prof P C Mokgokong and the generosity of the British Council there will be only very limited financial implications for the University in this arrangement.

These plans are a product of sixteen years of work (and reflection) into the training of language teachers in the Faculty of Education, University of the North. They are based on research, surveys and consultations with universities, colleges and language and language methodology institutes in South Africa and overseas. That most of the languages we deal with are South African languages is besides the point; what is important is the international nature of our activities i.e. classroom communication, first and second language methodology and communication for specific or academic purposes.

By way of conclusion we want to summarise what we have been engaged in from 1966 to date.

We conclude:

## 6. Conclusion

The area of work covered by the Language Bureau is, to put it mildly, vast. To cope with it, each member of the Bureau offers two languages in terms of Methodology and Content from level 101 to level 401. In practice this means that at Examination time members set anything upto 16 papers i.e. Methodology and Content in each of the 4 levels for the two languages, and carries a direct lecturing/teaching load of around 24 to 26 periods per week, excluding language laboratory classes for the departments of English and Afrikaans and Communication. The Head of Department carries a direct lecturing/teaching load of 20 periods per week. These periods will increase when the Bureau begins work at B. Ed. and possibly M. Ed. level next year.

Despite this crushing work-load the Language Bureau has over the past 6-7 years i) built a core of dedicated, hardworking and appropriately qualified staff; ii) gained membership of different language and language methodology organizations in Southern Africa and abroad; iii) organized successful In-service courses in language and language methodology for secondary school teachers; iv) read conference papers in language, language methodology and language in education at school, college and university levels; v) published a number of papers in different languages and language methodology journals; vi) and above all authored and/or co-authored 5 full-fledged books which are currently in circulation in Black secondary schools and 4 others in press with many more to come! These books are in different African languages and English with one Afrikaans one in press. Clearly, *teaching* language and language methodology and *publications* are the Language Bureau's strongest areas. Thus if full teaching loads (average 20 periods per week), research and publications are what University departments are all about, the Language Bureau has all the right to walk tall.

Mr Vice Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen it is crystal clear from what has been outlined above that the name Language Bureau is somewhat misleading and should therefore be changed to Department of Language and Language Methodology. The latter will be more appropriate since it will describe more accurately the nature and scope of our activities in the Faculty of Education. The department thus renamed, will continue to assist and co-operate with the languages departments of the Faculty of Arts in the use of the language laboratory facilities but will make certain suggestions that will put the bulk of language laboratory work for the departments of English and Afrikaans and Communication directly in the hands of these departments.

Mr Vice Chancellor, I thank you very much for having given me this opportunity to adumbrate the status and role of my department within the teacher-training establishment of the University of the North for all to know. I am happy to accept the Chair and Headship of the Language Bureau: Faculty of Education, University of the North and pledge to serve the University to the best of my ability in this capacity.

THANK YOU

#### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Barnes, D in A Cashdan et al: *Language in Education*, Open University, London, 1972
2. *Journal of Education in New Africa*, vol 1 no 8 March 1964
3. Langacker, R W : *Language and its structure*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973
4. Mawasha, A L : *From Missionary and Provincial control to State and Community control of Bantu Education*, Unpublished M E D dissertation, University of South Africa, 1969
5. Mawasha A L: *The Teaching of English as a second language to North Sotho speaking children in the Junior Secondary School with special reference to oral communication - an Empirical Study* Unpublished D Ed. Thesis, University of the North, 1977
6. Mawasha, A L : "ESL in Black Education" *CRUX*, Vol. 13: 2, June 1979
7. Lee, N: *Conversations with African Writers*, Voice of America series 1981.
8. Robinson, W P in A Cashdan op cit.
9. Verslag van die Werkkomitee: *Tale en taalonderrig*, RGN, 1981

University of the North  
Private Bag X5090  
PIETERSBURG  
0700  
Republic of South Africa

Universiteit van die Noorde  
Privaatsak X5090  
PIETERSBURG  
0700  
Republiek van Suid-Afrika

1982

SERIES/REEKS C72

ISBN 0/907986/01/3