

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In a democracy, the credibility of a structure to the people it intends to serve is of cardinal importance. In order to be credible before the people it intends to serve, a structure must be well received by the incumbent individuals and communities. The Xitsonga Language Board is no exception. As a structure entrusted with Xitsonga language management, the Xitsonga Language Board had to be credible before the Xitsonga-speaking community of South Africa.

However, the literature reviewed as indicated in the previous chapters suggested that the constituencies directly affected by the decisions of the Boards were critical about the composition, motives and functioning of these language management structures.

This chapter sets out to investigate whether the Xitsonga Language Board was well received in the Xitsonga-speaking communities.

4.2 DESIGN OF THE INVESTIGATION

According to Mouton (1996) research uses relatively objective methods when conceptualising, operationalisation, sampling, defining, analysing and collecting data.

4.2.1 Conceptualisation

Mouton (1996:109) defines 'conceptualisation' as *the clarification and the analysis of the key concepts in a study...*

The key terms used in this study were clarified and analysed adequately in the first two chapters.

These terms included minority languages, marginalised languages, language management, Language Board and mother tongue.

4.2.2. Operationalisation

According to Mouton (1996:109), **operationalisation** consists of the development of a measuring instrument by means of which accurate data about a phenomenon can be obtained. In this study, a questionnaire is used to obtain the data required. In a questionnaire, the subjects respond to the questions by writing, or, more commonly, marking an answer sheet. The advantage with a questionnaire is that it can be sent to a wide range of categories of people. The questionnaire is appended to this thesis.

In compiling the questions, the researcher was guided mainly by the respondents' level of literacy and knowledge, involvement in the subject as well as interest in the language. The researcher also took into account the fact that a questionnaire should be clear, unambiguous and uniformly workable.

As people's participation in surveys is voluntary, the researcher ensured that the questionnaire engaged the respondents' interest.

4.2.3. The sample

All in all two hundred questionnaires were sent out. As already indicated, the questionnaires were sent to respondents who were either involved in Xitsonga language management or had interest in the Xitsonga language management. The questionnaires were thus sent out to political organisations whose support base were directly affected by decisions of the Xitsonga language management or had interest in the management of African languages in South Africa in general. Xitsonga teachers, university lecturers, members of different Language Boards and professionals other than teachers who were directly affected by the decisions of Language Boards in South Africa were sampled to receive the questionnaires. Copies of the questionnaires (40 per group or category) were sent to the following groups:

1. Political organisations: African National Congress (ANC)
Pan African Congress (PAC)
Ximoko Progressive Party (XPP)
Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)
2. Xitsonga teachers: Primary schools, Post Primary schools, College lecturers
3. University lecturers in the Department of African Languages at the following universities:
University of the North
University of Venda
University of Pretoria
University of North West
University of the Witwatersrand
University of South Africa
4. Members of the different Language Boards: Xitsonga; Tshivenda; isiZulu; siSwati; Setswana; siNdebele; Sepedi; Sesotho; isiXhosa
5. The fifth group consisted of all other people, i.e. other professions besides teachers, e.g. Nurses
Ministers of Religion

The object of the questionnaire was to investigate the following:

- Whether people know about the Xitsonga Language Board
- About perceived needs and functions of the Language Boards
- About structure and organisation of the Language Boards

The questions were based on the situation in South Africa prior to the 1994 democratic elections.

Different questions posed were to elucidate the facts in 4.2. For the purpose of discussion, these statements and questions will be grouped according to the facts elicited.

4.2.4 The group statements

Group 1: Questions on knowledge about the Language Boards.

- Have you heard about this body before?

Group 2: Questions about the need and functions of a language management structure, specifically the Language Board

- Is it necessary to have such a body?
- What do you think the main tasks of this body should be?
- Do you think Language Boards should have a political function?
- Should the Xitsonga (and other black languages) Language Board deal with language related social problems such as; Literacy, high failure rate in the primary schools, the rights of the Xitsonga language, discrimination against people who are Xitsonga speakers?
- The Xitsonga (and other black languages) Language Board developed new words (terms) for the language. Are the new words (terms) that the Board has created used by the speakers of the language?
- Do you agree with the following statement: "The Xitsonga (and other black languages) Language Board does enough to promote the Xitsonga Language?"
- Does the Xitsonga (and other black languages) Language Board act in the interests of the Vatsonga and the Xitsonga language?
- Do you think the Xitsonga (and other black language) Language Board can fulfil the needs of the speakers?

- At present standard Xitsonga is not spoken in informal contexts. What is your opinion on this situation?
- Standardized Xitsonga (the written form of Xitsonga) (and other black languages), is made up of features from all the dialects of Xitsonga. Do you:
Options: Strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree and no opinion
- Do you accept the decisions of the Xitsonga (and other black languages) Language Board in connection with the orthography, the words they propose as technical terms and the books they promote at schools?

Group 3 statements and questions on structure and organisation of the Board

- Who do you think should serve on the Language Board?
- For the Xitsonga Language Board, the Gazankulu Government nominates the secretary. Is this a good idea?
- At present, all decisions by the Xitsonga Language Board are subject to approval by the Gazankulu Government. What is your opinion on this matter?
- Every African language in South Africa should have its own Language Board.
- At present, the different Language Boards function independently. What is your opinion on this situation?
- Do you agree with this statement "A Language Board should fall under a state/ government department?"

General Information statements

This is information about the respondents. In this study, data collected will be referred to as categories. The response of each category to the group of statements in 4.3.2-4.3.4 will be analysed. The categories are as follows:

- Gender
- Age
- Main language spoken at home
- Highest academic qualification
- Professional qualification
- Up to which level did you study Xitsonga?
- Occupation
- Residence: In Gazankulu or Outside Gazankulu
- Service in the Language Board

4.3 ANALYSIS OF THE INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE

This study follows the quantitative research procedure. Martins et. al (1996:125) describe quantitative research as follows:

“Quantitative research generally involves the collection of primary data from large numbers of individuals, frequently with the intention of projecting the results to a wider population.”

Quantitative research is in general contrasted with qualitative research which according to Martins et. al (1996) does not aim at generalising about any population, but rather to obtain greater clarity on a vague research problem.

Quantitative methods use standardised measures that fit diverse opinions and experiences into

predetermined response categories. The advantage of the quantitative approach is that it measures the reaction of a great number of people to a limited set of questions, thus facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation of the data. This allows a broad generalisation of findings. (Patton: 1994).

As the quantitative methods are used the responses will be presented in percentages, ranging from the lowest to the highest, in all the categories in 4.3.4.

4.4 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA COLLECTED

The word "item" will be used to refer to individual questions and statements in 4.3.2 - 4.3.4

GROUP 1 STATEMENTS

These are statements on knowledge about the Language Boards.

ITEM 1

There is a body called the Language Board. Have you heard about this body?

All categories responded positively to this question. Range: 89,53 - 92,86.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this response is that the majority of the people are aware about the existence of the Language Board.

These are statements on the need and functions of the Language Boards.

ITEM 2

Is it necessary to have such a body?

It was established that all categories are in favour of Language Boards. This shows that speakers of the various African languages recognise the need for a body that will manage their

languages.

Among the reasons given for this need are the following:

- To look after the interest of the Xitsonga Language.
- Since Xitsonga is a language that needs to be preserved and developed, there is a need to have a body that will be an agent to this effect.

ITEM 3

Should Language Boards deal with the following language related social problems such as:

- Literacy
- High failure rate in the primary school
- Discrimination against people who are speakers of the Xitsonga language?

Although all the categories were positive, it also varied according to the individual aspects.

Range: 75.00% - 82.35%

A major reason for supporting this suggestion is that all these aspects are part of language development, and it is necessary for the Language Board to deal with them all.

ITEM 4

Do the speakers of the language use the terms created by the Language Board?

The result was negative.

Range: 80.00% - 96.36%

The large percentage of difference is due to the fact that a number of the respondents did not express their opinions on this item.

There could be two interpretations to this response. The first could be that the new terms coined by the Language Board were not communicated to the public. This might be a back up to the claim from Sotashe's article as discussed in Chapter Three that communication channels were not properly arranged. The media and the subject advisers who were said to be the main conveyors of the activities of the Language Board were not being effective.

The second interpretation could be that the words coined or loaned by the Language Board do not fit in the vocabulary of the speakers.

Critical in the two interpretations here is what was said in Chapter Three from Sotashe's article that there was no reciprocal communication between the public and the Language Board. Through reciprocal communication, terms unacceptable to the public would be discarded and terms acceptable to the public would be used.

ITEM 5

The Xitsonga Language Board does enough for the Xitsonga language.

Categories were equally divided on this issue. The categories that are education related, including the category of people who have served in the Language Board, responded positively. However, a concern was raised that some more effort has to be invested into the whole venture.

The other categories indicated that they were not well enough informed about the activities of the Language Board to give an objective opinion.

From this it can be deduced that the majority of the people are aware of the existence of the Language Board but that while some people are able to follow the activities performed by the Board others are not. It is not surprising therefore that some of the terms coined or loaned by the Language Board are not used by the public.

ITEM 6

What are the needs of the Vatsonga in Post Apartheid South Africa?

The responses to this question could be summed up as follows:

- Xitsonga must receive recognition in all spheres of work and communication.
- The onus is on the people of the language for this aspiration to turn into reality.

ITEM 7

Can the Xitsonga Language Board fulfil this need?

All categories agree.

Range: 85.29% - 96.15%

The largest percentage is of the people who have served in the Language Board. Perhaps this is so because they obviously cannot discredit their efforts. How this can be achieved has been responded to by presenting the following suggestions:

- Improving communication in all the spheres where Xitsonga is used.
- Widen the domains of use.
- Seek to sell the good and beauty of the language rather than be a tool of confrontation.

What the respondents are calling for is a structure or body that would handle language management. But if the Language Board could fulfil the needs as stated here, there would still be the problem of legitimacy. The claim that the Language Board was created as an Apartheid body and therefore did not uphold democratic principles would put a strain on whatever good work the Board would do.

ITEM 8

The written form of Xitsonga (standard) is not spoken in informal contexts.

All categories agree.

Range: 63.64% - 75.86%

The reasons presented suggest encouragement of the diversity, and recognition of the dialects. This kind of response also shows that although there is a need for the recognition of geographical or regional dialects, there is a need for a language management body that would ensure that standard language is used in a formal context. This supports the response in Group 1,

item 1, that there is a need of a language management body.

ITEM 9

Standard (written) Xitsonga is made up of features from all the dialects of Xitsonga.

Range: 46.91% - 53.57%

All categories weakly support this notion.

The reasons for opting positively are:

- To avoid discrimination.
- Dialects are recognised, which creates an atmosphere of unity through diversity.
- This is the reality of the situation. The standard (written) language, is not on par with societal needs.

Some respondents had no opinion on this question. This could suggest a problem of not knowing what standardisation is all about. There could also be a feeling that some dialects have been highly influenced by different languages in the neighbourhood. Excessive borrowing, some people feel, destroys a language. Another view could be that the respondents feel that there is a need for a core dialect from which standardisation can take place.

GROUP 2

These are statements that seek to establish how the Language Board should be structured and organised.

ITEM 1

Who of the following do you think should serve in the Language Board?

Teachers, Lecturers, Academicians, Inspectors, Cultural Leaders, other ...

Among all five groups, cultural leaders were the most favoured, with 56%. The remaining

percentage is distributed as follows: Academicians - 18.67%; Teachers - 17.33 & Lecturers and Inspectors - 4% each.

The respondents indicated that all groups should serve, and have been serving, but cultural leaders have never been considered in the past, whereas they are close to the ordinary people on the ground, and this would encourage active participation by all the stakeholders.

There were also suggestions that competency should not be measured by qualifications, as this excludes many competent people, but interest must be considered as well. This response suggests that the public feels that in order to be effective, a language management body or structure must uphold democratic principles and that there must be effective and reciprocal communication between the public and the Language Board. The public must feel that the Language Board is theirs.

ITEM 2

Two questions were combined.

Should Language Boards have a political function? Should Political Organizations be represented in the Language Board? The response to both questions indicate disapproval by all categories. Among the reasons advanced are the following:

- Focus will shift from language issues to political debates.
- Representation of political parties will be detrimental to the Language Board as political representatives might not necessarily have an interest in language issues, and will be tempted to represent their political ideologies. However, if members of political organisations have satisfied the criteria to be members of the Language Board, their political affiliation should not be an obstacle.

In a South African context, the response to this question could be based on the experience that Africans have gone through. As indicated in Chapter One, for far too long African languages have been used as a political tool. Languages have been used as a divisive factor. When the

homeland system was introduced, people were divided according to the languages they spoke. This could be the fear that the respondents have about political interference in language management.

Generally, when language management is left to the politicians, some languages suffer while other languages are promoted. This is so as the politicians attach their political ideologies to language management. The June 1976 rebellion against Afrikaans by black learners or youth in or from Soweto is an example of what happens when there is political interference in matters of language.

ITEM 3

Three questions were combined. They all deal with the influence of the Government on Language Boards.

- i) In the past, the ex-Gazankulu Government nominated the chairperson and the vice-chairperson. Was this a good idea?
- ii) All decisions by the Language Board are subject to approval by the Gazankulu Government. What is your opinion on this matter?
- iii) Do you agree with this statement: A Language Board should fall under a state/government Department.

All categories agree with the statement in (iii).

Range 67.74% - 76.62%

The state will provide funding, and language development should be the concern of the state. However, all categories disagree with the statements in (i) and (ii).

Range: (i) 68% - 80%; (ii) 46% - 68%

A large percentage of the difference (in both) is a group with no opinion. This could suggest that the issue under discussion is of no significance to them, or, they have no idea as to how the Language Board should be organised.

The reasons for disagreeing were, among others, the following:

- This was a violation of the democratic principle.
- The powers of the Language Board are limited, and this renders them ineffective.
- The Government goes overboard, hence the decision in (i)
- It might have been a question of "the one who pays the piper must call the tune."

In the South African context however, government intervention is necessary to address the existing imbalance in language management. This intervention should be restricted to the provision of resources and setting up a structure.

ITEM 4

Two statements are combined.

- i) Every African language in South Africa has its own Language Board. Your opinion?
- ii) At present, the different Language Boards function independently? Your opinion?

Responses to the first statement indicate that languages have to be developed separately for effectiveness. However, there has to be co-ordination among all these structures, since they have a common interest. Co-ordination will also mean that there will be a spirit of interrelatedness. No man is an island.

ITEM 5

In the present Xitsonga Language Board, there are no representatives of the Vatsonga group in Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

All categories agree that the arrangement does not benefit any of the Vatsonga groups. If the Vatsonga in Mozambique are represented in the Language Board, it will create a spirit of unity.

The orthography will be the same, readership will widen, and these aspects are part of language development.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The purpose of Chapter Four was to analyse the reception of language management in the Vatsonga community and among interest organisations and individuals prior to 1994. A questionnaire as an instrument of research was used to obtain data. The data analysed has revealed that in general, the public felt that there was a need for a language management body but that such a body should not be manipulated by the Government for the attainment of its own political goals. The study showed that although the public was aware of the existence of the Language Boards, they felt that the Language Boards were being manipulated by the government.

It was found in the study that there was inadequate communication between the Language Boards and the people they intended to serve. This led to the public developing a negative attitude towards the Language Boards. Some words coined by the Language Boards were not used by the public due to the fact that the Language Boards had not consulted before coining such words and that these words were generally not properly coined to the liking of the speakers.

This field of study had limitations. Not all political parties and institutions could be approached for their input. Political parties such as Azapo were left out in spite of the fact that the languages of their members were managed by the Language Boards. Institutions such as Vista University, Giyani College of Education etc., were also left out. The reasons for these limitations vary. But they range from inaccessibility to the fact that the sample could be large for a study of this magnitude.

In Chapter Five, the present set-up in respect of language management in South Africa is analysed.