

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the last of the thesis, a summary of the entire thesis is presented. The findings of the research are also interpreted. In addition to the summary and findings, the chapter provides a conclusion as well as the recommendations of the study.

#### 6.2 SUMMARY

The central aim of this study was to provide an analysis of language management in South Africa. What sparked the need for such an analysis was the fact that African languages in South Africa have a low status compared with languages such as English. This imbalance is due to the policies of colonial governments which were in power before the 1994 democratic elections. Speakers of these African languages have a low self-esteem, the languages are stigmatised, they lack official use in education, they lack official use in politics, etc. This was the problem that this study wished to address. The study set out to analyse language management in South Africa so as to find out what language management can do to correct the past imbalances as well as the asymmetric power relations between the languages of the country.

A study of this kind was necessary so that the future of these languages can be mapped out or determined. It is only through the study and understanding of the past and the present that the future can be planned.

The focus was on one language, Xitsonga. This was so as the language was regarded as **marginalised**, as a **minority language** by some South Africans. Although it is one of the eleven official languages, the Xitsonga language does not enjoy rights or privileges such as TV coverage.

So neglected is the language that some Vatsonga are afraid to speak it. It is against this background that Xitsonga was used as a case study of the management of South Africa's nine African languages.

It is hoped that the findings would reflect how all the disadvantaged languages were managed.

The former Language Boards were entrusted with the responsibility of preserving and promoting the languages. They were the main institutions that managed these languages. As a result, when language management is discussed, these structures should be scrutinised. Against this background, the Xitsonga Language Board was investigated in this study. The purpose of investigating the history, structure and activities of the Xitsonga Language Board was to establish the difficulties the Board went through and the achievements of the Board while managing the Xitsonga language. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations emerging from

this study will contribute to the direction the Pan South African Languages Board will take in managing the African languages of South Africa.

The questionnaire method was used in this investigation. Minutes of the Xitsonga Language Board meetings were also reviewed and analysed. From the questionnaire responses as well as comments by authors on newspapers, journals, conferences, etc. it is clear that there were objections against the pre-1994 language management. The fact that the language management structures were created by a government that pursued Apartheid policies and that African languages were not as well promoted as English and Afrikaans discredited the language management structures to a large extent.

### **6.3 FINDINGS**

In Chapter Two the history of the Xitsonga language was discussed and in Chapter Three the Xitsonga Language Board was discussed. This research discovered that the Xitsonga Language Board was not an alien structure but that it was well known to the people. This is an achievement as the people have been able to identify a structure that was established to serve as

a vanguard for the development of the Xitsonga language.

The study has also been able to find out that the need to have a Board to manage the Xitsonga language is recognized. This is also positive as it gives an indication that the difficulties experienced notwithstanding, the Xitsonga Language Board has served the Vatsonga to an extent that the need to have a body similar to it, is recognised.

The finding that the terms coined by the Xitsonga Language Board are not used more by the Vatsonga in informal contexts is negative and it shows that the Xitsonga Language Board has not entirely succeeded in helping the Vatsonga to develop their language. The danger in this regard is that the Vatsonga might be using foreign words instead of the words coined by the Xitsonga Language Board. If such foreign words are not properly borrowed and therefore do not comply with the structural requirements of standard Xitsonga, the Xitsonga language will be negatively affected.

As a custodian of the Xitsonga language, the Xitsonga Language Board has succeeded in formulating terms that could be used by the Vatsonga. This is an achievement as the concepts would be used instead of foreign words whose over-usage and/or over-loan would affect the development of the Xitsonga language adversely. However, the difficulty in this regard is the fact that some of these terms are not used by the Vatsonga. This fact has been highlighted in this research. It has also been shown that the Xitsonga Language Board is not doing enough in the way of notifying the public about the new concepts formulated.

The research established that there was political interference in the administration of the Xitsonga Language Board. The interference was from politicians such as the leadership of the Gazankulu homeland. Such interference hampered progress as the Board could not take decisions freely such as changing the fundamental decision of adding the prefix *Xi-* to the word *Tsonga*. This has proved to be a major difficulty as the Xitsonga Language Board could not manage the Xitsonga language independently.

Interference from the government even manifested itself in the selection of the chairperson. The chairperson was chosen by politicians. In fact, in the early history of the Xitsonga Language

Board, the majority of the members of the Board were not Xitsonga speakers. It is this kind of interference by the Government that caused the public to develop a negative attitude towards the Language Board.

The fact that the public did not participate much in the activities of the Board also contributed to the negative attitude the public developed about the Board. The public felt that the Board prescribed their own books.

The Language Boards have been able to coin words. The problem in this regard however, was the fact that the technical terms coined were not used by the people on the ground. This was mainly because the Language Boards were unable to reach out to the people on the ground, consult with them, listen to their needs and involve them in the activities of the Language Boards and also introduce the terms coined to the people. There was no reciprocal communication between the Language Board and the public.

The research established that there is a need for a Language Board to manage South Africa's African languages. Such a Language Board would have to be democratically elected, that would not have ties with Apartheid and its policies. This need has been realised by the democratically elected Government that came into power in 1994 in compliance with the PANSALB Act through the establishment of the Pan South African Languages Board and Provincial Language Committees. Signs are that language bodies such as Language Specific Committees which would advise on the activities of a specific language are likely to be formed in the future.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

The past imbalances as well as the existing asymmetric power relations between the languages in the country can be corrected by the newly formed language management body known as the Pan South African Language Board. The Pan South African Language Board has been democratically elected and hence it has the support of the public. One of its functions is to bridge the gap between previously marginalised languages and previously privileged languages by promoting and developing the marginalised languages.

But this will be a huge task. The Board will have to work very hard in order to address such imbalances between languages and the asymmetrical power relations. Hereunder are some of the recommendations that the Board has to consider if it aims to achieve its goals.

## **6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (a) It is recommended that the Pan South African Languages Board operates in concert with speakers of the languages in order to be relevant to the speakers of the languages. Not only should the people know that the Pan South African Languages Board exists, they must be part of it. There must be a relationship between the Board and the people the Board serves. This could be done by:
- Creating language Bodies such as the Language Specific Committee;
  - Ensuring that there is at every village and town through which the inhabitants can communicate with the Language Specific Committee and the Pan South African Language Board. Such communication must be reciprocal.
- (b) Workshops about language matters should be organised from time to time by both the Language Specific Committees and the Pan South African Language Board.
- (c) Cultural festivals should be organised. Language and culture go together. Such cultural activities would make people feel proud about their culture and language.
- (d) Languages that are spoken by the majority of people in a particular province should be used in education, economics and politics.
- (e) It is recommended that the Pan South African Languages Board ensures that the multiplicity of languages in South Africa does not create conflict but co-operation. The pluralistic nature of South Africa's languages must not be seen as a curse but as a blessing.
- It is recommended that a new mechanism of prescribing books be found. Such a mechanism should be one in which the public would be involved. When the Pan South African Language Board was formed, nominations were invited from the public. It is therefore possible to involve the public in activities such as the prescription of books that could be used in schools.

It is recommended that the Pan South African Language Board be supported by the South African government in its activities. The support should be financial and otherwise.

However, there should not be any interference by the government in the activities of the Board.

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